

A Description
of the
BOOK
From
HEAVEN

by Walter L. Porter, Ph.D.



Searcy, Arkansas

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Preface

There are sixty-six books in the Bible, thirty-nine in the Old Testament, and twenty-seven in the New Testament. It was written by about forty men, beginning thirty-five hundred years ago. The last book was written near the end of the first century AD. Some of the authors are unknown, but all of them were guided by the Holy Spirit of God. That means God is the ultimate author of the Bible. Indeed, there are many places, especially in the New Testament, where the authors speak of the scriptures as the word of God. Therefore, the Bible is truly the book from heaven. The men God used to write its words were all Hebrews (the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), for they were God's chosen people.

The first book of the Old Testament is called Genesis. It tells about the beginning of the world, and about the patriarchs of the Hebrew people. The next four books contain the law of Moses. They also tell about the creation of the nation of Israel. Moses was the author of the first five books. They are called the Pentateuch, meaning five. Jews call them the Torah, meaning law. The Israelites were later called Jews when only the tribe of Judah survived conquest. The next twelve books contain roughly a thousand years of historical information about the Israelites, down to the fourth century BC. The next five books contain writings of wisdom and psalms. The remaining Old Testament books are primarily prophecy. The first four books of the New Testament tell about the life of Christ. The fifth book is about the early history of his church. The next twenty-one books contain information about the teachings of Christ and instructions for his disciples. The last one is a book of prophecy.

The Bible contains over 783,000 words. This description of it contains about 345,000 words, which represents forty-four percent of the Bible. I tried to include all of the major events and topics. Of course, I had to condense much of what it says. Nevertheless, it describes most of what is in the Bible. And hopefully it will encourage you to want to study the Bible itself. The Bible is the greatest of all books, having been written by Almighty God through the hands of his prophets.

If you find what I wrote in this description difficult, then I suggest first reading my condensed version of it. That contains about 123,000 words, which represents less than sixteen percent of the Bible. Nevertheless, I tried to include most of the major events and topics. If we can compare the

Bible to the body of a man, the condensed version is like seeing a line drawing of him. This full description is more like seeing his photograph. Of course, no description can replace the real thing.

I strongly recommend using a dictionary for words you do not recognize or are uncertain about. When I was young and foolish I belittled the importance of a good vocabulary. Yet I have learned that the smartest people work hard to learn new words. Words are tools for the mind to build wisdom and intelligence. Therefore, if you want to be smart, work hard to learn new words. And one of the best ways is to refer to a dictionary while reading serious books. Develop that good habit and it will bless you all your life. Your mind will grow stronger. Nevertheless, if you think that might be too distracting initially then you might want to read first as an overview. After which you could go back and study the material more carefully with the aid of a dictionary and a Bible. But regardless of how you choose to learn about the Holy Bible, you can be sure the more you gain knowledge and understanding of it, the greater will be the positive affect upon your soul.

Finally, a word of warning about modern English translations. Most of them (including the popular NIV) distort the original text of the Bible with many changes. The authors of those translations use the so-called "dynamic equivalent" method, which is simply a flattering euphemism for loose translating. The only thing dynamic about the method is to aggressively corrupt the original text with their opinions instead of faithful translation. The authors of them make many guesses about what the scriptures mean, then they choose words to make it easy to read. Such versions are very popular because they have chosen the wide path, which Jesus condemned when he said, "**Enter ye in by the narrow gate, because wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many are they who enter through it. How narrow is the gate, and restricted the way, that leads to life, and few are those who find it**" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Those kinds of versions vary in how loosely they translate, but none of them are trustworthy. They are all corrupted, more or less, with many instances of interpretation instead of translation. The greatest offenders are the "easy-to-read" style versions.

Consider just one example of how loosely they translate. Below are translations of Romans 7:9 from three legitimate versions:

For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died (King James Version).

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died (New King James Version).

I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died (New American Standard Version).

Here is how the *Living Bible* translates that passage: “That is why I felt fine so long as I did not understand what the law really demanded. But when I learned the truth, I realized that I had broken the law and was a sinner, doomed to die.” Can you not see how different it reads? It is not what the Bible says, it is what the author thinks it means.

It is wrong to paraphrase the holy scriptures or reword them to make the text seem modern and always easy to read. It perverts and debases the message. Those most guilty of that are the Bible story books for children. Simplified descriptions of the Bible for children can be useful, but they should never be called Bibles. Moreover, no publication should contain pictures of Bible characters, because all such things are deceitful. If you want something for children, try *Selected Scriptures from the Holy Bible: Readings for the Young*, compiled by Genelle Porter. You can also learn more about many of the issues related to translating the Bible from my article *Preserving the Word of God*. That can be read at my website www.still-voices.org.

“Now to the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, alone wise, to God is honor and glory into the ages of the ages. Truly” (1st Timothy 1:17).

NOTE: All scripture quotations are from the ACV (A Conservative Version), unless otherwise stated. Also I use gender relevant words in their historic meaning.

A Description of THE OLD TESTAMENT

beginning with

Genesis

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Dear reader, the world did not just happen, for nothing happens without a cause, except God. He alone had no cause because he has always existed. That is one of the great mysteries about him which is beyond our ability to understand. Yet knowing about him is the most rational and enriching explanation of our existence. Nothing can compare with the value of knowledge about him and his will for us.

We can understand him better by knowing that God is a supernatural being who resides outside our universe in a different and vastly superior realm, one that is impossible for us to even imagine. Yet, although invisible to us, he remains actively involved in this world. And over the years, through various representatives, he created the Bible so that we can know something about him and how he wants us to live. For the Bible teaches that we are his offspring, made in his image, which explains why we are so creative, and dominate all the other creatures of the world. Moreover, after our time in this life is over, our souls will be brought to his world to be judged by how we have lived in this one.

The first part of the book of Genesis tells about the creation. It says the world was first dark, without form and void, and covered with water. Then over a six day period, in the following sequence, God created light, the atmosphere, dry land, vegetation, the sun moon and stars, living creatures of the sea and air, living creatures of the land, and last of all mankind.

The book says that in the beginning the Spirit of God moved over the surface of the waters. Then he made light, which he called day, and he separated it from the darkness, which he called night. That created the first night-day cycle. On the second day he created the atmosphere, and divided the waters so that some of it would be for clouds. On the third day he separated the waters of the sea so that dry land would appear, after which he created all of the grass, and trees, and other vegetation. The book says that on the fourth day God created the lights of the sky that we call celestial bodies. One purpose of them was to allow us to determine time. Without

them there would be no days or years. He also designed them to give us bright light by day and dim light by night. Thus ended the special light he made on day one. On the fifth day he created all the creatures of the sea and the air. Then on the sixth day he created all of the land animals.

Also on the sixth day God said "**Let us make man in our image—after our likeness**" (Gen. 1:26). Since we are made in the image of God, then we know what God looks like, because he made us look like him. Of course, he is inconceivably more magnificent than we are. You can read a little more about what he looks like in the book of Revelation at 1:13-16. There it tells how Jesus in his heavenly glory had shown himself to his apostle John, and the Bible says that Jesus is the exact image of the essence of God. When John described how he looked, he said Jesus was as bright as the sun. Indeed, the sight of Jesus was so awesome that John fainted, but Jesus lifted him up and told him not to fear.

Man was created in the image of God, and was commanded to "**Be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth**" (Gen. 1:28). God created mankind to be productive. He commanded us to grow more numerous, and to continue bringing order to the world, and to rule over all other living things in it. Consequently, we do, although sin greatly retards our progress.

Now the book says that at the end of the sixth day God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good. That does not mean, however, it was perfect and complete, just that what he made was good. You see, God did not make everything in our world into finished products. We are his sons and daughters, and he wants us to continue what he began, to continue bringing new souls into the world, and to continue making good new things. The book also says that God gave man and beasts vegetation and fruit for food. So originally no animals were eaten. Hence, there were no predators.

The book says it took God six days to make the world. It only took him six days because he is so powerful, able to do incredible things very quickly. His Son Jesus could heal normally incurable diseases in an instant. However, creating this vast universe was a colossal task, so it took God six days. And the book says he rested on the seventh day. He rested because making this massive world took a lot of work. Some people do not believe that God did any work, so he did not need to rest. But the Bible says he rested. In fact, in the book of Exodus Moses said that when God rested he was refreshed: “**For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed**” (Exo. 31:17). Incidentally, Jehovah is God’s name.

Next the book tells how God created the first man and woman. He first formed the body of the man from the dust of the earth, then he breathed into him the breath of life. Next God planted the garden of Eden, and he put the man there to dress it and to keep it. He told him that he could eat of the fruit of any tree in the garden except from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And he warned him, “**For in the day that thou eat of it thou shall surely die**” (Gen. 2:17).

Then God said, “**It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make a help meet for him**” (Gen. 2:18). First he tried animals, but none were suitable. So he caused the man to go into a deep sleep, and he took a rib from him, which he then made into a woman. When the man saw her, he said, “**This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh**” (Gen. 2:23). He called her Woman, and she became his wife. And about them, the record says, “**Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cling to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh**” (Gen. 2:24). Since the two are said to be one flesh, then we can understand how the Bible says the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God—the three are one. That can also explain why the Hebrew word for God in the Old Testament is plural ten times more often than it is singular.

Life must have been wonderful in the garden paradise of Eden. They lived in childlike innocence, going about unclothed and carefree. Moreover, the record says that Jehovah God himself sometimes walked in the garden with them, although doubtless clothed and probably in earthly form. But then evil intruded. The record says, “**Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made**” (Gen. 3:1). And he tempted the woman to eat of the forbidden fruit. He

lied to her, and told her not to believe God. So she ate and gave it to her husband, and he also ate of it. The book says, “**And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons**” (Gen. 3:7).

When they heard God walking in the garden they hid themselves. When he called for him the man said he hid himself because he was naked and afraid. When God asked if he had eaten of the forbidden tree, the man said, “**The woman whom thou gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate**” (Gen. 3:12). When God asked the woman what she had done, she said, “**The serpent beguiled me, and I ate**” (Gen. 3:13).

So God punished all three of them. He told the serpent he was cursed above every beast, and he had to go on his belly and eat dust all his life. He also said, “**And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. He shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel**” (Gen. 3:15). The Bible says the serpent was the devil (see Rev. 12:9). The seed of the woman is commonly believed to be Jesus Christ. The head of the devil probably refers to his authority. The heel of Christ probably refers to his earthly body. Nevertheless, there is much mystery about all of those things. There are many mysteries in the Bible.

God said the woman was going to suffer much pain in childbearing. He also said to her, “**And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee**” (Gen. 3:16). He told the man the ground was cursed for his sake. He said he would eat from it in toil, and it would bring forth thorns and thistles. He said he would eat bread in the sweat of his face until he returned to the ground. He said, “**For thou art dust, and to dust thou shall return**” (Gen. 3:19). Dear reader, beware of all who promote sinful things. The devil and those who serve him lie until it is too late to undo the damage.

The book says Adam called his wife Eve (which means life), “**because she was the mother of all living**” (Gen. 3:20). Jehovah God made coats of skins for them to wear. Then Jehovah said, “**Behold, the man has become as one of us—to know good and evil**” (Gen. 3:22). Therefore, to prevent him from eating of the tree of life and living forever he sent him forth from the garden of Eden.

The book says that Adam knew his wife (meaning he was physically intimate with her), and in time she bore Cain and Abel. Abel took care of sheep, but Cain tilled the ground to grow crops. They both

made offerings to Jehovah. However, Jehovah only accepted Abel's offering, because he offered what God wanted. When Cain became angry Jehovah told Cain he would also be accepted if he did right. Nevertheless, when both men were in a field Cain rose up and murdered his brother. When Jehovah asked Cain where his brother was, Cain said, "**I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?**" (Gen. 4:9). God knew what Cain had done, so he punished him. He could no longer be able to grow crops, but had to wander about to survive. The book says Cain had a wife (it does not tell where she came from), and it names some of his descendants.

Adam had another son after Cain and Abel whom he called Seth. The book gives the names of the men who descended from Seth to Noah, and it tells how long they lived. It says Adam lived 935 years. For several generations men lived a very long time, averaging over 900 years. However, one man did not die, for the record says, "**Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him**" (Gen. 5:24). He must have been an extraordinarily righteous man. Enoch was also the name of Cain's firstborn. The oldest man on record was Methuselah, who lived 969 years, but God gradually began to lower the age of men to a maximum of 120 years.

As the population of the earth grew larger the record says, "**And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And Jehovah regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart**" (Gen. 6:5-6). However, the book says Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah.

The book also says the earth was filled with violence. As my countrymen have turned from God there has also been an increase in violence. Their music and dancing are more violent. Their movies and TV shows and other forms of entertainment are filled with violence. Their computer games are mostly about violent things. Their language has more shouting and cursing. Violence has seeped into the national character like smoke. It has not been sudden, and so the change is largely unnoticed, except by a few of us who remember the former days.

Because the world had become so corrupted God decided to wash the earth clean with a flood. Noah and his family were apparently the only righteous ones left, and so God commanded him to build a huge floating ark to save them. He also told him to

include all the species of animals. Jehovah said, "**Of every clean beast thou shall take to thee by sevens, the male and his female. And of the beasts that are not clean two, the male and his female. Also of the birds of the heavens by sevens, male and female, to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth**" (Gen. 7:2-3).

When the ark was ready God brought the great flood over the whole earth, and everything was destroyed except what was in the ark. The waters continued to rise for forty days. The book says after a hundred fifty days the waters began to recede. Then after Noah had been in the ark about a year, God commanded him to come out on the dry land. And from his three sons, their wives, and the animals they saved, the earth began to be repopulated.

God promised never to destroy the earth again by a flood, for he said, "... **the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth**" (Gen. 8:21). Regarding animal life, God said that now they would all fear men. Of course, we can teach some of them not to be afraid. And occasionally an animal will attack someone, but that is rare. Almost every rule has a few exceptions. This time God also let people eat animals for food as well as plants. Actually, he said we could eat any other living thing. However, he forbade eating blood. And God said this time that men should execute murderers. He said, "**Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. For in the image of God he made man**" (Gen. 9:6). That is just another of the many commands of God that sinful men disobey. God also said he made the rainbow as a sign of his covenant not to destroy every living thing again by a flood.

Noah's three sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. One of the sons of Ham was Canaan. The book says that Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. He became drunk after drinking the wine of it, and was naked in his tent. Noah probably did not know the wine would make him drunk. Nevertheless, his younger son Ham saw him, and did nothing except gossip about it to his brothers. They, on the other hand, respecting the privacy of their father, took a garment, laid it on their shoulders, and walked backward to cover him without seeing his nakedness. When Noah awoke and learned what had been done, he put Canaan under a curse, but he blessed Shem and Japheth. Why he named Canaan in his curse is not explained. There are many unexplained things in the Bible. Canaan was probably involved in the disrespect shown to Noah, for Ham had other sons. Many places in the

Bible teach about how important it is to honor our fathers and our mothers. It is one of the great ten commandments that God spoke from mount Sinai.

After that the record gives a genealogical listing of a few of the descendants of Noah's three sons, from whom came the new population of mankind. It names seven sons of Japheth, and sons of two of them. It names four sons of Ham, and sons of three of them. Then it gives twenty-six names of the progeny of Shem. It names his five sons, sons of two of them, a son of one of them, his son, his two sons, and thirteen sons of one of them.

Regarding the age of the world, from an analysis of the genealogical data in the Bible men have estimated the world was created about 4000 BC. Faithless men scoff at this, but you can either believe God's word or them. Any man who claims to have proof either way is a liar like the serpent who deceived Eve. From the Bible record, the flood seems to have been about 1600 years after the creation, or about 2400 BC.

At some time after the flood, when men had begun to multiply again, they decided to join forces and begin to create the great tower of Babel with its top in the heavens. However, when Jehovah saw it, he said, "**Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is what they begin to do. And now nothing will be withheld from them, which they propose to do**" (Gen. 11:6). Jehovah did not want them to become so powerful so quickly. Men can be very cruel and evil, especially if they have too much power. Therefore, he went down and confounded their language so they could not understand each other's speech. Hence, men were scattered on the face of the earth with many different languages, which continues to make it hard for us to work together. Notice in that scripture God's assessment of our potential: "**And now nothing will be withheld from them, which they propose to do.**" Hence, united our potential is virtually unlimited. Indeed, mankind is already doing things that our forefathers considered completely impossible.

Next the book names the fathers of ten generations from Noah to Terah. Terah was the father of Abram (later named Abraham), whom Jehovah called a few centuries after the flood. Jehovah wanted to make him the father of a new race. God knew that most people in the world want to live sinfully. And he did not want the whole world to become wicked like it was before the flood. Therefore, he was going to have a special people he

would use to preserve righteousness in the world. They would keep the world from becoming completely wicked again.

Abram was a very righteous man, therefore God chose him to start this special people. Those people were first called Hebrews. Later they were called Israelites. But now they are called Christians. I am one, and we are the spiritual descendants of Abraham. He is our spiritual forefather, because we believe and obey God as he did.

Jehovah said to Abram, "**Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to the land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and be thou a blessing. And I will bless those who bless thee, and he who curses thee I will curse. And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed**" (Gen. 12:1-3).

Abram obeyed God, and he sent him to the land of Canaan. At some time after arriving, there was a famine in the land, and so Abram went to Egypt. Before entering the land, however, he asked his wife to say that she was his sister, because she was very beautiful, and he feared they would kill him for her. She was, indeed, his half-sister. And sure enough the Egyptians seized Sarai and took her into Pharaoh's house. Pharaoh dealt well with Abram for Sarai's sake. However, Jehovah helped Abram get Sarai back by afflicting Pharaoh and his house with plagues. When Pharaoh learned why he was being afflicted, he criticized Abram, gave Sarai back to him, and sent him away.

Abram was a herdsman, as was his nephew Lot who had come with him. And when their herds became too large for them to stay together, Lot went to dwell in the cities of the Plain where Sodom and Gomorrah were. The book says, "**Now the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinners against Jehovah**" (Gen. 13:13). However, I doubt Abram and Lot knew that, for they were both righteous men. After Lot left, Jehovah told Abram that he would give him all the land of Canaan, and that his seed would be as the dust of the earth in number. God made that promise to Abram several times in his lifetime.

At some time after Lot moved to the Plain, war developed between several kings. As a result, Sodom and Gomorrah were looted by marauders, and many were carried away captive, including Lot. When Abram heard about it, he took the 318 men of his band, and defeated the marauders. He brought

back Lot and his goods, as well as all of the other people who were captured. Then Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High, brought them bread and wine, and he blessed Abram. Abram in turn gave him a tenth of all (a tithe). Melchizedek is a mysterious man whom the book of Hebrews in the New Testament says was like Christ. However, Melchizedek is only mentioned in one other sentence in the rest of the Old Testament. There are many mysteries in the Bible.

After that Jehovah appeared again to Abram. Abram wanted to know how he could be the father of a great nation if he did not even have a son. However, God promised him a son. Then in a dream Jehovah prophesied to him that his descendants would be slaves four hundred years in a foreign nation. But God would judge that nation, and his descendants would come out with much goods to go to the promised land, which would be from the Nile river to the river Euphrates.

When Sarai saw that she was not bearing him a son, she suggested he have a son by her handmaid, Hagar. Abram agreed and Ishmael was later born. However, that did not work, because God said that Ishmael was not going to be Abram's heir of the promise. Besides, Hagar began to despise Sarai, which caused trouble. Women of those days knew that their proper role was to bear and rear children. So as soon as Hagar saw that she could have children but Sarai could not, Hagar apparently began to scorn her. We can see by Hagar's attitude a good reason why God did not select her to be the mother of his chosen people the Hebrews.

Hagar provoked Sarai so much that, with Abram's approval, Sarai began to deal harshly with her. So before Ishmael was even born she ran away into the wilderness. But an agent of God found her, and told her to go back. He also assured her that she was going to have many descendants. He is the one who told her to call the child Ishmael. He also said to her, "**And he will be a wild donkey among men, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brothers**" (Gen. 16:12). Mohammed claimed that Ishmael was the father of the Arabs.

Later God appeared again to Abram. He restated his promise to him, and changed his name to Abraham. This time he also gave him the command of circumcision as a sign of his covenant with him. God said that throughout his generations, every male born in his house, and also foreigners bought with money, were to be circumcised. He said every

male born to him was to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth. God also changed the name of his wife to Sarah, and said he would give him a son by her. When Abraham heard that, he fell on his face and laughed, because he was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety years old. However, God assured him it would happen, and it would be at that season the next year. Then, as soon as God left, Abraham circumcised himself and all the men of his house. The book says Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised.

Not long afterward God appeared again to Abraham. Jehovah seems to have communicated with Abraham in various ways. This time he and two of his agents appeared to him as three men. When Abraham saw them, he rushed over, bowed down, and urged them to turn in for a meal and to rest. They agree, and so he commanded Sarah to prepare a meal for them, a tender calf with butter and milk. Then Jehovah said to Abraham, "**I will certainly return to thee when the season comes round, and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son**" (Gen. 18:10). Although Sarah was in the tent, and they were outside under a tree, she heard what God said. She laughed to herself about it because she was so old. However, Jehovah knew it, and he assured her that it would happen.

This time Jehovah was on another mission, and before he left Abraham, he said, "**Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice, to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him**" (Gen. 18:17-19). And truly all the nations of the earth have been blessed in him. For it was through Abraham's offspring that God gave the Bible, and it was from his seed that Christ, the Savior of the world, was born.

Therefore, God revealed to Abraham what he was going to do. He said to him, "**Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which comes to me. And if not, I will know**" (Gen. 18:20-21).

Then he sent his two agents to go there to evaluate them. However, after they left, Abraham pleaded with God for the sake of the righteous men in the

city not to destroy it. He began by asking him if he would spare it for the sake of fifty righteous men. When God said he would, Abraham kept lowering the number until he got to ten. God said he would even spare the city for the sake of ten righteous men. Then he departed.

When the agents of God came to Sodom, Lot urged them to stay with him, even though he did not know who they were or where they came from. However, during the night all the men of Sodom surrounded his house and demanded he give them the two visitors so they could “know” them, meaning rape them homosexually. Lot refused, pleading with them not to act so wickedly. The apostle Peter said that Lot was a righteous man, probably the only one in the city. When they were about to assault Lot, the two agents brought him back into the house and struck the men with blindness.

Early the next morning they took Lot, his wife, and two daughters out of the city, and they warned them not to look back. Then Jehovah rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, but Lot’s wife looked back, and she turned into a pillar of salt. When Abraham arose that morning he saw the smoke rising like the smoke of a furnace from the fire and brimstone that Jehovah rained down from the sky to destroy the cities.

Lot lived in a cave for a while. His daughters thought that all the other men in the world were dead. So they made him drunk with wine two nights in a row. One bedded with him one night, and the other the next night. Consequently, they both conceived offspring by him while he slept. Both daughters bore sons whose descendants became two nations, the Moabites and Ammonites.

Abraham journeyed further and came to the land of the Philistines. He also told them Sarah was his sister, so Abimelech the king sent and took her. However, God warned him about Sarah in a dream. So after criticizing Abraham, Abimelech gave him silver, livestock, and servants as compensation, and returned Sarah back to him, saying that he could live in the land freely.

Later, as God had foretold, Sarah bore Abraham a son, whom he named Isaac. As Isaac began to grow, Sarah saw Ishmael mocking Isaac. The apostle Paul said Ishmael persecuted Isaac (see Gal. 4:29). So Sarah told Abraham to cast them out, and that grieved him. However, God told him to do what Sarah said. And he assured him that the son of the handmaid would also become a nation because he was his seed. So he sent Hagar and Ishmael away.

However, they got lost in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. Hagar was an Egyptian, and she may have been going back to Egypt. So an agent of God spoke to her out of heaven and helped her, telling her again that Ishmael was going to become a great nation. The record says God was with the lad, and he became an archer, living in the wilderness.

After that, Abimelech and the captain of his army came and made a covenant with Abraham, a peace treaty. For he said God was with Abraham in all that he did. The book says Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines many days. Then God gave Abraham a severe trial. God commanded Abraham to take Isaac to a mountain in the land of Moriah, and offer him as a burnt offering. Abraham had waited many years, until he became very old before God gave him the son of promise. And now God commanded to kill him for a burnt offering. Nobody knows exactly how old Isaac was when it happened, but it was probably some time during his youth.

Nevertheless, Abraham had learned to trust God so much that he immediately set out on the journey. It took three days to get there. And he went as far as raising his knife to kill Isaac before the agent of Jehovah called to him out of heaven. Speaking for God the agent said, **“Do not lay thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything to him. For now I know that thou fear God, since thou have not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me”** (Gen. 22:12). It had been a test, but Abraham did not know that until it was over. And because Abraham proved his absolute faith in him, God blessed him greatly, making him the father of all the faithful. And so in that sense, Abraham is my father and yours too, if you have faith in God.

Eventually Sarah died, and was buried in the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham purchased from one of the men of that land. When Abraham was old, well stricken in age, he commissioned the chief servant of his house to go to the land from which he came to find a wife for Isaac from among his kin. He did not want him to marry one of the women of Canaan. The Canaanites were a more sinful people. His servant used ten camels to take some other men and many good things with him. When he arrived at the city of Nahor where Abraham’s kin were, he prayed to God that he would make his mission prosperous. And he asked God for a sign, saying, **“Behold, I am standing by the fountain of water. And the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. And let it come to**

pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink. And she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also. Let the same be she that thou have appointed for thy servant Isaac. And thereby I shall know that thou have shown kindness to my master” (Gen. 24:13-14).

And even before he had finished speaking, Rebekah, who was the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Abraham’s brother, came and did just as he described. And about her, the book says, “**And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin**” (Gen. 24:16). So Abraham’s servant gave her some jewelry, and lodged with her family that night, after telling them his mission. He also told them of his prayer, and how Rebekah conformed to what he asked of God. When they heard it, they said since it was from Jehovah he could take her. Then he gave her and members of her family many gifts. The next day, after Rebekah agreed to go, he returned with her and her damsels to Abraham. The servant told Isaac all he had done, and Isaac took Rebekah for his wife. The record says he loved her, and was comforted after his mother’s death.

At some time after that Abraham took another wife, and she bore him six sons. However, Isaac was the only son of promise, from whom the Hebrew race would grow. Then at 175 years of age Abraham died, and Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah with Sarah. After that the record lists the names of the twelve sons of Ishmael. He died at the age of 137 years.

Isaac’s wife Rebekah was barren for almost twenty years after their marriage, but he pleaded God for her, and so she conceived. She bore twins, who struggled together within her, making her wonder why she lived. So she went to inquire of Jehovah. He told her there were two nations in her womb, and one would be stronger than the other. In those days the elder son was given the highest rank, and received a double amount of the inheritance. However, in this case, God told her that the elder was going to serve the younger. The elder was Esau and the younger was Jacob. And the record says of them, “**Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field. And Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his venison. And Rebekah loved Jacob**” (Gen. 25:27-28). One day Esau came in from the field exhausted, and asked Jacob for the pottage that he cooked. Jacob said he would sell it to him for his birthright,

and Esau agreed. Hence, the book says, “**So Esau despised his birthright**” (Gen. 25:34).

Another famine occurred in the land, and so Isaac journeyed to the land of the Philistines where his father had also gone. Jehovah appeared to him and told him not to go into Egypt, and he gave him the same promise he had given to Abraham. Isaac also told the Philistines that his wife was his sister for the same reason that Abraham did. Although she was not related to him that way, as Sarah was to Abraham. Nevertheless, the Philistines did not bother Rebekah.

However, after he had been there a long time they discovered the truth. Therefore, Abimelech their king criticized him for his deception. And because Isaac had grown so prosperous they considered him a potential threat. Hence, Abimelech asked him to leave. Isaac went out into a valley of the country, but the Philistines kept quarreling with him about wells that he dug. So he eventually traveled to Beersheba where God again appeared to him and encouraged him. While he was there Abimelech, with one of his friends and the captain of his army, came and also made a peace treaty with him, because, they said, “**We saw plainly that Jehovah was with thee**” (Gen. 26:28). So Isaac made a feast for them, and they departed in the morning.

The book says that when Esau was forty years old he took two Hittite women for wives, “**And they were a bitterness of spirit to Isaac and to Rebekah**” (Gen. 26:35). When Isaac was old his eyes were dim and he could not see. And since he did not know how much longer he had to live, he told Esau to go prepare some venison for him so that he would bless him before he died. Now his blessing was a very special thing, apparently having the power from God to bestow benefits for the future. So when Rebekah heard what he told Esau, she persuaded Jacob to deceive Isaac into giving him the blessing instead. Rebekah prepared the meal, and dressed Jacob so that if Isaac touched him, he would feel like Esau, because Esau was a hairy man. The deception worked, and Isaac blessed Jacob. Jacob got the blessing, but both he and his mother sinned in the way he got it. And later events seem to show how God punished them both for it.

When Esau returned from the hunt, he and Isaac learned what happened. The book says Esau cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and he told his father to bless him also. Isaac replied, “**Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and I have sus-**

tained him with grain and new wine. And what then shall I do for thee, my son?" Gen. 27:37). He did give him a secondary blessing, but said he would serve his brother.

Esau was so angry that he vowed to kill Jacob as soon as his father Isaac died. When Rebekah learned of that, she persuaded Isaac to send Jacob back to live with Laban her brother, to find a wife for himself from her homeland. She hoped that Esau would cool down before he came back. She said to Isaac, "**I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?**" (Gen. 27:46). The modern idea that there are no character differences between races and cultures is quite false. Although such differences are based upon values and habits of living, not genetics.

So Isaac told Jacob not to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan, but to go and take a wife from the daughters of Laban his mother's brother. When Esau saw that his wives did not please Isaac his father, he went to Ishmael and took one of his daughters for a wife, besides the wives he had.

Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. At night on the way Jacob used a stone for a pillow. And he had a dream about a ladder up to heaven, with agents of God ascending and descending on it. Jehovah stood above it, and told him that he was the God of Abraham and Isaac. He also spoke to him the blessing of Abraham. He said his descendants would be as the dust of the earth, and he would give him and them the land, and in him and his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. He said he would always be with him, and would bring him back to that land.

Jacob thought that place was the house of God and the gate of heaven. So he took the stone under his head, set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. He was so impressed by the dream that he vowed to give God a tenth of everything if he would protect him and give him the necessities of life, for Jacob had very little with him.

When Jacob arrived at his destination, he came to a well. He asked those who were there about Rebekah's brother Laban. They said they knew him, and his daughter Rachel was coming with the sheep. When he told them they ought to be watering the sheep, they said they had to wait for the stone to be rolled from its mouth (they must have been women and children). So Jacob rolled it away and watered Laban's flock. Then he told Rachel who he was. So

she ran to get Laban, who then brought him to his house. After lodging with him for a month, Laban offered to hire him. Since Jacob loved Rachel, he agreed to work seven years for her. The record says, "**And they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had for her**" (Gen. 29:20).

However, after the seven years were over, Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Rachel's older sister Leah. The book says Leah had "weak eyes," which may mean she was slow mentally. Jacob did not discover it until he had spent the night with her. So Laban required Jacob to work another seven years to marry Rachel. I suspect that God may have allowed Laban to successfully deceive Jacob, cheating him of the woman he wanted, as recompense for his having deceived his father Isaac and cheating Esau of the blessing he wanted. God has ways to recompense both our good and our bad deeds. Nevertheless, Laban let Jacob have Rachel after the marriage week with Leah. So even though he had to work another seven years for her, he did not have to wait that long to marry her. Therefore, Jacob ended with two wives for fourteen years labor.

Jacob married two sisters, and it was almost inevitable that rivalry would develop between them. However, since Jacob loved Rachel, and regarded Leah inferior, God compensated Leah by giving her sons for Jacob. And since women in those days knew that child rearing was their primary role, Leah was hoping that bearing sons would win Jacob's heart. However, there is no record it ever did. Although he may have changed later after Rachel died.

Nevertheless, it did stir Rachel to envy because God closed her womb. She said to Jacob, "**Give me sons, or else I die**" (Gen. 30:1). Then the book says, "**Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, Am I in God's stead, who has withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?**" So Rachel took Bilhah her handmaid, and gave her to Jacob to have children by her. That way Rachel could have sons, for the sons of bondwomen belonged to their owners. It is like women today who are paid to bear children for someone else. When she got a couple of sons that way, Rachel said, "**With mighty wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed**" (Gen. 30:8). Then when Leah saw that she stopped bearing, she gave Jacob her handmaid Zilpah for the same purpose. Finally, after Leah had borne six sons and one daughter, God opened Rachel's womb and she bore a son, whom she called Joseph. Thus, Jacob ended with eleven

sons and one daughter from his two wives and their handmaids while he worked for Laban.

When the second seven year period was over Jacob asked leave of him. Laban replied, “**If now I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry, for I have learned by experience that Jehovah has blessed me for thy sake**” (Gen. 30:27). So he persuaded Jacob to keep working for him. However, this time Jacob said he would not work for wages, but for profit sharing. Jacob said he would work for all of the livestock of a certain coloration. Laban quickly agreed, then he went out that very day and removed all of those animals from the flocks that Jacob was managing. He gave them to his sons, and sent them three days journey away. That showed how selfish, greedy, and unfair he was. Nevertheless, because of Jacob’s skill at breeding, and God blessing him, after six years Jacob ended with huge herds, greater than those of Laban. Hence, Laban and his sons began to resent Jacob. Then in a dream Jehovah told Jacob to return to his homeland.

Jacob called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field, and he told them how hard he had worked for their father. He also told them how Laban had treated him. He said, “**And your father has deceived me, and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me**” (Gen. 31:7). Then he told them of the dream he had when God told him to return to his homeland. Rachel and Leah also spoke critically of Laban, and they agreed to do as God told Jacob.

So Jacob took everything he had, and left while Laban was away shearing his sheep. However, Rachel stole her father’s household gods. After three days it was told Laban they had departed. So he went with all his brothers to pursue Jacob, and caught up with him after seven days. However, God had appeared to Laban the night before and said to him, “**Take heed to thyself that thou not speak to Jacob either good or bad**” (Gen. 31:29). Consequently, Laban only criticized Jacob for leaving secretly and stealing his gods. Jacob told him to search for them, but Rachel hid them under the camel saddle she was sitting on, and he did not find them.

Then Jacob rebuked Laban not only for charging him with theft, but also for the many ways he had dealt unfairly with him in the past. Among other things he said, “**These twenty years I have been with thee, thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and I have not eaten the rams of thy flocks. I did not bring to thee that which was**

torn by beasts; I bore the loss of it, of my hand thou required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes” (Gen. 31:38-40).

Laban admitted no fault, and claimed everything Jacob had was his. Nevertheless, he did make a covenant of peace with Jacob. They both gathered stones and set up a pillar, saying it was a witness of their covenant. Jacob also offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and invited his brothers to eat bread. The next morning, after kissing his sons and daughters, and blessing them, Laban returned to his place

As Jacob neared the land of Canaan he sent messengers to the land of Seir to inform his brother Esau that he was coming. After they returned they said Esau was coming with four hundred men. That report caused fear and distress to Jacob. So he divided his people and livestock into two companies, hoping one would be spared if Esau attacked him. He also prayed to God for protection from his brother Esau. The next morning he selected out of his herds 580 animals including sheep, goats, camels, donkeys, cows and bulls. He sent them in groups, one behind the other, as gifts for Esau, hoping they would appease him. That night he also sent his two wives, his two handmaids, and his eleven sons away from the camp. Then he spent the night in the camp alone, during which time he wrestled with a man who was an agent of God (see Hos. 12:4). The man also changed his name to Israel and blessed him. There is a lot of mystery about that story.

The next day, when Esau met Jacob, they greeted each other with an embrace and a kiss, and they wept. Esau did not want to take the livestock from Jacob, because apparently he too was quite prosperous, but Jacob insisted. So they separated in peace, Esau to Seir, and Jacob to Succoth, which is east of the Jordan river. Jacob built a house there and booths for his livestock, perhaps to recuperated from the long journey, and/or to wait for a convenient time to cross the Jordan.

Then he went to Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, and bought a parcel of ground. He camped there and erected an altar. However, when his daughter Dinah went to see the daughters of that area the son of the prince of the land raped her. Then he went to his father and asked him to get her so she could be a wife for him. So his father went to negotiate. However, Jacob’s sons dealt deceitfully with him, claiming that he and all his men would have to

be circumcised first. And when all the men of the city were sore from the circumcision, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took swords and killed all of the men. Then Jacob's sons plundered the city, and took all of their livestock and other possessions, including their wives and little ones. When Jacob heard what they had done he was very troubled, and he rebuked Simeon and Levi.

Then the book says, "**And God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to thee when thou fled from the face of Esau thy brother**" (Gen. 35:1). So Jacob went to Bethel where God first spoke to him in the dream about the ladder. However, before departing he made everyone give him their foreign gods and earrings, which he buried under the oak that was by Shechem. The earrings were probably charms. The record says, "**And they journeyed, and a terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob**" (Gen. 35:5). Jacob also built an altar at Bethel.

Then God appeared again to him and changed his name to Israel. He also blessed him, and again gave him the promise of Abraham. After that Jacob set up a pillar of stone, and poured out a drink offering and oil upon it. When he journeyed from Bethel, Rachel died in childbirth, and was buried near Bethlehem. Jacob called the child Benjamin. Also sometime on the journey Jacob's firstborn Reuben lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it. Then the book names Jacob's twelve sons: "**The sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun. The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin. And the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid: Dan and Naphtali. And the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid: Gad and Asher**" (Gen. 35:23-26).

Sometime after Jacob returned to Isaac his father, Isaac also died, being a hundred eighty years old. So Esau and Jacob buried him. Rebekah had apparently died before Jacob returned, so she never saw him again after she had persuaded him to deceive his father Isaac. God has ways to recompense both the good and the bad that we do. After that the book gives the generations of Esau. Many names are given, including those of chiefs. Esau dwelt in mount Seir, and is the father of the Edomites.

Next the book says, "**These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers**" (Gen. 37:2). The rest of the book is primarily about Joseph, the first son of Rachel. It says that Israel loved Joseph more than all his brothers, and he made him a coat of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more, the record says, "**... they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him**" (Gen. 37:4). However, later events showed that Joseph was worthy of being loved more than the rest. And it may be that he had already proven his worthiness to Israel, because he informed his father about the evil things his brothers did.

The record says Joseph had two dreams that indicated he would reign over his father, mother, and brothers. The first was about sheaves in the field. His sheaf stood upright, and his brothers sheaves came and made obeisance to his sheaf. When he told his brothers about it, the record says they hated him even more. The second dream showed the sun, moon, and eleven stars making obeisance to him. When he told it to his father and his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "**What is this dream that thou have dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brothers indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?**" (Gen. 37:10). However, his father kept the saying in mind. Jacob was aware of the significance of some dreams in those days.

Then a day came when Israel sent Joseph to Shechem where his brothers were feeding the flock. However, when he found them they made a conspiracy against him. They said, "**Come now therefore, and let us kill him, and cast him into one of the pits. And we will say, An evil beast has devoured him. And we shall see what will become of his dreams**" (Gen. 37:20). When Reuben heard it, he told them not to shed blood, but to cast him into a pit there. He planned to later restore him to his father. Reuben was the firstborn son, and hence, had responsibility for the others. So after stripping him of his coat of many colors they cast him into the pit.

After that they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites who were Midianite merchantmen. Then Judah said to his brothers, "**What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our flesh**" (Gen. 37:26-27). So they sold him for twenty pieces of silver. Reuben had apparently been away, and when he returned he saw that Joseph was not in the

pit. He tore his clothes, went to his brothers, and said, “**The child is not, and I, where shall I go?**” (Gen. 37:30). So they killed a goat, and dipped his coat of many colors in the blood to give his father the impression that a wild beast had slain him. When they came to Jacob it was very bitter news to him, and he mourned about his son for many days. The book says, “**And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted, and he said, For I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning. And his father wept for him**” (Gen. 37:35).

At about that time Judah married a Canaanite woman who bore him three sons. When Er his firstborn was grown, Judah took a wife for him, whose name was Tamar. However, the book says, “**And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of Jehovah, and Jehovah killed him**” (Gen. 38:7). Then Judah told Onan, his second son, to go to Er's widow, Tamar, and “**perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother**” (Gen. 38:8). However, he spilled his seed on the ground, and so Jehovah took his life also. Since Judah had lost two sons with Tamar, not knowing why, he was afraid to send his third son to her.

So after a while she decided to trick Judah into giving her offspring. She disguised herself, put on a veil, and pretended to be a harlot on the roadside. Since Judah's wife had died, when he saw her, thinking she was a harlot, he asked if he could go in to her. When he later learned that Tamar was with child, he threatened to burn her because he thought she had been practicing harlotry. Some think the burning may have meant to put a scar on her and not burn to death. Nevertheless, when she proved to him that he was the father, Judah said, “**She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to Shelah my son**” (Gen. 38:26). And he did not lie with her again. Some men write disparagingly about Tamar, but the Bible does not. In fact, she is one of the few women named in Matthew's genealogy of Christ. She did what she could to have children lawfully, that is, within the family of Judah.

The book says Tamar bore twins. During the delivery one put out his hand. The midwife tied a scarlet thread on it, saying this one came out first. However, he drew back his hand, and his brother, named Perez, came out first. Upon which the midwife said, “**Why have thou made a breach for thyself?**” (Gen. 38:29). Why she said that is not clear, and indeed, her words are variously trans-

lated. Some translate what she said as an exclamation rather than a question. Nevertheless, Perez obtained the birthright of the firstborn because he came out first.

In the meantime, Joseph was purchased by Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's army, a man who was the captain of the guard in Egypt. Even though he was made a slave, the book says, “**And Jehovah was with Joseph. And he was a man who succeeds**” (Gen. 39:2). He did so well that his master made him overseer of his house, and Jehovah blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake. However, Joseph was also a handsome man, and his master's wife wanted him to commit adultery with her. She continued to tempt him day by day. A time came when he was working in the house alone, and she came and caught him by his garment. However, he fled, leaving the garment in her hand. So she called to the other men, and accused him of attempting to lie with her.

When his master came home, she said, “**The Hebrew servant, whom thou have brought to us, came in to me to mock me. And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and fled out**” (Gen. 39:17-18). Therefore, Joseph's master became angry, and he put him into prison. However, the record says, “**But Jehovah was with Joseph, and showed kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison**” (Gen. 39:21). Even in prison unjustly, Joseph continued to be a faithful worker, so much so that the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all of the other prisoners.

Were not all of those things a severe test of Joseph's faith in God? His own brothers hated him, and sold him into slavery. Even though he did not deserve to be a bondman, he worked exceedingly well for his new master. Yet even then, when he refused to commit adultery with his wife, he was cast into prison because of her false charges. Nevertheless, even there he worked faithfully to do good. A lesser man would have been bitter toward God for letting such unjust things happen to him. However, unknown to Joseph, God was preparing him for greatness. And Joseph proved himself worthy of it because he patiently trusted God even when everything seemed to be against him. You see, God was preparing Joseph to be the ruler of all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself. Joseph had been the household manager for the captain of the guard, and he must have learned much about Egyptian life and commerce. And while he was in the special prison

where the king's prisoners were kept, he must have learned much about Egyptian government. So when the time came, Joseph was well trained to rule over Egypt.

When that time came, the change in his life was rapid and extreme. Joseph had earlier interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's officers, a chief butler and a chief baker, both of whom had been cast into prison temporarily. From the butler's dream Joseph predicted he would be released, and he said to him, "**But have me in thy remembrance when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, to me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon**" (Gen. 40:14-15). When the baker asked Joseph to interpret his dream, Joseph said it meant he was going to be hanged. Three days later both predictions came to pass, yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph.

Two years after that Pharaoh had two dreams that no man could interpret. The first dream was about seven fat and well fed cows, followed by seven skinny and undernourished ones. The skinny ones ate the fat ones but remained skinny. The second dream was about seven full and good ears on one stalk, followed by a second stalk with seven thin and withered ears. And the thin ears swallowed the full ears.

Then the chief butler remembered Joseph. He told Pharaoh how he and the chief baker had been cast into prison. While they were there Joseph interpreted dreams they both had one night. And what Joseph said would happen came true; he was restored, but the chief baker was hanged. So Pharaoh called for Joseph, and said he had heard he could interpret dreams. Joseph said to him, "**It is not in me. God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace**" (Gen. 41:16). Joseph always honored God. Then after Pharaoh told him the dreams, Joseph said that God had revealed to Pharaoh by the dreams what was he was about to do. There were going to be seven years of great abundance, followed by seven years of great famine. And the famine would be so severe that it would consume all of the abundance. He said because the dream was doubled to Pharaoh, the thing was established by God, and he was going to shortly bring it to pass.

Then Joseph advised Pharaoh to appoint a wise ruler over the land to supervise overseers who should take a fifth part of the land, and gather grain

during the years of abundance to store for the seven years of famine. Pharaoh and his servants were so impressed by Joseph that Pharaoh made him that ruler. For Pharaoh said to him, "**Inasmuch as God has shown thee all of this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou. Thou shall be over my house, and according to thy word all my people shall be ruled. Only in the throne I will be greater than thou**" (Gen. 41:39-40).

Pharaoh put his signet ring on Joseph's hand, arrayed him with vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck. He also made him ride in the second chariot, and they cried out before him to bow the knee. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "**I am Pharaoh, and without thee no man shall lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt**" (Gen. 41:44). He also gave him a wife, the daughter of a priest.

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, which meant he was in bondage in Egypt for thirteen years. And finally Joseph could understand that all the terrible things that had happened to him were part of a great plan God had to prepare him for greatness. Should that not be a lesson for us all? God wants to prepare us all for greatness, in this life and/or in the one to come. But he cannot unless we trust and obey him, as Joseph did.

The book says that during the seven years of abundance "**Joseph laid up grain as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left off numbering, for it was without number**" (Gen. 41:49). Joseph also had two sons by the wife Pharaoh gave him, whom he named Manasseh and Ephraim. Then came the seven years of famine. The book says, "**And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. And Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, Go to Joseph; what he says to you, do**" (Gen. 41:55). So Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians. Also all the other countries came to Egypt to buy grain.

Jacob and his family also needed grain for bread. And when he heard there was grain in Egypt he sent his sons there. However, he did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin, who was the second son of Rachel, for fear harm might come to him too. When they came to Egypt, Joseph recognized them, but they did not recognize him. So he spoke roughly to them, asking where they were from. The book says Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed about them (that they would bow down to him).

He also apparently decided to test them, to see what kind of men they now were, for he accused them of being spies. And after hearing them tell about their family, he said the only way they could prove they were not spies was to bring their younger brother to him. He told them to send one of them to fetch their brother. And he put them in custody for three days. However, on the third day, he said to them, “**This do, and live, for I fear God: If ye be true men, let one of your brothers be bound in your prison house, but go ye, carry grain for the famine of your houses, and bring your youngest brother to me. So shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die**” (Gen. 42:18-20).

When they heard those words, they said to each other, “**We are truly guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear. Therefore this distress has come upon us**” (Gen. 42:21). Their consciences were tormenting them because of what they had done to Joseph. They did not know Joseph understood them, for there was an interpreter between them. The record says he turned himself around from them and wept. When he returned, he took Simeon and bound him before their eyes. Then he commanded to fill their vessels with grain, and restore every man’s money into his sack, and also give them provisions for the way. When they later discovered the money in their sacks, they trembled and wondered what God had done to them.

When they returned to Jacob, they told him all that happened. When Jacob heard, he said, “**Ye have bereaved me of my sons. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me**” (Gen. 42:36). Jacob refused, even though Reuben the eldest told him to kill his own two sons if he did not bring Benjamin back. And so it was not until they had eaten all of the grain they had brought back that Jacob told his sons to go buy more in Egypt. However, they said they could not return to Egypt without bringing Benjamin with them. Israel said to them, “**Why did ye deal so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?**” (Gen. 43:6). They explained how the man questioned them about their family. They asked Jacob how they could have known he would tell them to bring their brother down. This time Judah guaranteed to his father that they would bring him back safely. He said if they had not lingered, they would have returned a second time. So their father Israel said to them, “**If it be so**

now, do this: Take of the choice fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry a present down to the man, a little balm, and a little honey, spicery and myrrh, nuts, and almonds. And take double money in your hand, and the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks carry again in your hand. Perhaps it was an oversight. Also take your brother, and arise, go again to the man. And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And if I be bereaved of my sons, I am bereaved” (Gen. 43:11-14)

So they went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin he brought them all into his house to dine with him. That frightened them, and they thought it was because of the money in the sacks. So they told the steward of Joseph’s house about it. However, he said, “**Peace be to you, fear not. Your God, and the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks. I had your money**” (Gen. 43:23). Then he brought Simeon out to them. When Joseph came home, they brought the present and bowed down themselves to him. The book says that after seeing Benjamin and asking about their father, “**Joseph made haste, for his heart yearned over his brother, and he sought where to weep. And he entered into his chamber, and wept there. And he washed his face, and came out. And he restrained himself, and said, Set on bread**” (Gen. 43:30-31).

So they dined. Then he sent them all on their way with grain. However, he had his steward hide his silver cup in the bag of grain that Benjamin was carrying. Then after they had gone a short way, the steward caught up with them and accused them of theft. When the cup was found in Benjamin’s bag, they all returned to Egypt with great dismay. Joseph told them that only Benjamin would be his bondman, so the rest of them could return to the land of Canaan. Yet Judah pleaded with Joseph, telling him how their father felt toward Benjamin. He said he became surety for the lad to his father. Then he said, “**Now therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide a bondman to my lord instead of the lad, and let the lad go up with his brothers. For how shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me? Lest I see the evil that shall come on my father**” (Gen. 44:33-34).

Joseph had seen their loyalty to Benjamin even in danger, and he had seen their love and concern for their father. They showed Joseph they were not cruel and selfish as they had been. Here is how

Joseph responded: “**T**hen Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood before him, and he cried out, Cause every man to go out from me. And no man stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph, does my father yet live? And his brothers could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence.

“**A**nd Joseph said to his brothers, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near, and he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years, in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me here, but God, and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hasten ye, and go up to my father, and say to him, Thus says thy son Joseph: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me, delay not” (Gen. 45:1-9).

Joseph always honored God, proving time and again that he was more worthy than his brothers by the way he lived. When Pharaoh heard that his brothers had come, it pleased him and his servants well. So he commanded Joseph to tell his brothers to go to the land of Canaan, and bring their father and all they have to him. He said he would give them the good of the land of Egypt. He also told them to take wagons for their little ones and their wives, and bring their father.

So Joseph sent his brothers back to Jacob with wagons and many provisions to bring him and all of their possessions down into Egypt. When they came to Jacob, and told him that Joseph was still alive and was ruler of all the land of Egypt, the book says, “... **h**is heart fainted, for he did not believe them” (Gen. 45:26). However, when he saw the wagons he said, “**I**t is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die” (Gen. 45:28). Then he departed with them.

On the way to Egypt, at Beersheba, Israel offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Then God spoke to him in the visions of the night, and said, “**I** am God, the God of thy father. Fear

not to go down into Egypt, for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will also surely bring thee up again, and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes” (Gen. 46:3-4). Then the book lists the names of all of the children of Israel, and all of their children. He and all of his descendants in Egypt were seventy persons when he went there.

Jacob sent Judah to Joseph, to show them the way to the land of Goshen in Egypt. Then Joseph made his chariot ready, and went up to meet his father. The book says he fell on his neck, and wept a good while. And Israel said, “**N**ow let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou are yet alive” (Gen. 46:30). Then Joseph said he would go to Pharaoh, and tell him they had come. And he would tell him they were shepherds with flocks and herds. He said when Pharaoh asked them their occupation, they were to tell him they were keepers of cattle. That way they could live in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.

Then Joseph went to Pharaoh, and reported to him about his family. And he said they were in the land of Goshen. Then he took five men from among his brothers to present to Pharaoh. When Pharaoh asked their occupation, they answered as Joseph had instructed them, and they asked to dwell in the land of Goshen. And he granted their request.

Then Joseph brought Jacob his father to Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. When Pharaoh asked Jacob of his age, he replied, “**T**he days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage” (Gen. 47:9). The record again says that Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and then he departed. So Joseph gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best land, the land of Rameses (Goshen) as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph nourished his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household, with bread, because the famine was very severe.

As the famine continued, the population of Egypt eventually sold everything they had to Joseph for Pharaoh. They even asked him to buy their lands for grain to survive. Only the priests did not sell their land, for they ate their portion from Pharaoh. Remember, the Egyptians also had the opportunity to store grain during the seven years of abundance, but apparently they chose not to store their surplus. Joseph said he would buy their lands, and make

them tenant farmers, allowing them to keep eighty percent of their crops, but giving twenty percent to Pharaoh as owner. When he told them that, they said, "**Thou have saved our lives. Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants**" (Gen. 47:25). Dear reader, twenty percent is only half of what Americans now pay in taxes to our rulers to spend as they decide.

Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years, until he was 147 years old. And when he was near death he called for Joseph, and made him swear he would bury him with his fathers, not in Egypt. Then he said Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, were his. He said he was adopting them as his own sons, so that the descendants of Joseph would become two tribes of Israel instead of one.

After that Joseph brought his sons to Jacob who put his hands on the head of each of them. He crossed his arms so that his right hand was on Ephraim the younger, and he blessed them. When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he attempted to put it on the head of Manasseh the firstborn. However, his father refused, and said, "**I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations**" (Gen. 48:19).

Then Israel called his sons, saying, "**... gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the latter days**" (Gen. 49:1). Then, beginning with the eldest to the youngest, he foretold, often in figurative language, how their tribes would develop. Among his words he said that Reuben his firstborn would not have pre-eminence because he defiled his father's bed. He said Simeon and Levi (the sons who slaughtered the men of Shechem) would be scattered among the tribes. He said Judah would become a ruling people, and Joseph would be noted for fruitfulness. All those things came to pass in later centuries. Both Ephraim and Judah became the dominant tribes in Israel. Jerusalem was in Judah, and our Lord Jesus Christ was a descendant of Judah. The Levites were never given a territory of their own, and the land and population of Simeon were eventually absorbed into Judah.

When Jacob finished he charged them to bury him in the cave of Machpelah where Abraham and

Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah, were buried. Jacob also said he buried Leah there. I do not believe God will ever allow that tomb to be violated by anybody, including grave robbing archaeologists. Then Jacob died, and the book says, "**Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. And the physicians embalmed Israel. And forty days were fulfilled for him, for so are fulfilled the days of embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days**" (Gen. 50:1-3).

After getting Pharaoh's permission, Joseph took a very great caravan with chariots and horsemen into the land of Canaan to bury his father in the cave of Machpelah. The book says that all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, went with him and his brothers. Only their little ones and their livestock remained in the land of Goshen. Both chariots and horsemen went with him, a very great company. The record says, "**And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians. Therefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan**" (Gen. 50:11).

When Joseph returned to Egypt his brothers were fearful of what he might do because of their past cruelty to him. So they sent a message to him which said that his father had given a command before he died for him to forgive them, and they begged his forgiveness. Then they came and fell down before him, saying "**Behold, we are thy servants**" (Gen. 50:18). However, Joseph said, "**Fear not, for am I in the place of God? And as for you, ye meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not. I will nourish you, and your little ones**" (Gen. 50:19-21). The book says he comforted them, and spoke kindly to them. Joseph demonstrated the true spirit of Christ in many ways.

Later, when Joseph was about to die, he prophesied that God would bring them back to their promised land. Then he made the sons of Israel swear they would take his bones out of Egypt when God brought them out again. So Joseph died at a hundred ten years of age, and was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt.

A Description of **Exodus**

This book first gives the names of the sons of Israel. Then it says that while they were in the land of Egypt “**the sons of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and grew exceedingly mighty, and the land was filled with them**” (Exo. 1:7). Therefore, the Egyptians became afraid of them, saying they were “**more and mightier than we**” (Exo. 1:9). Consequently, they dealt craftily with them, and set taskmasters over them to afflict them with burdens. However, the book says, “**... the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out**” (Exo. 1:12). It says the Egyptians made their lives bitter with hard service. Moreover, the king of Egypt commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill every newborn son. But the midwives feared God, and they kept the male children alive. When Pharaoh demanded to know why, they said to him, “**Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women, for they are lively, and are delivered before the midwife comes to them**” (Exo. 1:19). Therefore, God blessed the midwives, and made them households.

However, Pharaoh also ordered all the Hebrew people to cast every newborn son into the river. Moses was born during that time, and his mother hid him three months because she saw he was a goodly child. When she could hide him no longer, she put him in a little ark, and laid it in the reeds near the bank of the river. Later the daughter of Pharaoh came to bathe there. She saw the ark, and sent her handmaid to fetch it. When she saw the babe weeping she had compassion on him, and decided to take him for her son. It was she who named him Moses. His sister Miriam was there watching when Pharaoh’s daughter found him, and so at her suggestion Moses’ mother was hired to nurse him. Was that not a double blessing from God?

As Moses grew he knew that he was a Hebrew, so at the age of forty years he went out to see the burdens of his Hebrew brothers. It was then that he killed an Egyptian who was attacking one of them. When Pharaoh heard of it he sought to kill Moses, but Moses fled, and dwelt in the land of Midian. When he came to a well there he helped some women who were being driven away by shepherds as they tried to water their father’s flock. Moses was ever ready to defend those who were being oppressed. The women were the seven daughters of

Jethro, the priest of Midian. When they told their father what happened he said, “**And where is he? Why is it that ye have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread**” (Exo. 2:20). Moses decided to stay with him, and he married one of his daughters.

Then the time came when God decided to respond to the cry of the sons of Israel. It was forty years after Moses fled from Egypt, and God was going to use him to lead them out. Moses had been keeping Jethro’s flock near mount Horeb (also called mount Sinai). And to get Moses’ attention Jehovah sent an agent to appear to him in a burning bush that was not consumed. The burning bush aroused Moses’ curiosity, and he went to examine such a strange thing. As he approached God called to him out of the bush. First he told him not to come near, but to take off his shoes because the place was holy ground. Then he told him who he was, saying, “**I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob**” (Exo. 3:6). The book says that Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

Jehovah then told him he had seen the affliction of his people in Egypt, and had heard their cry. He said he had come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and was going to bring them to a good and large land. Then he told Moses he was going to send him to Pharaoh, that he may bring his people the sons of Israel out of Egypt. But Moses said, “**Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the sons of Israel out of Egypt?**” (Exo. 3:11). Jehovah said that he would be with him. And after bringing them out, he was to bring them to that mountain to serve him.

Moses asked God what he should say when he comes to the sons of Israel, and he tells them the God of their fathers sent him, and they ask what is his name. God said, “**I AM WHO I AM. ... Thus shall thou say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you**” (Exo. 3:14). God told him to gather together the elders of Israel, and tell them that Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to him, and he will bring them out of the affliction of Egypt to a land flowing with milk and honey. He told Moses that he and the elders of Israel were to go to the king of Egypt, and say, Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews met with them, and they

wanted to go three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to him.

However, God also said, “**And I know that the king of Egypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will put forth my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst of it, and after that he will let you go**” (Exo. 3:19-20). He also said they would not go empty, for every woman was to ask of her neighbor jewels and raiment. He said they would despoil the Egyptians.

Moses was still reluctant to go, so God gave some signs for proof of his power. One involved Moses casting his rod on the ground, and it becoming a serpent until he picked it up again. Moses later repeated that miracle in the presence of Pharaoh. Moses also used the rod many other times later when he was employing God's miraculous powers. God also gave him another sign: he made Moses' hand leprous, then restored it to normal. However, Moses said he was not able to speak well, but God said he would be with his mouth. Nevertheless, Moses asked God to send someone else. So God became angry with him. He told him that he would use his brother Aaron to assist him, because he could speak well. Therefore, Moses returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and requested leave to go to his people in Egypt.

After arriving in Egypt, the record says, “**Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the sons of Israel**” (Exo. 4:29). They told them what Jehovah had said, and they did some miraculous signs as evidence. So the people were encouraged, and “**they bowed their heads and worshiped**” (Exo. 4:31). Then Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, and they said to him, “**Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness**” (Exo. 5:1), but Pharaoh refused. He said the people were idle, and he added to their burdens. That led them to criticize Moses and Aaron for causing more trouble.

So Moses returned to Jehovah, and asked him why he had sent him, because Pharaoh only dealt worse with the people, and God had not delivered them. Moses must have forgotten God's warning that Pharaoh would not let them go at first. Hence, Jehovah assured him again that he was going to deliver them. And he added that Pharaoh would drive them out with a strong hand. He told Moses to tell the sons of Israel that he would not only redeem them with “**an outstretched arm, and with great**

judgments” (Exo. 6:6), but he would also make them his people, and give them the land promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. But when Moses told it to the people, the book says they did not hearken to him because their spirit was anguished, and their bondage was cruel.

Next the book says, “**These are the heads of their fathers' houses**” (Exo. 6:14). Then it names the sons of Reuben and Simeon. They were the first two sons of Israel. Then it names the sons of Levi, the third born, and some of their descendants, which included Moses and Aaron. It also names the sons of Aaron, for he and his descendants were made the priests of Israel.

Jehovah told Moses to speak to Pharaoh all that he told him. When Moses asked how Pharaoh would hearken to him, Jehovah said, “**See, I have made thee as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet**” (Exo. 7:1). He also said he would harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply his signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. He said he would bring out his armies, meaning his people the sons of Israel, by great judgments. The book says Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron was eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

Then Jehovah told Moses to show Pharaoh the miracle of a rod becoming a serpent. He told Moses to have Aaron cast his rod on the ground near Pharaoh. When Aaron did so it became a serpent. However, Pharaoh's magicians also caused rods to become serpents. They were probably small serpents that only appeared to be wooden rods. All magicians rely upon illusion. Nevertheless, Aaron's swallowed all of theirs. Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not hearken to them, as Jehovah had spoken. Then Jehovah began to afflict Egypt with plagues, eventually sending ten of them, the last of which caused Pharaoh to finally let them go.

God told Moses to go meet Pharaoh again, this time at the river. He was to remind Pharaoh of his refusal to let Jehovah's people serve him in the wilderness. Then he was to say he was going to smite the river water with his rod, and it would turn to blood, causing all the fish to die and the river to become foul. And it happened as Moses said. Pharaoh's magicians also turned water into blood (another illusion), so he ignored that sign also. The book says the Egyptians had to dig holes in the ground for water to drink.

After seven days Jehovah told Moses to tell Pharaoh that God was going to send a swarm of frogs

upon him and his people if he did not let them go. They would be everywhere, even in their beds and their food dishes. Pharaoh apparently did not respond. So God told Moses to have Aaron stretch forth his rod for the frogs to come, and they came. Even though his magicians also brought up frogs, Pharaoh did not ignore that plague. He called for Moses and Aaron, saying, **“Entreat Jehovah, that he take away the frogs from me, and from my people, and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to Jehovah”** (Exo. 8:8). So when Moses went out and called upon Jehovah to remove the frogs they all died. The record says they were gathered in heaps, and the land stank because of them. However, when Pharaoh saw they were dead he hardened his heart again, and refused to hearken to them, just as God had told Moses he would.

Jehovah then caused all the dust of Egypt to be filled with lice. They were so bad they got on all the Egyptian people and their animals. Pharaoh's magicians had been able to mimic the first three signs by their tricks, but they could not cause lice. So they said to Pharaoh, **“This is the finger of God”** (Exo. 8:19). Moreover, those magicians were not able to do anything of the subsequent plagues, nor could they end any of them, from the first to the last. Pharaoh always had to plead with Moses to end them. Nevertheless, Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not hearken to them, as Jehovah had spoken.

After that God told Moses to meet Pharaoh at the river again, and warn him about flies. God was going to send swarms of flies if he did not let his people go and serve him. He also told him to tell Pharaoh to notice there would be no swarms of flies in the land of Goshen where the Hebrew people were living. He said it would be a sign to him that Jehovah was making a distinction between the Egyptians and the sons of Israel. Before some of the plagues, but not all of them, God commanded Moses to tell Pharaoh to notice that the sons of Israel would be spared. Nevertheless, the book does not say that any of the plagues afflicted the sons of Israel.

The next day Egypt became filled with swarms of flies which went everywhere, even in Pharaoh's house. The flies were so bad that Pharaoh called for Moses, and said they could go, but they had to stay in Egypt. Moses told him they could not remain in Egypt, for Jehovah had commanded them to go three days journey into the wilderness. The flies were so bad that Pharaoh finally said they could go, but not very far. When Pharaoh asked Moses to

entreat Jehovah for him, he said he would, but he also told Pharaoh not to deceive them as he had before. Then Moses went out and prayed to God. However, when God took away all of the flies Pharaoh hardened his heart again, and did not let them go.

Therefore, Jehovah told Moses to go and warn Pharaoh that Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, was going to kill all of their livestock if he did not let them go. All of the Egyptian camels, and horses, and cows, and other beasts were going to die by a very grievous pestilence, but nothing would perish that belonged to the sons of Israel. Pharaoh apparently refused again, because the next day they all died just as God said. When Pharaoh sent, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. Nevertheless, his heart was stubborn, and he did not let them go.

Then Jehovah told Moses to take some ashes of the furnace and sprinkle it up in the air so Pharaoh could see it. When Moses did so the ashes spread out and caused boils, which became sores on all the Egyptians, including his magicians. The book says, **“And Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not hearken to them, as Jehovah had spoken to Moses”** (Exo. 9:12).

Then Jehovah told Moses to rise up early, and tell Pharaoh the God of the Hebrews said for him to let his people go so they may serve him. He was to tell Pharaoh he would send plagues upon him and his people that he would know there was none like him in all the earth. He was also to tell him Jehovah said, **“But indeed for this cause I have raised thee up, to display in thee my power, and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth”** (Exo. 9:16). He said he was going to send hail the next day. The hail would be so bad that it would kill anything not under shelter, whether man or beast. The servants of Pharaoh must have purchased more livestock after all of theirs died from the pestilence, because the book says that all of those who feared the word of Jehovah protected their cattle and their servants.

The next day Jehovah told Moses to stretch forth his hand toward heaven. And when he did Jehovah sent thunder and hail and lightning. The book says that it had never hailed so bad in all the history of the Egyptians. The hail and the lightning were so severe that it killed everything that was in the field, both man and beast. It also destroyed every herb and broke every tree in the field. Only in the land of Goshen was there no hail.

It kept coming until Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron. He begged them to ask Jehovah to stop the storm, saying, "**I have sinned this time. Jehovah is righteous, and I and my people are wicked**" (Exo. 9:27). He asked Moses to entreat Jehovah, and he would let them go. Moses told him that as soon as he left, he would spread forth his hands to Jehovah for the storm to stop. Then he said to Pharaoh, "**But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear Jehovah God**" (Exo. 9:30). The book says the wheat and the rye were not smitten because they had not yet grown. Moses did as he said he would, and God stopped the hail and the lightning. But when Pharaoh saw the storm was over, he hardened his heart, and did not let them go, just as Jehovah had spoken by Moses.

Later Jehovah told Moses to go again to Pharaoh. God said he had hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he might show his signs in the midst of them, that they may tell future generations what he had done, that they would know he is Jehovah. So Moses and Aaron went to see Pharaoh, and they said, "**Thus says Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, How long will thou refuse to humble thyself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me**" (Exo. 10:3). Then they told him that God was going to bring locusts the next day against the Egyptians if he did not let his people go. He said they would eat what was left from the hail. Moreover, their houses would be filled with them. Then he turned and went out from Pharaoh. When Pharaoh's servants heard those words, they said to him, "**How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve Jehovah their God. Do thou not yet know that Egypt is destroyed?**" (Exo. 10:7). So Moses and Aaron were brought back again. Pharaoh said the men could go but not the women and children. Then he drove them out.

So at the command of Jehovah, Moses stretched out his hand over the land to bring the locusts. When he did God sent an east wind that blew them in. There were so many locusts that they covered the whole ground making it look dark, and they ate all the plants that had grown. The book says that Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and he said, "**I have sinned against Jehovah your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat Jehovah your God, that he may only take away from me this death**" (Exo. 10:16-17). When Moses went out and asked God to remove the locusts, God caused

an exceedingly strong west wind to blow them all into the Red Sea. But Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let them go.

Then in the same way, Jehovah had Moses stretch forth his hand to bring darkness in the land of Egypt. The record says it was a darkness that could be felt. It was so bad they could not even see each other. The book says they all stayed where they were because they could not see. It lasted for three days, but the sons of Israel all had light in their houses. So Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron again. He said they could take their women and children with them, but not their herds and flocks. Moses said they all had to go. But Jehovah hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. This time Pharaoh became so angry that he told Moses to get away from him and never come back. He said in the day he saw his face he would die. Moses said to him, "**Thou have spoken well. I will see thy face again no more**" (Exo. 10:29).

Then Jehovah said to Moses, "**Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt, afterwards he will let you go from here. When he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out from here altogether**" (Exo. 11:1). He told Moses to tell the people that each man was to ask his neighbor, and each woman her neighbor, for jewelry of silver and gold. The book says Jehovah gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the sight of the people of Egypt.

Jehovah told Moses that about midnight he was going to slay the firstborn of every Egyptian, from the greatest to the least of them, and also the first-born of all their livestock. He said there would be a great cry throughout Egypt, such as had not been or would ever be again. But not one person or animal of the sons of Israel would be harmed, that they would know Jehovah made a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel. Before they left Pharaoh, Moses warned him about all of those things. And he predicted to Pharaoh that all of his servants were going to come and bow down to him, telling him and all of his followers to get out. And Moses said, "**... after that I will go out**" (Exo. 11:8). Then the book says he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

Yet Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, because it was God who was hardening Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh and the Egyptians had made the sons of Israel into slaves. Moreover, they treating them very cruelly, even forcing them to kill their newborn baby boys. They deserved all that punishment. Fur-

thermore, those plagues demonstrated not only to them, but also to the other nations how great and powerful Jehovah is, because the other nations heard what was happening. So God had a very good and just reason to harden Pharaoh's heart.

After that last meeting with Pharaoh, Jehovah said to Moses and Aaron, that month was going to be the first month of the year for them. And he instructed them about all the details of the Passover ceremony. The Passover was a meal that the sons of Israel were to prepare and eat that night. The food had to be a lamb without blemish, a male a year old. And they had to put some of its blood on their door posts. It was called Jehovah's Passover, because he was going to "pass over" every Israelite household when he killed all of the firstborn. He also commanded them to keep the ceremony every year throughout their generations for a memorial of his salvation that night. Jesus Christ came later, and he is God's new Passover. So now we Christians observe the Lord's Supper as a memorial of his eternal salvation (see Luke 22:19-20).

Then at midnight Jehovah killed all of the firstborn of the Egyptians. The record says there was not one of their houses without someone dead. That caused a great cry of sorrow throughout the land. People can endure many trials and tribulations, but the death of loved ones is the most bitter. Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in the night, and he told them to go.

The record says the sons of Israel departed Egypt in haste because the Egyptians urged them to go. God had earlier commanded Moses to tell the sons of Israel to ask their Egyptian neighbors for "**jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment**" (Exo. 12:35). Therefore, when they left they despoiled the Egyptians (who had enslaved them so cruelly) as God said they would, because they gave them what they asked. For the Egyptians were full of both fear and sorrow.

The sons of Israel (called the armies of Jehovah) came out with all their flocks and herds and other possessions, including all of the treasures that the Egyptians gave them that night. The record says there were about 600,000 men besides women and children. It also says, "**Now the time that the sons of Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the armies of Jehovah went out from the land of Egypt**" (Exo. 12:40-41). The

book says it was a night to be much observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations.

Next Jehovah gave Moses and Aaron more ordinances about the Passover, primarily about those who were qualified to partake of it. Then Jehovah said to Moses, "**Sanctify to me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the sons of Israel. Both of man and of beast, it is mine**" (Exo. 13:2). Moses told the people to remember that day they came out of Egypt. And he said no leavened bread was to be eaten that day. He also told about the annual seven day feast of unleavened bread immediately following the Passover. Then he spoke again about setting apart all the firstborn. Clean animals were to be sacrificed, but men and unclean animals were to be redeemed. That special attention to the firstborn was a way they could teach their sons how Jehovah brought them forth from Egypt.

God did not lead them directly to their promised land. He said, "**Lest perhaps the people regret when they see war, and they return to Egypt**" (Exo. 13:17). Instead he led them by way of the uninhabited wilderness. He led them by day in a pillar of cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire. The book says it never left them during their exodus travels. It was also a way that the sons of Israel could have a visible manifestation of God's presence among them without actually seeing his form. The two pillars may have been one, which appeared as a cloud by day and fire by night. Since it was called a pillar, perhaps it looked like a column going up into the heavens, for the book says there were times when Jehovah descended in the pillar of cloud.

Jehovah commanded Moses to tell the people to encamp by the sea, because he was going to harden Pharaoh's heart one more time, to pursue after them with his army. God was going to make an example of Pharaoh and his army to again show the Egyptians that he is Jehovah. Therefore, Pharaoh pursued the sons of Israel with his army. However, when they saw the army, they cried out to Jehovah in fear, and they condemned Moses for their plight. Then Moses said to them, "**Fear ye not. Stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will work for you today, for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. Jehovah will fight for you, and ye shall keep silent**" (Exo. 14:13-14).

So Jehovah commanded Moses to lift up his rod, and stretch out his hand over the sea to divide it so that the sons of Israel could go across on the dry

seafloor. After they had all crossed over, he told Moses to stretch forth his hand over the sea again. When he did the waters came back upon Pharaoh's army as they tried to follow them. Thus the enemy soldiers were all drowned. Afterward Moses and the sons of Israel sang a song of victory to Jehovah. It spoke of how God destroyed their enemy in the sea with his mighty power, and how it struck fear in the hearts of the Canaanites and other nations when they heard of it. And also the book says, "**Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances**" (Exo. 15:20).

After going three days in the wilderness, they found no water. And when they came to Marah (which means bitter) they discovered the waters there were too bitter to drink. So they complained again to Moses, but Jehovah told him to cast a tree into the waters to make them sweet. After traveling a little further they complained again to Moses and Aaron, this time saying they did not have enough to eat. It was that way throughout their journeys; the people frequently complained, and condemned Moses, and provoked God to anger whenever any kind of threat or hardship developed. Yet God always protected and provided for them.

This time he gave them "**bread from heaven**" (Exo. 16:4), which came with the morning dew. So that when the dew dried up it left something that looked like hoarfrost on the ground. Perhaps it was something like flakes of breakfast cereal on the ground (though uncooked), because they could gather it, and then bake or boil it for food. However, when the sun grew hot it melted. The book says it tasted like wafers with honey. It was called Manna, and it no longer exists, for it only appeared during the time that the sons of Israel were journeying to their promised land. Jehovah told Moses to save some of it for future generations to see how he fed them with bread in the wilderness. The psalmist says this about it: "**Yet he commanded the skies above, and opened the doors of heaven, and he rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them food from heaven. Man ate the bread of the mighty. He sent them food to the full**" (Psa. 78:23-25). The book also says that God gave them quails for food. At that time also, Jehovah established the sabbath as a day of rest for them. On the seventh day of every week they were not to work. They could not even cook a meal, although they

could eat. Each of them was to remain in his place on that day.

After traveling a while further the people again became thirsty, so they demanded that Moses give them water to drink, murmuring against both him and God. The record says, "... **they challenged Jehovah, saying, Is Jehovah among us, or not?**" (Exo. 17:7). They were so harsh toward Moses that he cried to Jehovah, saying, "**What shall I do to this people? They are almost ready to stone me**" (Exo. 17:4). God sometimes subjects us to stress in order to test us and/or to strengthen us. However, the sons of Israel showed themselves to be a rebellious people. Nevertheless, God commanded Moses to go ahead of the people, taking some of the elders of Israel with him, to a certain rock at Horeb. Remember, Horeb is mount Sinai, and that was where Jehovah told Moses from the burning bush to bring his people. Jehovah said he would stand upon the rock there. God told Moses that when he struck the rock with his rod, water would come out. And it happened when Moses did. When Jehovah stood upon the rock he must have been in the pillar of cloud.

Not long after that the Amalekites began to fight against Israel. So Moses sent Joshua to choose men to go out and fight with them. Joshua did so, and with God's help he defeated them. Jehovah was so angry with the Amalekites for their unprovoked attack against the sons of Israel that he told Moses to write these words of his in a book for a memorial: "**I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven**" (Exo. 17:14).

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had heard all that happened, and so he brought Moses' wife and two sons to him in the wilderness at the mount of God, Sinai, where they had camped. The book says, "**Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him**" (Exo. 18:7). Jethro rejoiced and praised God for delivering the people, and he "**took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God**" (Exo. 18:12).

The following day Jethro watched while Moses sat as a judge for the people. Moses sat from morning till evening, judging the various disputes that the people had with each other. Moses told his father-in-law that the people came to him to inquire of God, to learn of his statutes and laws. However, Jethro told him that what he was doing was not good; it was too much of a burden for him. He advised Moses to continue to teach them the statutes and laws, and to lead them, but that he should select

“able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain, and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens, and let them judge the people at all seasons” (Exo. 18:21-22). And he should reserve only the hard cases for himself. Moses took his advice and did so. Then his father-in-law went back to his own country.

In the third month after leaving Egypt the sons of Israel arrived at mount Sinai. And Moses went up to God, who spoke to him from the mountain. Jehovah commanded Moses to tell the people God said this: **“Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be my own possession from among all peoples, for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation”** (Exo. 19:4-6).

A covenant is an agreement with someone. It is like a contract. An example is marriage, which is an agreement or contract between a man and a woman to be united and love each other. And God was making an agreement with the sons of Israel to make them his special people, if they would obey him. Moses spoke to the elders of the people what Jehovah told him, and all the people said, **“All that Jehovah has spoken we will do”** (Exo. 19:8). They accepted his covenant. Then Moses went back and reported to God. This time Jehovah told him to sanctify the people for two days. They were to wash their garments and prepare for the third day because God was going to come down upon the mountain in the sight of all of them. And he said that any man or beast that touched the mountain should be killed.

So Moses went down from the mount and did as God commanded him. Then the book says, **“And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of an exceedingly loud trumpet. And all the people who were in the camp trembled”** (Exo. 19:16).

It also says, **“... mount Sinai, the whole of it, smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire, and the smoke of it ascended as the smoke of a furnace. And the whole mount quaked greatly”** (Exo. 19:18). Jehovah told Moses again to warn the people lest they break through to the mountain to look and perish. Then God himself spoke to all the people from the mountain, giving them the ten commandments:

First: **“I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shall have no other gods before me”** (Exo. 20:2). God did not want any tolerance for other gods in the nation of his people, because he knew those gods would cause them to turn away from him and become sinful.

Second: **“Thou shall not make to thee a graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, for I, Jehovah thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of those who hate me, and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments”** (Exo. 20:3-6).

Third: **“Thou shall not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain, for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain”** (Exo. 20:7). Most Americans in this sinful generation only use his name as an expletive, which is certainly taking his name in vain. It is very commonly done, and I wince every time I hear it.

Fourth: **“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days thou shall labor, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to Jehovah thy God. Thou shall not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates, for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it”** (Exo. 20:8-11). Jehovah gave that command so that everyone in his nation would be able to rest at least one day each week. No other nation had a day of rest each week for all—man and beast, bondmen and freemen.

Fifth: **“Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God gives thee”** (Exo. 20:12). The apostle Paul said that was the first commandment with promise. God promised the people they would live long if they honored their fathers and their mothers. That was, of course, a general rule, and not a universal guarantee for each individual.

Sixth: **“Thou shall not murder”** (Exo. 20:13).

Seventh: "**Thou shall not commit adultery**" (Exo. 20:14).

Eighth: "**Thou shall not steal**" (Exo. 20:15).

Ninth: "**Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor**" (Exo. 20:16).

Tenth: "**Thou shall not covet thy neighbor's house. Thou shall not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is thy neighbor's**" (Exo. 20:17). There is nothing wrong with wanting the same kinds of things that our neighbors have, if they are decent and wholesome. But it is wrong for us to want what they already own.

So those are the great ten commandments which God spoke to the people directly from the mountain. He spoke those words himself to them probably because they are so fundamental and important. Everyone ought to learn them and do them. For the more people obey them, the better the world becomes. The only exception is the strictness of the sabbath day. Jehovah said the sabbath day was a sign for the sons of Israel, like circumcision, that they were a distinct people (see Exo. 31:13). Nevertheless, people everywhere have learned that the idea of at least one day free from work each week is a good one. The most productive nations do it. Forcing people to work seven days a week routinely is not good, as God taught Moses about thirty-five centuries ago.

Seeing the mountain, and hearing the voice of God was an awesome experience. In fact, when all the people saw the mountain, and heard the voice, they were very afraid. The mountain was so terrifying that the Bible says even Moses trembled: "**And so fearful was that which was made visible, that Moses said, I am terrified and trembling**" (Heb. 12:21). The people were so fearful that they asked Moses to speak to them instead of God. They said they were afraid they would die.

Therefore, Moses came near the thick darkness where God was, and God told him to warn them again against making other gods, gods of silver or gold. Jehovah knows what is in the heart of everyone, and so he must have known what the sons of Israel were soon going to do. Jehovah also commanded them to make an altar of earth or stones without carvings, upon which to sacrifice their offerings.

Then he gave Moses more laws and ordinances for the sons of Israel. There were several laws about

bondservants, all of which were to ensure kindness and fairness to them. There were also several laws about assault against persons. The most general penalty for any man who willfully or recklessly injured an innocent person was "**life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe**" (Exo. 21:23-25). O that our laws were as just! The swift enforcement of such a penalty would greatly reduce assaults. Jesus never taught against the intended application of those laws, as I will explain in that part of this description of the Bible.

There were also laws about the loss or destruction of property caused by someone else. In cases of unavoidable accident there was to be compensation of equal value given to replace the loss. In cases of theft, recompense ranged from the return of the stolen item plus twenty percent of its value, up to a four-fold replacement, depending upon circumstances. A modern application of the Biblical four-fold replacement law would be to require a thief who stole and destroyed a car to recompense the victim with an amount equal to four cars of equivalent value. And if the thief did not have that much, then he would have to get a loan to pay for it. And if he was unemployed, then he would be put under forced labor until he earned enough to repay the loan with its interest.

Why should the loss and suffering of victims not be recompensed by the guilty? The only ones compensated in modern America are lawyers on both sides. There is no doubt in my mind, that if American laws were as just as the laws of Moses, crime would no longer pay, and would, therefore, greatly diminish. But our people and our rulers have become too sinful, and their primary concerns are for the rights of criminals and the profits of lawyers. Victims are given few if any rights. It seems that most Americans no longer want real justice anymore, so the suffering of innocent citizens grows.

Murder and negligent homicide were to bring the death penalty. Other crimes that Moses mentions in this book that brought capital punishment are the following: kidnapping someone; anyone who struck or cursed his father or mother; owning a known dangerous beast that kills someone; sexual behavior with an animal; defiling the sabbath; being a sorceress; sacrificing to any other god. Other things such as adultery, homosexuality, and blasphemy are described as capital crimes in other books of the law of Moses.

By considering those things that God said deserve the death penalty we can learn more about his values. For example, God values the lives of innocent men so highly, that anyone who deliberately or recklessly takes such a life must forfeit his own. God also considers sexual intimacy to be such a serious matter that any kind of perverse or adulterous relationship is deadly in his sight. Also, any form of disrespect to God was commanded to be fatal. Moreover, in the sight of God, extreme disrespect to our father or mother (to strike or curse one of them) also deserves death. We should, therefore, at the very least give high priority to avoid (1) endangering the lives of our neighbors, (2) acting disrespectfully toward God and our parents, and (3) engaging in sexual intimacy in a perverse or adulterous relationship. If you wonder why there is so much evil in the world, then consider how much contempt the world has for human life, and how much they scorn God and mock their parents, and how loose and perverse sexuality has become, and how profitable cheating and stealing is. Then you will know.

There were also several laws intended to protect and care for the poor and weak, including widows, orphans, and strangers. For example, they were not to exact interest on a loan to a poor man. However, neither were they to favor the poor in a dispute. They were to neither distort the justice due a poor man nor favor him in his case.

God also commanded them to keep a feast to him three times a year. At each of those times all their males were to appear before Jehovah at the designated place. Those feasts were: the feast of unleavened bread, which began immediately after the Passover, the feast of harvest or weeks (in the New Testament it is called Pentecost, which means fifty), and the feast of ingatherings (also called the feast of tabernacles or booths) at the end of the (agricultural) year, the later harvest time. It was called the feast of tabernacles because they were supposed to live for a week in huts or tents, which was intended to make them remember how they lived in the wilderness after they left Egypt. God also said, “**The first of the first-fruits of thy ground thou shall bring into the house of Jehovah thy God**” (Exo. 23:19). There is more detail about that in later books of the law.

There were a few other laws in that listing, which you can read from the Bible itself if you want to know them all. After giving those laws to Moses for the sons of Israel, God said, “**Behold, I send an**

agent before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Take ye heed before him, and hearken to his voice, provoke him not. For he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him. But if thou shall indeed hearken to his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to thine enemies, and an adversary to thine adversaries” (Exo. 23:20:22).

Jehovah told them that he was going to destroy all the nations in their promised land. Then he gave command about the religions of those nations, saying, “**Thou shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works, but thou shall utterly overthrow them, and break their pillars in pieces**” (Exo. 23:24). There was no foolishness about preserving them for “archeological study.” Earlier he had also commanded them about foreign gods, saying, “**And in all things that I have said to you take ye heed, and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth**” (Exo. 23:13). God wanted no tolerance for other religions in the nation of his chosen people. They were not even to utter the names of other gods.

Jehovah also said he would send hornets ahead of them to drive out the people. And he said, “**I will not drive them out from before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee. Little by little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land**” (Exo. 23:29:30). He also warned them against making any treaties with them, or allowing them to live in the land. Otherwise, they would be a snare to them, and lead them astray from him. God was not referring to all foreign nations, but rather to the nations of Canaan, which he had condemned to destruction because they were so wicked.

Then God commanded Moses to come up to him, bringing Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Aaron’s two eldest sons), and seventy of the elders, to worship from afar. He said Moses alone could come near to him. Then the book says, “**Moses came and told the people all the words of Jehovah, and all the ordinances. And all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Jehovah has spoken will we do**” (Exo. 24:3).

So after commanding that sacrifices be offered, and reading the book of the covenant to the audience of the people, he went back up to Jehovah with the men he was told to bring. And the book says,

“... they saw the God of Israel. And there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness. And he laid not his hand upon the nobles of the sons of Israel. And they beheld God, and ate and drank” (Exo. 24:10-11).

Sometime later Jehovah again called for Moses to come up onto the mount. This time God said that he was going to give him the tablets of stone upon which he would write the ten commandments so that Moses could teach them. Hence, Moses went up onto the mount of God with Joshua his minister. And he instructed the elders to wait for them below until they returned. He said they could use Aaron and Hur to judge their cases. When Moses went up on the mount, it was covered with a cloud, and it was not until the seventh day that Jehovah called to Moses from the cloud. The book says that this time Moses was on the mount forty days and forty nights.

Jehovah told Moses to collect a free-will offering from the people with which to make a sanctuary for him. After listing all of the kinds of materials he wanted (wood, precious metals and stones, skins, fabrics, oil and spices) he said to Moses, “**And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee: the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture of it, even so shall ye make it**” (Exo. 25:8-9). After those words, the book records about seven pages (in a typical modern Bible) of detailed instructions that God gave for the construction of the tabernacle, which I summarize below.

The tent of meeting, also called the tabernacle, was designed to be a portable sanctuary for God during the time of their journey to the promised land. It was a place for God himself to come, and was never open to the public, for only Moses and the priests had access to it. The first thing mentioned in the book about it, besides listing the materials needed, was God’s instructions for the construction of its most sacred item—the ark of the covenant. That was basically a chest (although very beautiful) in which to house the two tablets of stone which had the ten commandments engraved on them.

A cubit is a measure of length, and it is believed to be the distance from a man’s elbow to the tip of his middle finger, being roughly a foot and a half. And the ark was to be two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. So it would have been rather small, being about the size of a small storage box in the back of a modern

pickup truck. It was to be made of acacia wood, and overlaid entirely of gold, both inside and outside, with a crown of gold around it. Its cover was to be called the mercy-seat (also called the place of forgiveness), which was to be made of solid gold. The ark of the covenant was also to have four rings of gold attached to it, in which were to be placed the two staves for carrying. The staves were also to be covered with gold, and they were never to be removed.

On top of the mercy-seat were to be two cherubim of solid hammered gold, one on each end. Regarding them, Jehovah said, “**And the cherubim shall spread out their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, with their faces one to another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy-seat**” (Exo. 25:20). Real cherubim are heavenly beings whose primary role appears to be guards. For example, when God sent Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden, the Bible says, “**And he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to guard the way of the tree of life**” (Gen. 3:24).

Nobody knows exactly what the tabernacle or anything about it really looked like, including the cherubim. But there is one thing the Bible does make clear about the appearance of cherubim: they do not look like women or small children. From reading the various references to cherubim in the Bible, I have the impression they are awesome beings of great might. That would certainly make them fitting guards. Of course, what God told Moses to make were only images of them, or a representation of them. That was an exception God made to the second of the ten commandments, which forbade making images. However, those cherubim were not to be seen by the public. Even when the priests took down the tabernacle for travel, the ark was to be covered.

After telling Moses to place the mercy-seat on top of the ark, with the testimony (engraved on the two tablets) inside of it, he said, “**And there I will meet with thee. And I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment to the sons of Israel**” (Exo. 25:22).

God commanded Moses to make a table of acacia wood overlaid with gold, also having a crown of gold around it. It was to be two cubits long, a cubit wide, and a cubit and a half high, so it was not to be

quite as large as the ark of the covenant. It was also to have four rings of gold with their staves. It was to have dishes, spoons, flagons, and bowls with it, all of gold. And it was to always have fresh showbread on it. They were also to make a lampstand of solid gold. It was to have branches, one in the middle and three on each side, totaling seven. Their cups were to look like almond-blossoms. It was also to have snuffers for it. It was to burn pure beaten olive oil, and was to burn continuously every night, so there would always be light in the tabernacle. The last item of furniture in the tabernacle was an altar to burn incense upon. It was to be similar to the table for the showbread, although smaller, being only one cubit square, but higher, two cubits instead of a cubit and a half. Aaron was to burn the incense of sweet spices on it every morning and every evening.

The tent itself was to be thirty cubits long, ten cubits high, and probably ten cubits wide; the width is not as clearly stated. That would make it a little larger than the typical trailers behind the big trucks on our highways. The walls of the tent were to be vertical wooden boards having rings where rods were placed horizontally to hold the boards together. However, the center row of rods were supposed to go through the boards themselves. The boards and bars were to be overlaid with gold, but the rings were to be solid gold. The boards were to be set in sockets of silver, which, from the description, might have formed a continuous foundation around the tabernacle, except at the entrance. The tent was to face toward the rising of the sun, and there was to be no wall on that end; it was to be covered with a screen. There were to be four layers of curtains to cover the tent; the inner two were to be of fabric, and the outer two of leather. The innermost layer of leather was to be of ram's skins dyed red, while the outermost cover was to be of skins not definitely known.

The innermost layer of the tent was actually to be "**ten curtains, of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cherubim the work of the skilful workman**" (Exo. 26:1). Those ten curtains were to be coupled together, five each, by gold clasps in loops to make two adjoining curtains. Those curtains must have hung inside to cover the boards, because they were to be decorated with cherubim. The other curtain of fabric was to be made of goat's hair in eleven sections. It was to be two cubits longer and wider than the linen curtain, which was to be under it, and so its edges must have extended over the outside of the board wall. The

inner linen curtain was probably to be attached to the solid walls. The book mentions pegs of bronze to be included, so the other three layers were probably to be held by cords and pegs, but none of that is described.

The tabernacle was to contain two rooms, the outer room was to be called the holy place, and the inner room was to be called the most holy place, or holy of holies. The most holy place was to be ten cubits long (giving it the shape of a cube), and originally only the ark of the covenant was to be there. Later, the book of the law was also kept there. The two rooms were to be separated by a veil, which was to be held up by four wooden pillars overlaid with gold. The veil was also to be made like the linen curtains, so the tabernacle was to be surrounded with woven pictures of cherubim, except perhaps at the entrance. There was no mention of cherubim being woven on the screen which was to cover the entrance, although it too was to be of blue, and purple, and scarlet linen. The hooks of the pillars supporting the veil were to be of gold, and their sockets were to be of silver. The screen at the entrance of the tent was to be similar but to have five pillars.

Jehovah also told Moses to make an altar outside the tabernacle designed to burn their sacrifices. It was to be of acacia wood, five cubits square, and three cubits high. It was to have horns on its four corners, and was to be overlaid entirely with bronze. The bronze covering must have been quite thick in order to protect the inner wood from being damaged by the fires of it. Its utensils, the pots for ashes, the shovels, the basins, the flesh-hooks, and the fire-pans, were all to be of bronze. The grating was to be a network of bronze. The altar was also to have four rings with staves for carrying, but with bronze instead of gold. Also in the courtyard was to be the laver of bronze for washing with water. No dimensions for the laver are specified in the book, so we know neither its size nor its shape, although it was most likely shaped like a bowl. It was to be placed between the tent and the altar for the priests to wash their hands and their feet before entering the tent, or before they burned offerings at the altar. Failure to do so was to bring the death penalty.

The tent was to be surrounded by a courtyard enclosed with a fence of plain curtains of fine twined linen. The courtyard was to be a hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide, which is about half the size of a modern football field. God also gave details about the curtains of the court and the gate of

it. Its curtains were to be five cubits high, which is about the height of the walls of a typical modern house. The curtains were to be held by sixty pillars spaced five cubits apart. However, even though the courtyard was to be fenced, since the tabernacle was to be at least five cubits higher than the fence, then the top of it could have easily been seen outside from a distance.

Jehovah also gave Moses details about garments for the priests, the first of whom were Aaron and his sons. The garments were to consist of a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a miter (hat), and a sash. All of those items were to be very ornate. The breastplate was to have twelve different kinds of precious stones on it, four rows of three stones each. And each stone was to have the name of one of the sons of Israel engraved on it. The breastplate was also to have the Urim and the Thummin in it, so that it would be upon Aaron's heart when he went in before Jehovah. Thus the record says, "**Aaron shall bear the judgment of the sons of Israel upon his heart before Jehovah continually**" (Exo. 28:30). The Urim and the Thummin were mysterious things that were used to inquire of God about a particular decision to make. It was something like casting lots, but the record gives no detail about how it was done. Small bells of gold were to be attached to the skirt of the ephod so that whenever the priest walked he could be heard. Also there was to be a plate of gold with an engraved signet, HOLY TO JEHOVAH, which was to be upon the forehead of the miter. Those were some of the details of the priest's garments. God also gave Moses details about the sacrifices for the consecration of Aaron and his sons. It was to be a seven day ceremony, to sanctify them, the tent of meeting, and the altar.

During those instructions, God also told Moses to create special anointing oil and incense. The anointing oil was to be a perfume, compounded with olive oil and spices, to anoint the tent and its furnishings, as well as Aaron and his sons, the priests. The incense was to be a specially formulated perfume for the holy place. It was forbidden for any man to make those things for any other purpose. Finally, God told Moses the names of the two chief men whom he had chosen to construct everything.

It is interesting that in the midst of God's instructions to Moses about the tabernacle, he also commanded him about the half shekel required from every man twenty years old and upward whenever a

census was taken. He said it was "**to make atonement for your souls**" (Exo. 30:15). Each man was to give no more and no less than the half shekel, and it was to be used for the service of the sanctuary.

Before Moses went back down, the book says that Jehovah spoke again to him about God's sabbaths, which he said was a sign between God and the sons of Israel throughout their generations. Keeping the sabbath was a way they had of acknowledging that God was he who sanctified them. And now, thanks to both the Old and the New Testaments, most Americans enjoy two days a week free from work. The world has gained a great many blessings from what God gave to his people, which we can read about in the Holy Bible.

At the end of communing with Moses, Jehovah gave him the two tablets of stone upon which was the testimony—the ten commandments—which, the book says, were written with the finger of God. However, when the people saw that Moses delayed coming back down, they went to Aaron, and said, "**Up, make gods for us, which shall go before us. For as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what has become of him**" (Exo. 32:1). So Aaron told them to bring to him the golden earrings of their wives, sons, and daughters. And he used them to make a molten calf. Then the people said, "**These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt**" (Exo. 32:4). Then Aaron built an altar before it, and proclaimed a feast to Jehovah for the next day, during which time they worshiped the idol, and made offerings to it. And the book says they also "**sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to revel**" (Exo. 32:6).

Then Jehovah told Moses to go down, because the people he had brought out of the land of Egypt had corrupted themselves, quickly turning aside from what he had commanded them. Remember, it was not long before they made the golden calf that they had assured Moses, saying, "**All that Jehovah has spoken we will do.**" So Jehovah called them "**a stiff-necked people**" (Exo. 32:9), meaning stubborn and hard to work with. And he threatened to consume them in the heat of his wrath, telling Moses that he would make of him a great nation. But Moses pleaded with God to spare the people. So Jehovah relented of the evil that he said he would do against them.

When Moses was going back down from the mount with the tablets in his hands Joshua heard the noise of the people, and he told Moses it was the

noise of war in the camp. But Moses said it was not the noise of victors or vanquished, but the noise of singing. When Moses saw the calf and the dancing, the book says his anger grew hot, and he cast the tablets down and broke them. Then he took the calf, melted it down, ground it to powder, and scattered it upon water, which he made them drink. That meant the gold of the calf would be mixed with their excrement, a fitting end for such an abomination. However, the loss of their gold was nothing compared with the disgrace they had brought upon themselves.

After that, the record says, “**Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Whoever is on Jehovah’s side, come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. And he said to them, Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor**” (Exo. 32:26-27). So the sons of Levi killed about three thousand men that day. The sons of Israel had declared war against Jehovah when they made the calf, and therefore he fought against them.

On the next day Moses rebuked the people for their great sin, but he said he would try to make atonement for them. Then Moses returned to Jehovah, and asked that he forgive them. God told Moses to lead the people to the place he told him about. However, he also said, “**Nevertheless in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them**” (Exo. 32:34). The record says Jehovah smote the people because of the golden calf, but it does not say how he did.

Jehovah told Moses to lead the sons of Israel to the land he swore to give to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but he would not be among them. Instead, he would send an agent before Moses to drive out the inhabitants of the land. When the people heard what God had said, they mourned, and went without their ornaments on them. God also told Moses to say to the sons of Israel, “**Ye are a stiff-necked people. If I go up into the midst of thee for one moment, I shall consume thee. Therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do to thee**” (Exo. 33:5). So from that time on they stripped themselves of their ornaments. They had dishonored themselves, and were not worthy to wear such things.

The record then says, “**Now Moses used to take the tent and to pitch it outside the camp, afar off**

from the camp, and he called it, The tent of meeting. And it came to pass, that everyone who sought Jehovah went out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp” (Exo. 33:7). That was apparently a temporary accommodation until the sanctuary that God designed was constructed. It may have been inside the camp before they made the golden calf, which would partly explain why God said he would no longer be in their midst. Nevertheless, the record says that when Moses went out to the tent all the people stood up at the door of their tents, and watched until he went inside. And when the pillar of cloud descended at the door of the tent of meeting, where Moses was, every man would rise up at his tent door, and worship. The book also says, “**And Jehovah spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend, and he turned again into the camp. But his minister Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart out of the tent**” (Exo. 33:11).

Moses spoke to Jehovah about himself and the people. Among other things he said, “**For how shall it now be known that I have found favor in thy sight, I and thy people? Is it not in that thou go with us, so that we are separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth?**” (Exo. 33:16). Jehovah said he would be with them. Then Moses asked Jehovah to show him his glory. But Jehovah said, “**Thou cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live**” (Exo. 33:20). Jehovah said while his glory passed by he would put him in a cleft of the rock and cover him with his hand until he had passed. Then he would remove his hand and let him see his back.

After that Jehovah told him to hew two tablets of stone like the first, and he would write the same words on them to replace the ones Moses broke. So Moses did, and went back up on the mount alone as God commanded him. Then Jehovah descended in the cloud to be with him, and he spoke to him again about his covenant with the sons of Israel. The book next lists a few more laws that God gave, most of which were listed earlier. Then it says Moses “**...was there with Jehovah forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread, nor drank water, and he wrote upon the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments**” (Exo. 34:28).

When Moses came down from the mount his face shone because God had spoken with him, yet he did not know that had happened. And so when all the sons of Israel saw him, they were afraid to come near him. However, Moses called Aaron and all the

rulers of the congregation to him, and “**he gave them in commandment all that Jehovah had spoken with him on mount Sinai**” (Exo. 34:32). Because his face shone Moses put on a veil when he was down with the people, but he took it off when he went to speak with Jehovah.

Moses told the people about the sanctuary, and the kinds of material that Jehovah wanted for it. In this matter the people were wholehearted in their support, both with their contributions and their service. In fact the workmen soon told Moses not to collect any more materials because they had more than enough. Yet when it came to worshiping him alone, and keeping all his commandments, they

proved themselves time and again to be a rebellious people.

The rest of the book of Exodus describes details about the construction of the tabernacle and everything associated with it, all of which was in accordance with God’s plans that he had given to Moses. Finally, on the first day of the first month of the second year after they left the land of Egypt, the tabernacle was erected. And the book says “**Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle**” (Exo. 40:34). And throughout their journeys to their promised land, whenever the cloud was taken up, the sons of Israel broke camp and moved out.

A Description of **Leviticus**

This book mainly describes additional laws that God gave to Moses for the sons of Israel. Unlike those recorded in the book of Exodus, however, Jehovah spoke these to Moses out of the tent of meeting, the tabernacle. Most of the laws in this book refer to how the Levites, the priests, were to supervise the offerings made to God, and how they were to promote cleanliness among the people. Hence, the name Leviticus. The Levites were chosen by God to be the priestly tribe, and so all of the sons of Levi were considered priests. However, Aaron and his sons were the chief or high priests. That distinction is sometimes unclear, because the book often uses the word priest to refer to the chief priests only. You must use the context to determine how that title is being used.

Since the descriptions of many of the laws and their procedures are detailed and complex, reading the text of Leviticus is difficult and hard to understand. It is mostly a law book, and law books are notoriously difficult and boring to read. Nevertheless, it is a part of the holy scriptures, and it is important to know what is in it. It contains much wisdom that is useful for all ages. Consequently, I have done my best to present a summary that you can more easily read and understand. Of necessity I am omitting most of the details. If you want to know more, I suggest keeping a Bible nearby while reading this description so that you can refer to the full text.

The first set of laws are about burnt offerings, which were animal sacrifices made on the altar in the court of the tabernacle. They could only sacri-

fice certain kinds of animals, all of which (except for doves and pigeons) came from the livestock they had which were acceptable for food, such as sheep and goats. The expression “burnt offering” has two meanings. Most references in the law use it in the specific sense, referring to times when all of the animal was burnt. In the general sense it refers to any sacrifice that involved burning (e.g., Deu. 12:27). Some offerings saved part of the meat for food, and sometimes the skin was also saved. In every case, however, the blood was spilt on the ground (although a little of the blood was usually used to place on things), and the fat was burnt. For the scripture says, “**It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings, that ye shall eat neither fat nor blood**” (Lev. 3:17).

Making burnt offerings was widely practiced by peoples of the Bible, beginning with Abel and continuing through the time of Christ. Burnt offerings served two main purposes: one as a form of worship, and the other as atonement to God for sin. Whenever animals were offered, whoever made the offering was to lay his hands on the head of the animal and kill it. Then the priest was to sprinkle some of the blood on the altar, and pour the rest on the ground. After which he burnt either the whole or part of the animal. That was usually done on the altar, but sometimes the whole or part of the animal was burnt outside the camp. All those differences depended upon the kind of offering and the purpose of it. There were various regulations about butcher-

ing the animal, what parts to wash and what parts to burn.

Here is a sample of the first commands given in Leviticus, and they were about whole burnt offerings: “**When any man of you offers an oblation to Jehovah, ye shall offer your oblation of the cattle, even of the herd and of the flock. If his oblation be a burnt offering of the herd, he shall offer it a male without blemish. ... and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. ... And the priest shall burn the whole on the altar, for a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor to Jehovah.**

“**And if his oblation be of the flock, of the sheep, or of the goats, for a burnt offering, he shall offer it a male without blemish. ... And the priest shall offer the whole, and burn it upon the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor to Jehovah**

“**And if his oblation to Jehovah be a burnt offering of birds ... the priest shall burn it upon the altar, upon the wood that is upon the fire. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor to Jehovah”** (Lev. 1:3-17).

The expression “sweet savor” occurs over forty times in the Bible, always referring to a pleasing sacrifice. I always enjoy the cooking aroma that drifts out from a modern steakhouse. God wants everything associated with him to be positive. Sweet incense was to be continually burnt in the tabernacle. And animal sacrifices were to be burnt daily on the altar in the courtyard, which no doubt gave off the same kind of pleasant aroma that we experience near a steakhouse.

Next are instructions about meal (grain or cereal) offerings, which were often combined with animal sacrifices: “**And when anyone offers an oblation of a meal offering to Jehovah, his oblation shall be of fine flour, and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense on it. And he shall bring it to Aaron’s sons the priests, and he shall take out of it his handful of the fine flour of it, and of the oil of it, with all the frankincense of it. And the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor to Jehovah. And that which is left of the meal offering shall be Aaron’s and his sons”** (Lev. 2:1-3). Notice in the case of the meal offering most of it was given to the priests for food. Following the above scripture is much additional detail about meal offerings, such as different ways to prepare them, and what ingredients to include or exclude.

Next are instructions about peace offerings. Those offerings were a form of worship, and they preserved the meat, which was later cooked (usually boiled) and eaten by the worshiper: “**And if his oblation be a sacrifice of peace offerings, if he offer of the herd ... he shall take away the fat that covers the innards, and all the fat that is upon the innards, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the caul upon the liver, with the kidneys. And Aaron’s sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt offering, which is upon the wood that is on the fire. It is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor to Jehovah.**

“**And if his oblation for a sacrifice of peace offerings to Jehovah be of the flock The fat of it, the entire fat tail, he shall take away close by the backbone. And he shall take away the fat that covers the innards, and all the fat that is upon the innards, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, which is by the loins, and the caul upon the liver, with the kidneys. And the priest shall burn it upon the altar. It is the food of the offering made by fire to Jehovah. ... All the fat is Jehovah’s**” (Lev. 3:1-16).

Next are instructions about sin offerings. They were made for atonement of sins that were committed unwittingly. Sin offerings varied depending upon who it was that sinned: either an anointed priest who brought guilt on the people, or the whole congregation, or a ruler, or any of the common people. The two rituals to atone for unwitting sin by the people were the same: “**If a soul shall sin unwittingly, in any of the things which Jehovah has commanded not to be done, and shall do any one of them, if the anointed priest shall sin so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer for his sin, which he has sinned, a young bullock without blemish to Jehovah for a sin offering. ... And the skin of the bullock, and all its flesh, with its head, and with its legs, and its innards, and its dung, even the whole bullock he shall carry forth outside the camp to a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire. It shall be burnt where the ashes are poured out.**

“**And if the whole congregation of Israel err, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done any of the things which Jehovah has commanded not to be done, and are guilty, when the sin by which they have sinned is known, then the assembly shall offer a young**

bullock for a sin offering, and bring it before the tent of meeting. ... And he shall carry forth the bullock outside the camp, and burn it as he burned the first bullock. It is the sin offering for the assembly” (Lev. 4:2-21).

The two rituals to atone for unwitting sin by individuals differed only in the animal offered. A ruler was to bring a male goat, but an ordinary man was to bring a female goat or a lamb. The book says, “**When a ruler sins, and does unwittingly any one of all the things which Jehovah his God has commanded not to be done, and is guilty, if his sin, by which he has sinned, be made known to him, he shall bring for his oblation a goat, a male without blemish. ... And all the fat of it he shall burn upon the altar, as the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall make atonement for him as concerning his sin, and he shall be forgiven.**

“And if any soul of the common people sin unwittingly, in doing any of the things which Jehovah has commanded not to be done, and be guilty, if his sin, which he has sinned, be made known to him, then he shall bring for his oblation a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has sinned And all the fat of it he shall take away, as the fat is taken away from off the sacrifice of peace offerings, and the priest shall burn it upon the altar for a sweet savor to Jehovah. And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven” (Lev. 4:22-31).

Finally, there are instructions about trespass (or guilt) offerings. Trespass offerings were a kind of sin offering, but they were made for those sins which required payment of compensation, either to the priests for God, or for whoever had been victimized by the sin. First there is a list of the kinds of sins that required a trespass offering for forgiveness: “**And if a soul sins, in that he hears the voice of an oath, he being a witness, whether he has seen or known, if he does not testify, then he shall bear his iniquity. Or if a soul touches any unclean thing, whether it be the carcass of an unclean beast, or the carcass of unclean cattle, or the carcass of unclean creeping things, and it be hidden from him, and he be unclean, then he shall be guilty. Or if he touch the uncleanness of man, whatever his uncleanness be with which he is unclean, and it be hid from him, when he knows of it, then he shall be guilty. Or if a soul swears rashly with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatever it be that a man shall utter rashly**

with an oath, and it be hid from him, when he realizes it, then he shall be guilty in one of these” (Lev. 5:1-4).

Those sins seem to be about things done either unawares, or done rashly and then forgotten, or perhaps done by neglect, like the one about failing to testify. Nevertheless, having done any of those kinds of things caused the man to become guilty, and required a trespass offering for his forgiveness: “**And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these, that he shall confess that by which he has sinned. And he shall bring his trespass offering to Jehovah for his sin which he has sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him as concerning his sin”** (Lev. 5:5-6).

If the man could not afford a lamb or a goat, then he was to offer two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering. And if he could not afford those, he was to offer “**the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He shall put no oil upon it, nor shall he put any frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering”** (Lev. 5:11).

The next part appears to be about special unwitting sins related to “**the holy things of Jehovah.**” Those things are not defined, but if they had been violated inadvertently, then the guilty man was required to bring his trespass offering, plus restitution payment to be given to the priest.: “**If a soul commits a trespass, and sins unwittingly in the holy things of Jehovah, then he shall bring his trespass offering to Jehovah, a ram without blemish out of the flock, according to thy estimation in silver by shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering. And he shall make restitution for that which he has done amiss in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part to it, and give it to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and he shall be forgiven”** (Lev. 5:15-16).

After that, the book lists kinds of sins that required restitution and compensation to the victim, along with their corresponding trespass offerings to Jehovah: “**If a soul sins, and commits a trespass against Jehovah, and deals falsely with his neighbor in a matter of deposit, or of bargain, or of robbery, or have oppressed his neighbor, or has found that which was lost, and deal falsely by it, and swears to a lie, in any of all these things that a man does, sinning by it, then it shall be, if he**

has sinned, and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took by robbery, or the thing which he has gotten by oppression, or the deposit which was committed to him, or the lost thing which he found, or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall even restore it in full, and shall add the fifth part more to it. He shall give it to him to whom it pertains, in the day of his being found guilty. And he shall bring his trespass offering to Jehovah, a ram without blemish out of the flock, according to thy estimation, for a trespass offering, to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him before Jehovah, and he shall be forgiven concerning whatever he does so as to be guilty by it” (Lev. 6:2-7).

There are further instructions about offerings. Fire was to be kept burning upon the altar continually. The priests were given most of the meal offerings. They were also given the meat of the sin offerings and the trespass offerings. The priest who burned the four-footed animal on the altar was given the skin of it. Regarding peace offerings, the priest who burned a peace offering was to be given part of the unleavened cakes and wafers that were required with it. And the breast and the right thigh of the animal was to be given to the priests. Also, the worshiper had to eat the meat of his peace offering either on the same day of the offering, or on the next day, depending upon whether it was for thanksgiving, or for a vow, or if it was simply a freewill offering. And again Jehovah warned against eating fat and blood.

The next part the book describes the dedication ceremony of the priests, Aaron and his sons. They were washed, clothed with the special clothing, and anointed with oil and blood. There were also several animal sacrifices that were involved, to sanctify both them and the congregation. The ritual lasted eight days, and the description of it is quite lengthy, taking about two pages in a modern Bible. The last part of it involved Moses and Aaron going into the tabernacle, then coming out and blessing the people. After that the book says, “**And the glory of Jehovah appeared to all the people. And there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and consumed the burnt offering and the fat upon the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted, and fell on their faces**” (Lev. 9:23-24).

Sometime after that Aaron’s two eldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, “**each of them took his censer, and put fire in it, and laid incense on it, and offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he**

had not commanded them” (Lev. 10:1). Upon which, “**there came forth fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah**” (Lev. 10:2). Then Moses told Aaron what Jehovah said about taking the lives of his two sons: “**I will be sanctified in those who come near me. And I will be glorified before all the people**” (Lev. 10:3). Aaron no doubt mourned about the loss of his two sons, but the book says he kept quiet. He knew they had brought it upon themselves. Moses commanded two of Aaron’s cousins to bury Nadab and Abihu outside the camp. He also commanded Aaron and his remaining two sons not to put on the appearance of mourning (loose shaggy hair, torn clothes) because they had been anointed. However, Moses also said, “**... let your brothers, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which Jehovah has kindled**” (Lev. 10:6). The book says they obeyed him.

After the death of Nadab and Abihu the book says, “**And Jehovah spoke to Aaron, saying, Drink no wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tent of meeting, that ye not die—it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations—and that ye may make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, and that ye may teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which Jehovah has spoken to them by Moses**” (Lev. 10:8-11)

Some men have suggested that Nadab and Abihu may have gotten drunk, which led them to act so irreverently. Hence, the command never to drink wine or strong drink when they entered into the tabernacle. The record does not say those men became drunk. Nevertheless, drinking alcoholic beverages, like beer, wine, and whisky, make it harder for a man to be alert and restrained. No man should partake of any such thing if he has something important to do, because it dulls the mind and impairs its effectiveness. In America almost half of all fatal car accidents are caused by people so impaired, which means thousands of people are killed by drunk drivers every year. If Americans enforced laws like the ones God gave Moses for the sons of Israel, very little of that would happen. Thousands of lives could be saved.

After that Moses told Aaron and his two remaining sons Eleazar and Ithamar to eat their portion of the sacrifice. However, he learned it was burned instead of eaten. So he became angry with Aaron because he had not eaten of the goat of the sin offer-

ing in the sanctuary as was required. Aaron replied, “**Behold, this day they have offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before Jehovah, and there have befallen me such things as these. And if I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have been well-pleasing in the sight of Jehovah?**” (Lev. 10:19). Then the book says, “**And when Moses heard, it was well-pleasing in his sight.**”

Next the record lists the animals that the sons of Israel were allowed to eat, as well as those they were not allowed to eat, being classified unclean. Most of the unclean animals were those that civilized people would not want to eat anyway, such as horses, rats, crocodiles, eagles. Of all the unclean animals listed, the most commonly eaten by Gentiles is the swine or pig. They are very filthy animals whose bodies are filled with parasites and their eggs. Anybody who eats rare pork is taking a very serious risk. One animal that was acceptable for them to eat, which I would not want, was the locust. But then, I have never tried one.

After that listing, the book gives the Lord’s explanation why those animals were not to be eaten: “**For I am Jehovah your God. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and become ye holy, since I am holy. Neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that moves upon the earth. For I am Jehovah who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. Ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy**” (Lev. 11:44-45). Holiness involves purity.

Next Jehovah gave instructions to Moses about the length of time that a woman who bears a child was unclean. The NIV uses the expression “ceremonially unclean” here as well as in many other places in their translation. However, the word “ceremonially” is something they have added. Its Hebrew equivalent is not found anywhere in the original documents, nor is the idea it conveys. If a woman bore a boy, she was considered unclean forty days. (All male children were to be circumcised on the eighth day.) If she bore a girl, the woman was unclean eighty days. The book of Luke (2:22) mentions the days of Mary’s purification after the birth of Jesus.

There is much that is mysterious about those requirements. I can only suggest that the reason for a minimum of forty days uncleanness was to facilitate her recovery. For everything she touched, and everybody who touched her during that time would be considered unclean. Hence, she would not be able to engage in many tasks and chores that might

otherwise be required of her. I have no explanation for why she was unclean twice as long if she bore a girl. But this I know: God has a good reason for everything he does, whether we understand it or not. After those time-periods the woman was required to make a burnt offering and a sin offering to “**make atonement for her**” and to end her uncleanness.

Those instructions in Leviticus are followed by about four pages of a modern Bible that describe in detail exactly how to deal with various kinds of infectious diseases, including the offerings required if they were healed. That section concludes with these words: “**This is the law for all manner of a leprous disease, and for a scall, and for a leprous disease of a garment, and for a house, and for a rising, and for a scab, and for a bright spot, to teach when it is unclean, and when it is clean. This is the law of a leprous disease**” (Lev. 14:54-57).

Next there is about a page of instructions about “**the law of him who has an issue, and of him whose seed of copulation goes from him, so that he is unclean thereby, and of her who is sick with her impurity, and of him who has an issue, of the man, and of the woman, and of him who lies with her who is unclean**” (Lev. 15:32-33). The basic treatment for all of those conditions involved washing and/or quarantining. I highly recommend the book *None of these diseases* by S. I. McMillen, which describes the remarkably progressive hygienic wisdom found in the Holy Bible, of which these scriptures are a part. The priests were to examine those with skin disorders to decide who was unclean and needed to be quarantined. However, they were not like physicians who prescribe treatment.

The priests were also to examine suspicious clothing and buildings for diseases. For those objects the priests were first to order things done in an attempt to cleanse them. And if they could not be cleansed they were to be destroyed. They also supervised the sacrifices that were required if a patient or object were cleansed. Matthew 8:4 tells how Jesus reminded a leper he had just healed to go to the priest to fulfill that requirement. But God no longer requires all those rituals.

God spoke to Moses frequently above the cherubim, which was on the mercy seat in the most holy place of the tabernacle. However, Moses was an exceptionally reverent man, and Jehovah knew that future generations would not always have men who were worthy of entering into his inner sanctuary fre-

quently. Hence, after the death of the two sons of Aaron, Jehovah gave a new command limiting entrance into the most holy place to only once a year. And that would be on the day of atonement, which was to be the tenth day of the seventh month. Only the high priest was allowed in the most holy place where was the mercy seat, and no other men were allowed anywhere in the tabernacle while he was there. A detailed ritual was specified for that day, including animal sacrifices, with some of their blood to be sprinkled on the mercy seat.

That was also the day when two goats were selected, one for a sin offering, and the other as a scapegoat, which was to be dealt with as follows: “**And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the sons of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins. And he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a man who is in readiness into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities to a solitary land. And he shall let the goat go in the wilderness”** (Lev. 16:21-22).

Regarding the day of atonement, Jehovah said to Moses, “**And it shall be a statute forever to you. In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and shall do no manner of work, the home-born, or the stranger who sojourns among you. For on this day atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you. Ye shall be clean from all your sins before Jehovah. It is a sabbath of solemn rest to you, and ye shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever. And the priest, who shall be anointed and who shall be consecrated to be priest in his father’s stead, shall make the atonement. And he shall put on the linen garments, even the holy garments, and shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. And this shall be an everlasting statute to you, to make atonement for the sons of Israel because of all their sins once in the year”** (Lev. 16:29-34). They were commanded to afflict their souls, which meant it was a day of fasting in recognition of their sins on that day of atonement. It was the only time of the year they were all required to fast (afflict their souls).

God warned the sons of Israel not to make sacrifices anywhere but at the tabernacle, saying, “...

they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to the he-goats [the KJV says devils, the RSV says satyrs], **after which they play the harlot”** (Lev. 17:7). And he again warned against eating blood. The law against eating blood is one of the few carried over for Christians (see Acts 15:20). I have seen pictures of people eating blood in Africa, and the Germans still have a popular dish called blood pudding.

Jehovah also warned the sons of Israel against some of the abominable practices of the pagan nations. He told Moses to say to them, “**I am Jehovah your God. Ye shall not do after the doings of the land of Egypt, in which ye dwelt, and ye shall not do after the doings of the land of Canaan, where I bring you, nor shall ye walk in their statutes. Ye shall do my ordinances, and ye shall keep my statutes, to walk therein. I am Jehovah your God. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my ordinances, which if a man does, he shall live in them. I am Jehovah”** (Lev. 18:3-5).

Then he told them some of the other things they were not allowed to do. First, he said, “**None of you shall approach to any who are near of kin to him, to uncover nakedness. I am Jehovah**” (Lev. 18:6). The expression “uncover nakedness” refers to sexual intimacy, including that of marriage. And he mentioned such relatives as their mother, sister, granddaughter, daughter-in-law, aunt. They were also forbidden to marry both a woman and her daughter. Other such restrictions on sexual activity are the following:

- “**And thou shall not take a wife in addition to her sister, to be a rival to her, to uncover her nakedness, besides the other in her life-time”** (Lev. 18:18).
- “**And thou shall not approach to a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is impure by her uncleanness [menstruation]**” (Lev. 18:19).
- “**And thou shall not lie carnally with thy neighbor’s wife, to defile thyself with her”** (Lev. 18:20).
- “**Thou shall not lie with mankind, as with womankind** [homosexuality]. **It is abomination”** (Lev. 18:22).
- “**And thou shall not lie with any beast to defile thyself with it, nor shall any woman stand before a beast, to lie down with it. It is a perversion”** (Lev. 18:23).

Jehovah also forbade using their children for burnt offerings (called passing through the fire to Molech): “**And thou shall not give any of thy seed to make them pass through the fire to Molech, neither shall thou profane the name of thy God. I am Jehovah**” (Lev. 18:21). A later scripture says doing so was to bring the death penalty. Sacrificing children for burnt offerings may sound horrible, but tens of millions of innocent babies have been slaughtered in America since the people have turned away from God, not to mention the greater world of paganism.

God warned his people about all of those things, saying, “**Do not defile ye yourselves in any of these things. For in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out from before you, and the land is defiled. Therefore I visit the iniquity of it upon it, and the land vomits out her inhabitants. Ye therefore shall keep my statutes and my ordinances, and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the home-born, nor the stranger that sojourns among you, (for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and the land is defiled), that the land not vomit you out also, when ye defile it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. For whoever shall do any of these abominations, even the souls that do them shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore ye shall keep my charge, that ye not practice any of these abominable customs, which were practiced before you, and that ye not defile yourselves in it. I am Jehovah your God**” (Lev. 18:24-30). Alas, the history of the sons of Israel shows they did not hearken to his warnings, and so the land vomited them out also. I fear God’s wrath against my own country, which is being filled with the same kinds of abominations.

Next the record lists more laws of justice and virtue and kindness, which Jehovah commanded Moses for the people. I list many of them here because modern man sorely needs to learn the lessons they teach:

- “**Every man shall fear his mother, and his father. And ye shall keep my sabbaths. I am Jehovah your God**” (Lev. 19:3).
- “**Turn ye not to idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods. I am Jehovah your God**” (Lev. 19:4).
- “**And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shall not wholly reap the corners of thy field, nor shall thou gather the gleaning of thy**

harvest. And thou shall not glean thy vineyard, nor shall thou gather the fallen fruit of thy vineyard. Thou shall leave them for the poor man and for the sojourner. I am Jehovah your God” (Lev. 19:9-10).

- “**Ye shall not steal, nor shall ye deal falsely, nor lie one to another**” (Lev. 19:11).
- “**And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, and profane the name of thy God. I am Jehovah**” (Lev. 19:12).
- “**Thou shall not oppress thy neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not abide with thee all night until the morning**” (Lev. 19:13).

Withholding wages for a week or a month is common in modern American. However, that is rarely a handicap for laboring men during these days of great prosperity. In fact, receiving a pay check every day would now probably be considered an imposition by most men. Blind legalism can be very oppressive. We can apply what Jesus said about the law of the sabbath to all laws, by saying, “Laws were made for man, and not man for laws.” That is why Christ replaced legalism with love. You can read more about that in my essay, *Law versus Virtue* at my web site. Here are more of those laws:

- “**Thou shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but thou shall fear thy God. I am Jehovah**” (Lev. 19:14).
- “**Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment. Thou shall not respect the person of the poor man, nor honor the person of the mighty man, but thou shall judge thy neighbor in righteousness**” (Lev. 19:15).
- “**Thou shall not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people, neither shall thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor. I am Jehovah**” (Lev. 19:16).
- “**Thou shall not hate thy brother in thy heart. Thou shall surely rebuke thy neighbor, and not bear sin because of him**” (Lev. 19:17).
- “**Thou shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of thy people, but thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. I am Jehovah**” (Lev. 19:18).

Those commands could all be summarized in the one that Jesus said was the second greatest commandment: “... thou shall love thy neighbor as

thyself." Love would not be cruel or unfair or gossipy or hateful or do anything harmful to a neighbor. And they were commanded not to take personal vengeance. Nor were they to bear a grudge either, but they were to go and criticize their neighbor personally. Jehovah wanted them (and us) to solve disagreements together, not be resentful and go around criticizing a neighbor behind his back. If you try Jehovah's way, and the other man is stubborn and refuses to be reconciled, then leave it to God; he will deal with such men.

Nevertheless, remember, Jehovah commanded authorities to enforce the laws. If a man steals something or injures someone else authorities must punish the criminal, and force him to compensate for the harm he did. There is nothing wrong with wanting vengeance and recompense about such things. For the righteous souls in heaven cry out to God for vengeance (see Revelation 6:10). Vengeance is fair retribution. Wanting vengeance means wanting justice. And the enforcement of justice is the right and duty of authorities. If authorities were faithful about that, there would be much less cause for resentment. Alas, modern Americans do not seem to want justice. Even the word vengeance is being changed to mean something evil. Which reminds me of the words of the prophet Isaiah: "**Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil**" (Isa. 5:20). Other laws are,

- "**Ye shall not eat anything with the blood. Neither shall ye use enchantments, nor practice augury**" (Lev. 19:26).
- "**Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, nor shall thou mar the corners of thy beard**" (Lev. 19:27).
- "**Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you [no tattoos or body paint]. I am Jehovah**" (Lev. 19:28).

What the command about the corners of their heads and beards seems to say is that God did not want his chosen people to have fancy beards or fancy hair cuts. Barbarians and clowns do such things. And Jehovah wanted his people to look civilized and dignified. Some Jewish men have misinterpreted that command, so they let their sideburns grow long and hang down. It certainly does not look dignified; it makes them look more like women. God also commanded them not to put things like tattoos, body paint, or carvings on their skin. All such things are barbaric and demeaning. Although in

times of spiritual decadence, as in my day, they can become popular. God wants people to look civilized and dignified. Here are more laws of Moses:

- "**Do not profane thy daughter, to make her a harlot, lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness**" (Lev. 19:29).
- "**Do not turn to those who have familiar spirits, nor to the wizards [things like astrology or psychics]. Do not seek them out, to be defiled by them. I am Jehovah your God**" (Lev. 19:31).
- "**Thou shall rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and thou shall fear thy God. I am Jehovah**" (Lev. 19:32).
- "**And if a stranger sojourns with thee in your land, ye shall not do him wrong. The stranger that sojourns with you shall be to you as the home-born among you, and thou shall love him as thyself, for ye were sojourners in the land of Egypt. I am Jehovah your God**" (Lev. 19:33-34).
- "**Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in measures of length, of weight, or of quantity. Ye shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin. I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. And ye shall observe all my statutes, and all my ordinances, and do them. I am Jehovah**" (Lev. 19:35-37).
- "**For he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him**" (Lev. 20:9).
- "**And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness [menstruation], and shall uncover her nakedness, he has made naked her fountain, and she has uncovered the fountain of her blood. And both of them shall be cut off from among their people**" (Lev. 20:18).

After giving those and similar ordinances, Jehovah again warned the sons of Israel to obey his laws, and not practice the abominable things that were done by the peoples he was going to cast out. God said they did those things, "**and therefore I abhorred them**" (Lev. 20:23). But his people were to be holy, and set apart from the filthiness of the world. He said, "**Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my ordinances, and do them,**

that the land, where I bring you to dwell in it, not vomit you out. And ye shall not walk in the customs of the nation which I cast out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. But I have said to you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess it, a land flowing with milk and honey. I am Jehovah your God, who has separated you from the peoples. Ye shall therefore make a distinction between the clean beast and the unclean, and between the unclean fowl and the clean. And ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by bird, or by anything with which the ground teems, which I have separated from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy to me, for I, Jehovah, am holy, and have set you apart from the peoples, that ye should be mine” (Lev. 20:22-26).

Next Jehovah gave Moses commands about the priests, the sons of Aaron. Since they worked for God there were even stricter requirements for their behavior. For example, they were not to marry a harlot or a divorced woman, and not even a widow. They could only marry a virgin. And any of their daughters who played the harlot (committed fornication) was to be burnt with fire. Moreover, none of them could perform the duties of a priest who had any kind of blemish. Such a man could eat of the offerings, but he could not go in the tabernacle or come near the altar. There are about two pages of those ordinances in a typical modern Bible.

After that, Jehovah spoke of their holy convocations, which were all special times when the people were to remember God. Besides the weekly sabbath day of rest, Jehovah specified some other days when they were to make special offerings to him each year. Here is that list:

- The first annual convocation was the Passover. **“In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, is Jehovah’s Passover”** (Lev. 23:5). Their year began around March or April according to our calendar.
- Then, on the day following the Passover meal, the feast of unleavened bread began. **“And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread to Jehovah. Ye shall eat unleavened bread seven days”** (Lev. 23:6).
- Also at some time near the first of their year was the offering of first-fruits. **“When ye have come into the land which I give to you, and shall reap the harvest of it, then ye shall bring the**

sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest to the priest” (Lev. 23:10).

- After bringing that offering (with its associated sacrifices) they were to count fifty days: **“And ye shall count to you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering, there shall be complete seven sabbaths. Ye shall number fifty days, even to the morrow after the seventh sabbath, and ye shall offer ...”** (Lev. 23:15-16). That day was called the feast of weeks. It was also called Pentecost in the New Testament, which comes from the Greek word meaning fifty.
- After that, on the first day of their seventh month, was to be **“a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation”** (Lev. 23:24). That was the beginning of the second half of their year, but it is New Year’s Day for modern Jews.
- Then the book says, **“... on the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement [Jews call it Yom Kippur]. It shall be a holy convocation to you, and ye shall afflict your souls, and ye shall offer an offering made by fire to Jehovah”** (Lev. 23:27). Remember, that was the one day the high priest could enter into the most holy place of the tabernacle. And it was the one day they were all supposed to fast in repentance.
- Finally, there was the feast of ingathering or tabernacles (or booths). **“On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the feast of tabernacles for seven days to Jehovah”** (Lev. 23:34). They were required to dwell in small temporary tents or huts for a full week. God said the purpose was **“that your generations may know that I made the sons of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am Jehovah your God”** (Lev. 23:43). On the eighth day they were to hold an assembly and offer more sacrifices.

The book concludes that listing with these words: **“These are the set feasts of Jehovah, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire to Jehovah, a burnt offering, and a meal offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, each on its own day. Besides the sabbaths of Jehovah, and besides your gifts,**

and besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings, which ye give to Jehovah” (Lev. 23:37-38).

Then Jehovah told Moses to keep a lamp burning continually from evening to morning outside the veil of the testimony (the one that separated the most holy place). He also told him to bake twelve cakes to set in the tabernacle every sabbath day. He said, “**And it shall be for Aaron and his sons. And they shall eat it in a holy place, for it is most holy to him of the offerings of Jehovah made by fire by a perpetual statute**” (Lev 24:9). That was called the showbread or the bread of presence.

Next the book tells about the son of an Israelite woman whose father was an Egyptian. He had quarreled with a man of Israel, and blasphemed the Name (Jehovah), and cursed. They put him in custody until they could inquire of Jehovah. Jehovah said, “**Bring forth him who has cursed outside the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him**” (Lev. 24:14). Then he restated some of the laws about murder and other kinds of assault. So the man was stoned as Jehovah commanded Moses.

The sabbath was a day of rest every seventh day, but every seventh year the sons of Israel were to give their land a sabbath rest. They were neither to sow their fields nor prune their vineyards that year. And nothing was to be harvested commercially. Whatever grew was to be freely available as food for them and the other inhabitants of the land, including the strangers and the animals. I was told by a professor of agriculture that such a practice was good for soil conservation. However, I suspect that the purpose of the law was for more than just soil conservation. For the labor that would have gone into food production could have been used for other constructive activities. God assured the sons of Israel he would bless them for their obedience so that they would be prosperous enough to have plenty of food in storage for those sabbath years.

Then after seven sabbaths of years, in the forty-ninth year on the day of atonement they were to announce the fiftieth year as a year of jubilee. It too was to be a sabbath for the land. However, it was also the year when every man was to receive back his inherited property, meaning his land or his house that he may have sold. That law would have prevented the accumulation of lands and properties by a few rich men, which always tends to occur. The laws of Moses were designed to prevent the development of the very rich and the very poor. Both are

unhealthy for a nation (although socialism is not the solution because it is very unjust). One of America’s great blessings is its large middle class, which has been gradually shrinking with the growth of vice and injustice.

Whenever agricultural land was sold they were to adjust the price according to how many years remained until the jubilee, a greater price for many years, and a smaller price for fewer years. God said, “**The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land**” (Lev. 23-24).

Jehovah said that if any of them became poor and sold some of his possession, then either the man himself, or his near kinsmen could redeem it at any time, which meant paying for whatever years were left on the lease, since the sale of all land was actually a lease until the jubilee. Hence, the maximum time a man would be without his land or house would be forty-nine years.

There were a few exceptions to that ordinance. If a house in a walled city was sold, it could only be redeemed within the first year. After that the sale was considered permanent. Also, the fields around the cities of the Levites were never to be sold, since they had no other lands. And a house purchased from a Levite, even if it was in a walled city, could be redeemed at any time. And if it was not redeemed it was to go back to him at the jubilee.

Regarding poor men, Jehovah said, “**If thy brother** [meaning a fellow Israelite] **becomes poor, and his hand fails with thee, then thou shall uphold him; he shall live with thee as a stranger and a sojourner**” (Lev. 25:35). Moreover, they were not to take interest on any money loaned to such a man. Nor were they supposed to sell him food at a profit; he was to buy food for himself at whatever the cost was to produce it. Another stipulation dealt with making a labor contract with a poor man; the Bible calls it selling himself. He was to be treated as a hired servant, and not a permanent bondman. Only foreigners in Israel could be made permanent bondmen.

The difference between a hired servant and a bondman in those days was somewhat similar to the difference between a civilian employee and a member of the military in modern America. Finally, if a brother Israelite put himself under a labor contract (“sold himself”) to a rich foreigner in the land he could be redeemed, either by a near kin, or by him-

self if he became prosperous enough. In any case the law of jubilee applied as well.

Next in the text, after giving all of those laws, Jehovah pronounced his promise of blessings for obedience, and curses for disobedience. If they kept his commandments he said their agriculture would yield bountifully, so much so they would have large stores of food. Also there would be peace in the land. And in any armed conflict they would greatly outclass their enemies. They would be a fruitful people and would multiply. For he said, "**I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people**" (Lev. 26:12).

On the other hand, if they would not hearken to him, and would not do all those commandments, Jehovah said he would afflict them with things like diseases, crop failures, and military defeats. Those things would not come all at once, but would be progressive, giving them time to repent. However, if they persisted in disobeying him, eventually he would make their cities a waste, and would scatter them among the nations. Yet Jehovah also promised not to reject them nor destroy them completely.

The purpose of the last part of this book is not clear, but it seems to be about how they could redeem things they had dedicated to God by a vow. Perhaps this was a way that God showed mercy to them whenever they made a rash vow, which is a common tendency, especially during times of great trouble. Redemption was by payment in shekels of silver. Hence, whatever they dedicated had to be evaluated so they would know the cost of buying it back.

Sometimes persons would be dedicated, as in the case of the prophet Samuel by his mother (1Sa. 1:11). With respect to persons, Jehovah determined the evaluation by their age. For persons twenty to sixty years, the valuation was fifty shekels of silver for males and thirty shekels for females. For persons five to twenty years, the valuation was twenty for males and ten for females. The amounts from one month to five years were five and three, and above sixty years they were fifteen and ten. However, Jehovah said that if the man was too poor for any of

those amounts, then he could pay according to his ability as the priest would value him.

With respect to beasts, houses, and fields, the priests were to value them, adding twenty percent to the total. If a dedicated field was not redeemed by the jubilee, then it was to become the permanent possession of the priest. There were a few other conditions stated, which depended upon circumstances.

Next, the record says that things "set apart to Jehovah" were never to be sold or redeemed: "**Notwithstanding, nothing set apart, that a man shall set apart to Jehovah of all that he has, whether of man or beast, or of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed; everything set apart is most holy to Jehovah**" (Lev. 27:28).

That scripture suggests there were two degrees of devoting things to God, and the things "set apart" were at the highest level, making them irrevocable. The above scripture mentions things that "**a man shall set apart to Jehovah of all that he has.**" However, there were cases when Jehovah set apart things for himself that were not to be bought or redeemed, such as the city of Jericho, which was to be destroyed and all of its wealth placed in Jehovah's treasury (see Jos. 6:17-19). Also, any man who was "set apart" was not to be ransomed, but was to be put to death. Being set apart in that case must have referred to all men condemned to capital punishment.

All of the tithe was to be "**holy to Jehovah,**" but could be redeemed for its valuation plus twenty percent. However, the tithe from the herd or flock was not to be redeemed. Selecting the tithe from the herd or flock was done by lining the animals up, and selecting every tenth one. And once an animal was selected it could not be changed or redeemed. Any attempt to change it would make both it and its substitute holy, meaning set apart for Jehovah. That restriction on redemption appears to have applied only to clean animals (from the herd or flock), for the sons of Israel were also commanded elsewhere to redeem unclean animals, like donkeys and mules.

A Description of Numbers

This book begins with these words: “**And Jehovah spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they came out of the land of Egypt, saying, Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their fathers’ houses, according to the number of the names, every male, by their polls, from twenty years old and upward, all who are able to go forth to war in Israel. Thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies. And with you there shall be a man of every tribe, each one head of his fathers’ house”** (Num. 1:1-4).

The head of each tribe was then named, and those men were responsible for numbering their respective tribes. The resulting figures for each tribe in the order given are as follows:

• Reuben	46,500
• Simeon	59,300
• Gad	45,650
• Judah	74,600
• Issachar.....	54,400
• Zebulun	57,400
• Ephraim.....	40,500
• Manasseh.....	32,200
• Benjamin	35,400
• Dan	62,700
• Asher	41,500
• Naphtali.....	53,400

The first six names were the sons of Leah, the next three were from Rachel (Ephraim and Manasseh were the sons of Joseph that Israel adopted), and the last three were sons of the two handmaids of Leah and Rachel. The total number of the sons of Israel “from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go forth to war” was 603,550. However, the Levites were not numbered with them, for they were responsible for the tabernacle, to minister to it, transport it, and set it up. There were three families of Levites that developed from the three sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. The Levites were later numbered according to those three families.

The tribes of Israel were called armies. And the layout of their camp, and the order of their marching was to be organized in a military fashion. Remember, they were preparing for a military campaign against the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. The tabernacle was to be in the center of their camp, and

the Levites were to camp around it. Jehovah said the reason was “**that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the sons of Israel**” (Num. 1:53). That meant to keep them from doing anything to desecrate it.

Concerning the other tribes, they were to camp around the Levites as follows: On the east side was to be the standard of the camp of Judah, which included Issachar and Zebulun. And when they began to travel, those tribes were to set forth first. On the south side was to be the standard of the camp of Reuben, which included Simeon and Gad. They were to set forth second, followed by the Levites with the tent of meeting or tabernacle. On the west side was to be the standard of the camp of Ephraim, which included Manasseh and Benjamin. They were to set forth third. Finally, on the north side was to be the standard of the camp of Dan, which included Asher and Naphtali. And they were to set forth last. The leaders of the army of each tribe are also named, as well as the number of men in each army.

Regarding the Levites, Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, “**And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of all the firstborn who opens the womb among the sons of Israel. And the Levites shall be mine, for all the firstborn are mine. On the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed to me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be mine. I am Jehovah**” (Num. 3:12-13). God had originally planned to appoint every firstborn son to comprise his ministerial class. They were going to be assistant priests, a priesthood that was subject only to the priestly family of Aaron from whom came the high priests. It meant that almost every family of the sons of Israel would have been represented in the priesthood. However, apparently because of their frequent rebellions, especially with the golden calf, Jehovah changed his mind and chose the Levites, who had rallied behind Moses to execute Jehovah’s vengeance during the calf incident. Is there not an important lesson in this? What we do, whether it be good or evil, will affect God’s plans for us, for good or evil.

The Levites were organized both according to what parts of the tabernacle they were to carry, and on what side they were to camp. Their males were also numbered, but they were counted from a month old and upward. The 7,500 sons of Gershon were to

camp on the back side of the tabernacle, westward; the 8,600 sons of Kohath were to be on the south side; and the 6,200 sons of Merari were to be on the north side. Moses and the family of Aaron were to camp at the front of the tabernacle on the east side. Each family was assigned specific parts of the tabernacle to carry during their marches.

After giving that information the scriptures say, “**All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of Jehovah, by their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty-two thousand**” (Num. 3:39).

Then Jehovah said to Moses, “**Number all the firstborn males of the sons of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names**” (Num. 3:40). That figure was 22,273, being 273 more than the number of the Levites. To accommodate for the difference, Jehovah said to Moses, “**And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the sons of Israel, who are over and above the number of the Levites, thou shall take five shekels apiece by the poll. According to the shekel of the sanctuary thou shall take them (the shekel is twenty gerahs), and thou shall give the money, with which the odd number of them is redeemed, to Aaron and to his sons**” (Num. 3:46-48). You see, in those days men were considered an asset. Now days they may or may not be. Our laws and practices are not as good, therefore, many men are useless liabilities. Most modern American children are reared that way, and many remain so as adults.

Next Jehovah told Moses to number the males of the three families of the Levites who were from thirty to fifty years old. That was to be the age of service for the tent of meeting, the tabernacle. Then he told him in detail how Aaron and his sons were to wrap and otherwise prepare for transport all of the inner furnishings of the tabernacle, and the altar of burnt offerings.

The Kohathites were assigned the duty of carrying those things, but they were not allowed to see anything inside the tabernacle. Indeed, Jehovah said to Moses, “**Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites, but thus do to them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach to the most holy things. Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint for them each one to his service and to his burden, but they shall not go in to see the sanctuary even for a moment, lest they die**” (Num. 4:18-20).

The sons of Gershon were to carry the curtains and the coverings, while the sons of Merari were to carry the boards, pillars, bases, and their accessories. The number of the men who were qualified for the work was 2,750 of the sons of Kohath, 2,630 of the sons of Gershon, and 3,200 of the sons of Merari, which totaled 8,580.

After that Jehovah told Moses to command the people to put out of the camp all who were unclean in a certain way. Then Jehovah said to him, “**Speak to the sons of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, so as to trespass against Jehovah, and that soul shall be guilty, then he shall confess his sin which he has done. And he shall make restitution for his guilt in full, and add to it the fifth part of it, and give it to him in respect of whom he has been guilty**” (Num. 5:7).

Jehovah said if the man had no kinsman to receive the restitution, then it was to be the priest’s, besides the ram of the atonement. That probably dealt with offences that were voluntarily confessed, and not those that the offender attempted to conceal, which brought a more severe penalty.

Next Jehovah gave the law about the spirit of jealousy that comes upon a man when he suspects that his wife has committed adultery, but he has no evidence. The Bible teaches that adultery is the worse offense against marriage. So God gave a way for an Israelite man to determine the truth. The law of jealousy involved a kind of lie detection procedure by the priest. The suspecting man was to bring a meal offering and his wife to the priest. The priest was to bring her near, and set her before Jehovah.

Then the book says, “**And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel. And the priest shall take of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle, and put it into the water. And the priest shall set the woman before Jehovah, and let the hair of the woman’s head go loose, and put the meal offering of memorial in her hands, which is the meal offering of jealousy. And the priest shall have in his hand the water of bitterness that causes the curse. And the priest shall cause her to swear, and shall say to the woman, If no man has lain with thee, and if thou have not gone aside to uncleanness, being under thy husband, be thou free from this water of bitterness that causes the curse.**

“**But if thou have gone aside, being under thy husband, and if thou are defiled, and some man has lain with thee besides thy husband, then the**

priest shall cause the woman to swear with the oath of cursing, and the priest shall say to the woman, Jehovah make thee a curse and an oath among thy people when Jehovah makes thy thigh to fall away, and thy body to swell. And this water that causes the curse shall go into thy bowels, and make thy body to swell, and thy thigh to fall away. And the woman shall say, Truly, Truly” (Num. 5:16-22).

After that the priest was to write the curses in a book, and blot them out into the water of bitterness. Then the priest was to take the meal offering of jealousy from the woman’s hand, wave it before Jehovah, and perform the usual procedure for a meal offering. Afterward, the priest was to make the woman drink of the water of bitterness. The book says that if the woman was guilty, then “**the water that causes the curse shall enter into her bitter, and her body shall swell, and her thigh shall fall away. And the woman shall be a curse among her people**” (Num. 5:27). However, if she was innocent, then no harm would come to her, and both she and her husband would be free from iniquity. Clearing away doubt and suspicion can do wonders to reconcile people who become estranged, and it will discourage them from sinning by acting unjustly. Alas, how rarely it is even attempted. Concealing doubt and suspicion is like sweeping garbage under a rug. It remains concealed, but the atmosphere begins to stink.

Next God gave his commands about the vow of a Nazirite. Jehovah told Moses to say to the sons of Israel, “**When either man or woman shall make a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to Jehovah, he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink. He shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any juice of grapes, nor eat fresh grapes or dried. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is made of the grape-vine, from the kernels even to the husk. All the days of his vow of separation there shall no razor come upon his head. Until the days be fulfilled, in which he separates himself to Jehovah, he shall be holy. He shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow long**” (Num. 6:2-5).

That is the first mention of the Nazirite vow in the Bible, and not much is known about it except what is stated in this book. The main difference between that vow and others seems to be that it was for a time of separation to God. Besides describing the offerings to be made when the time was over,

there was a warning about touching any dead body, or apparently even being near one, because “**All the days of his separation he is holy to Jehovah**” (Num. 6:8). If he became unclean that way the man had to bring a sin offering, and begin the time of his separation again, because the former days were void.

When his days were fulfilled, he was to make several different offerings at the altar. One of the last things required of him was to shave his head, and burn the hair with the peace offering. Samson is the only man mentioned in the Bible who was a Nazirite for life. The prophet Samuel may also have been one (see 1Sa. 1:11). You should know, however, that although Nazirites were not allowed to cut their hair, it is unlikely they let it hang loose (meaning disheveled). Loose shaggy hair was forbidden of the high priest, but required of lepers. Hence, it seems to have been associated with uncleanness.

Next, the record says Jehovah told Moses, “**Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, This way ye shall bless the sons of Israel: Ye shall say to them, Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee. Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious to thee. Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. So shall they put my name upon the sons of Israel, and I will bless them**” (Num. 6:23-27).

The record says that after Moses finished setting up the tabernacle, anointing and sanctifying everything, that the rulers of the tribes brought an offering of six wagons and twelve oxen, a wagon for every two rulers, and an ox for each ruler. After they brought them Jehovah told Moses to take them, and given them to the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari because they had the items of the tabernacle that needed wagons. None were given to the sons of Kohath because they were to bear the furnishings of the tabernacle on their shoulders. Remember, each item of furniture had staves for carrying.

The rulers of each tribe also offered an oblation for the dedication of the altar. An offering was given from a separate tribe for each of twelve days. The order of offering was the same as the order of marching. Judah offered the first day, Issachar the second day, Zebulun the third day, and so forth to Naphtali on the twelfth day, which was the last tribe mentioned in the marching order that was given earlier.

Each tribe offered the same thing that the ruler of Judah offered, which was the following: “**And his oblation was one silver platter, the weight of**

which was a hundred and thirty *shekels*, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meal offering; one golden spoon of ten *shekels*, full of incense; one young bullock, one ram, one he-lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; one male of the goats for a sin offering; and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, five he-lambs a year old" (Num. 7:13-17). Then the book gives the total number offered by the rulers of the tribes for each item at the dedication of the altar after it was anointed. Which was simply twelve times what each gave.

So after the tabernacle was erected and dedicated, the book says, "**And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with him, then he heard the Voice speaking to him from above the mercy-seat that was upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim, and he spoke to him**" (Num. 7:89).

After that Jehovah commanded Moses to cleanse the Levites, and present them to the people as the tribe to be separated for the work of the tabernacle instead of their firstborn sons. And so after offerings were made for the Levites, the men of qualified age (from twenty-five to fifty years old) went in to assist Aaron and his sons in their ministry. Of course, since there were over eight thousand of them it is obvious they did not all worked at the same time.

On the first anniversary of Passover there were some men who could not observe the feast because they had become unclean from a dead body. Hence, Jehovah made provision in such cases for them to observe it a month later.

Regarding the pillar of cloud, the text says, "**And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, even the tent of the testimony, and at evening it was upon the tabernacle, as it were the appearance of fire, until morning. So it was always: the cloud covered it, and the appearance of fire by night. And whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tent, then after that the sons of Israel journeyed. And in the place where the cloud abode, there the sons of Israel encamped**" (Num. 9:15-17).

Jehovah also commanded Moses to make two silver trumpets for signaling. They were used to signal things such as to gather all the people or all the rulers to the tabernacle, to signal the beginning of a march, and to alarm them for war. Jehovah also said, "**And in the day of your gladness, and in**

your set feasts, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings. And they shall be to you for a memorial before your God: I am Jehovah your God" (Num. 10:10).

On the twentieth day of the second month of the second year the book says, "... **the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle of the testimony. And the sons of Israel set forward according to their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud abode in the wilderness of Paran**" (Num. 10:11-12). Therefore, they set forth in order as instructed. The standard of the camp of the sons of Judah, which included Issacher and Zebulun, was first. Following them were the sons of Gershon and Merari (families of Levites) carrying the tabernacle (after it was taken down by Aaron and his sons). Next was the standard of the camp of Reuben, which included Simeon and Gad. They were followed by the sons of Kohath (the other family of Levites) with the furnishings of the tabernacle. That description about moving the tabernacle differs somewhat from the earlier command about it. The detail here is more specific. After them was the standard of the camp of Ephraim, which included Manasseh and Benjamin. Finally, the standard of the camp of Dan, which included Asher and Naphtali, set forth. The book also gives the name of the leader of the army of each tribe; they were the same twelve men mentioned earlier. It ends the list, saying, "**Thus were the journeys [marches] of the sons of Israel according to their armies, and they set forward**" (Num. 10:28).

Before they left, Moses invited Hobab his brother-in-law to go with them, but he said he would return to his own land. Moses urged him, but the text does not say whether he went or not. So they began to march, and the book says, "**And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, O Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let those who hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Jehovah, to the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel**" (Num. 10:35-36).

The record says they journeyed for three days. However, sometime afterward the people began to murmur and complain, so Jehovah became angry and sent a fire among them. And when Moses prayed to him the fire abated. Later, they again began to complain. The book says, "**And the mixed multitude that was among them lusted exceed-**

ingly. And the sons of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic, but now our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all except this manna to look upon" (Num. 11:4-6).

The text here gives a little more information about the manna: "And the manna was like coriander seed, and the appearance of it as the appearance of bdellium. The people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in mortars, and boiled it in pots, and made cakes of it. And the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it" (Num. 11:7-9).

The following text gives the dialogue that Moses had with God about this latest provocation of the people. Notice how frustrated and discouraged Moses was because of them: "And Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, every man at the door of his tent. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled greatly, and Moses was displeased. And Moses said to Jehovah, Why have thou dealt ill with thy servant? And why have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou lay the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I brought them forth, that thou should say to me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing-father carries the sucking child, to the land which thou swore to their fathers? From where should I have flesh to give to all this people? For they weep to me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness.

"And Jehovah said to Moses, Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou know to be the elders of the people, and officers over them. And bring them to the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there. And I will take from the Spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou not bear it thyself alone. And say thou to the people, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and ye shall eat flesh, for ye have wept in the ears of Jehovah, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt. Therefore Jehovah

will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days, but a whole month, until it comes out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome to you, because ye have rejected Jehovah who is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why did we come forth out of Egypt?

"And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen, and thou have said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? And Jehovah said to Moses, Is Jehovah's hand grown short? Now thou shall see whether my word shall come to pass to thee or not" (Num. 11:10-23).

Therefore Moses went out and did as Jehovah commanded him. And God's spirit rested upon the seventy elders and they prophesied. However, the book says they only prophesied that one time. When a young man saw two of them prophesying at another place, he ran and told Moses. Joshua told Moses to forbid them, but he replied, "Are thou jealous for my sake? Would that all of Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put his Spirit upon them!" (Num. 11:29). Then Jehovah sent forth a wind, which brought quails in large numbers from the sea to the camp. However, when the people began to eat, the book says, "... the anger of Jehovah was kindled against the people, and Jehovah smote the people with a very great plague" (Num. 11:33).

Sometime after that Moses was criticized again, this time by his own sister and brother. The record says, "And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. And they said, Has Jehovah indeed spoken only with Moses? Has he not spoken also with us? And Jehovah heard it. Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12:1-3). That scripture says Moses was very meek, more so than all other men on the earth. There are numerous examples of the courage of Moses, but he was a meek and humble man, very selfless. Apparently he was not going to argue with Miriam and Aaron, or defend himself.

Nevertheless, God became angry because of their unjust accusations, and he defended him. For

the book says, “**And Jehovah spoke suddenly to Moses, and to Aaron, and to Miriam, Come out ye three to the tent of meeting. And the three came out. And Jehovah came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the tent, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words. If there be a prophet among you, I Jehovah will make myself known to him in a vision. I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so. He is faithful in all my house. With him I will speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches, and he shall behold the form of Jehovah. Why then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant, against Moses? And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against them, and he departed.**

“**And the cloud removed from over the tent. And, behold, Miriam was leprous, as snow. And Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. And Aaron said to Moses, Oh, my lord, lay not, I pray thee, sin upon us, in which we have done foolishly, and in which we have sinned. Let her not, I pray, be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother’s womb. And Moses cried to Jehovah, saying, Heal her, O God, I beseech thee. And Jehovah said to Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut up outside the camp seven days, and after that she shall be brought in again. And Miriam was shut up outside the camp seven days. And the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again”** (Num. 12:4-15). God said he would forgive Miriam, but he also punished her. Forgiveness does not mean having no punishment. It means not having all we deserve.

Later Jehovah commanded Moses to send spies to the land of Canaan, one man from each tribe, each one a ruler. The record gives the names of the men as well as Moses’ instructions to them. So they departed, and returned after forty days. When they gave their report they said the land was excellent, flowing with milk and honey, but its inhabitants were strong.

The people must have become alarmed when they heard that, for the book says Caleb calmed them, and urged them go up at once and possess it. However, ten of the twelve men said they were not able. They said the inhabitants of the land were too strong, “**And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight**” (Num.

13:33). Only Joshua and Caleb supported the invasion. Hence, the people became troubled and disheartened, and “**all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried, and the people wept that night**” (Num. 14:1). Then they began to revolt, saying “**Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt**” (Num. 14:4). Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before them. Joshua and Caleb tried to calm their fears, and told them not to rebel against Jehovah. Nevertheless, the congregation said to stone them.

Then the book says, “**And the glory of Jehovah appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel. And Jehovah said to Moses, How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, for all the signs which I have wrought among them?”** (Num. 14:10-11). Moses again pleaded with God, as he did when they made the golden calf, not to destroy them. Jehovah said to Moses, “**I have pardoned according to thy word, but in very deed, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah, because all those men who have seen my glory, and my signs, which I wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have challenged me these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any of them who despised me see it. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and has followed me fully, him will I bring into the land into which he went, and his seed shall possess it**” (Num. 14:20-24).

So God cursed them to wander in the wilderness forty years, one year for each day the spies had been gone, until every man from twenty years and upward was dead. Only Joshua and Caleb would remain alive. Also the ten spies who gave the evil report soon died from a plague. When the people heard the curse against them, they confessed their sin, repented, and sought to invade the land. However, it was too late, and Moses warned them against it. Yet they even rebelled at this, and tried anyway. Therefore they were defeated by the Amalekites and Canaanites in that area.

Next more instructions were given about adding meal and drink offerings with their animal sacrifices. Jehovah also said that their laws were to apply to the sojourners among them as well as themselves, although there were a few exceptions, such as being circumcised. Jehovah reminded them to make an offering of their first-fruits. And he restated some of the regulations about offerings for unwitting sins

that were required of both natives and foreigners in their land.

However, God added these words: “**But the soul that does anything with a high hand, whether he be home-born or a sojourner, the same blasphemes Jehovah, and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of Jehovah, and has broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him**” (Num. 15:30-31). That probably referred a lawless man—a habitual sinner—and not to those who might commit an occasional sin willfully (with a high hand). The expression “utterly cut off” sometimes referred to the death penalty. Although it might also include being banished from the land, as the judges would decide.

An occasion arose when a man was found gathering sticks on the sabbath. They put the man in custody until he was sentenced. Jehovah told Moses to have the man put to death, because that was the penalty given earlier (see Exo. 31:14-15). Therefore, all the congregation stoned him outside the camp.

Next Jehovah gave a requirement that was designed to help them remember his commandments. Jehovah said to Moses, “**Speak to the sons of Israel, and bid them that they make for them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of each border a cord of blue. And it shall be to you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of Jehovah, and do them, and that ye not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to play the harlot, that ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am Jehovah your God**” (Num. 15:38-41).

Sometime later Moses faced another rebellion. Several men were involved, and there are some things that are not clear about them. Korah, a Levite, appears to have led 250 rulers of the congregation against Moses. The text implies that those men were all Levites as well, but it does not say so directly. There were also three other rebels who were of the tribe of Reuben: Dathan, Abiram, and On (although On may have backed out quickly because he is no longer mentioned). Korah and his group made this accusation against Moses and Aaron: “**Ye take too much upon you, since all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and**

Jehovah is among them. Why then do ye lift up yourselves above the assembly of Jehovah?” (Num. 16:3).

Upon hearing that, Moses fell on his face (in dismay), and said to them, “**In the morning Jehovah will show who are his, and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to him, even him whom he shall choose will he cause to come near to him**” (Num. 16:5). He then told them to come tomorrow, and bring censers, with fire and incense upon them, to bring near to Jehovah to see who he would choose. Then he said, “**Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi**” (Num. 16:7).

Apparently they wanted the same authority and privileges that Aaron and his sons had. For the book says, “**And Moses said to Korah, Hear now, ye sons of Levi. Is it a small thing to you, that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of Jehovah, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them, and that he has brought thee near, and all thy brothers the sons of Levi with thee? And ye seek the priesthood also?**” (Num. 16:8-10).

Then Moses called for Dathan and Abiram, but they refused to come, saying, “**Is it a small thing that thou have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, but thou must make thyself also a ruler over us? Moreover thou have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will thou put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up**” (Num. 16:13-14).

Those accusations made Moses very angry, and he asked Jehovah not to respect their offering, because he had done nothing against those men. On the following day, as Moses had commanded them, Korah and his group came with their censers prepared, and stood at the door of the tabernacle with Moses and Aaron. Jehovah then told Moses that he was going to consume the whole congregation. Apparently the people had not rallied behind Moses and Aaron, which angered God. And later events showed how the people had more regard for the rebels than they did for Moses. Nevertheless, Moses and Aaron again fell on their faces, and dissuaded Jehovah.

Then Jehovah told Moses to command the people to separate from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. So he went to the tents of Dathan and Abiram, with the elders of Israel following him, and he

told the congregation what God had said. Then the people moved back. And both men came out and stood at the door of their tents with their wives and children.

Here is the Bible description of what happened next: “**And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that Jehovah has sent me to do all these works, for it is not of my own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then Jehovah has not sent me. But if Jehovah makes a new thing, and the ground opens its mouth, and swallows them up, with all that pertains to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then ye shall understand that these men have despised Jehovah.**

“**And it came to pass, as he made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground split asunder that was under them, and the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men that pertained to Korah, and all their goods. So they, and all that pertained to them, went down alive into Sheol. And the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the assembly. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them, for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up. And fire came forth from Jehovah, and devoured the two hundred and fifty men who offered the incense**” (Num. 16:28-35).

Jehovah then commanded Moses to take the 250 censers and make them beaten plates for a covering of the altar, which would be a constant reminder to the sons of Israel that no man who is not of the seed of Aaron was to burn incense before Jehovah. So Eleazar, one of Aaron’s sons, gathered the censers to be made into a cover for the altar.

However, on the very next day the congregation assembled against Moses and Aaron, saying “**Ye have killed the people of Jehovah**” (Num. 16:41). They accused Moses and Aaron of causing the earth to open and fire from God to destroy the rebels. God knew their hearts, which is no doubt why he told Moses earlier that he was going to consume them. Yet Jehovah is so longsuffering that he rarely gives full vent to his wrath, no matter how justified it would be. This time Jehovah sent a plague among the people. Therefore, Moses said to Aaron, “**Take thy censer, and put fire in it from off the altar, and lay incense on it, and carry it quickly to the congregation, and make atonement for them, for there is wrath gone out from Jehovah. The plague has begun**” (Num. 16:46). Aaron did so,

which stopped the plague, but not before 14,700 had perished.

In order to further prove to the sons of Israel that God had chosen Aaron, Jehovah told Moses to take a rod from the ruler of each tribe, and write each man’s name on his rod. Then he was to place those rods together with Aaron’s in the tent of meeting before the ark of the covenant. Jehovah said, “**And it shall come to pass, that the rod of the man whom I shall choose shall bud. And I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the sons of Israel, which they murmur against you**” (Num. 17:5).

On the day after placing them in the tabernacle, the rod of Aaron had put forth buds, produced blossoms, and bore ripe almonds. Remember, they were in a wilderness where such a thing could normally not be found. Then Jehovah commanded Moses to return each man’s rod to him, but to place Aaron’s before the testimony in the most holy place “**to be kept for a sign against the sons of rebellion, that thou may make an end of their murmurings against me, that they not die**” (Num. 17:10).

After seeing all of those signs, the sons of Israel said to Moses, “**Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone. Every man who comes near, who comes near to the tabernacle of Jehovah, dies. Shall we all of us perish?**” (Num. 17:12-13). So God told Aaron that only he and his sons were to do the ministry of the tabernacle and the altar. The other Levites were to assist them, but they were forbidden to come near the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar. Everybody else was to keep back to prevent further wrath upon them. For Jehovah said, “**And henceforth the sons of Israel shall not come near the tent of meeting, lest they bear sin, and die**” (Num. 18:22). That is one more example of how sin moves men further from God.

Jehovah also told Aaron about what he was to receive for his service, in addition to the assistance of his brother Levites. Among other things God said to him, “**And this is thine: the heave offering of their gift, even all the wave offerings of the sons of Israel. I have given them to thee, and to thy sons and to thy daughters with thee, as a portion forever. Everyone who is clean in thy house shall eat of it. All the best of the oil, and all the best of the vintage, and of the grain, the first-fruits of them which they give to Jehovah, I have given them to thee. The first-ripe fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring to Jehovah, shall be**

thine. Everyone who is clean in thy house shall eat of it” (Num. 18:11-13).

Heave and wave offerings were things given by the sons of Israel to Jehovah for his priests. Most of those things were items of food, like meat and bread, but it also included silver coins and other items of value. The terms heave and wave seem to have described motions with the hands containing the offering as a visible sign that it was given to God, like raising the offering up toward heaven, or lifting it up and waving it back and forth.

However, Jehovah also told Aaron that he would have no inheritance in the land. For he said, “**I am thy portion and thine inheritance among the sons of Israel**” (Num. 18:20). Likewise the tribe of Levi was not to receive an inheritance in the land. Jehovah said, “**And to the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they serve, even the service of the tent of meeting**” (Num. 18:21).

The sons of Israel were to give the Levites a tithe of their produce; it was like a tax to support them. However, the Levites were also to give a tithe of what they received, a tithe of the tithe. Jehovah said all the best was for Aaron and his sons, the priests.

Next Jehovah gave instructions to Moses and Aaron about selecting a red heifer for special ashes. It had to be one that was without blemish and upon which no yoke had come. After performing various activities associated with burning it outside the camp (with some other things added), its ashes were to be put in a clean place outside the camp where “**it shall be kept for the congregation of the sons of Israel for a water for impurity. It is a sin offering**” (Num. 19:9). The water of impurity was water that had some of the ashes mixed with it. And it was used during the process of purifying a man who had been unclean. An example followed, which was for a man who had touched the dead body of another man.

Miriam died in the wilderness of Zin and was buried. Afterward the people strove with Moses again about having no water, blaming him for making them leave Egypt for what they called “this evil place.” Therefore, Moses and Aaron fell on their faces at the door of the tent of meeting. The glory of Jehovah appeared to them, and he said to Moses, “**Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye to the rock before their eyes, that it give forth its water, and thou shall bring forth water to them out of the rock. So thou shall give the congregation and**

their cattle drink” (Num. 20:8). However, instead of speaking to the rock, Moses struck the rock twice, after saying, “**Hear now, ye rebels. Shall we bring forth water to you out of this rock?**” (Num. 20:10).

That act and those words were very uncharacteristic of Moses. They help reveal to us how tormented he was with their complaints and accusations. That time he let his feelings make him act rashly. He went beyond what God had told him, and he struck the rock instead of speaking to it. God did bring forth water from the rock, but he said to Moses and Aaron, “**Because ye did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the sons of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them**” (Num. 20:12). Those were called the waters of Meribah.

After that the book says Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom requesting permission to cross their territory. He told him they would take nothing without payment. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau. However, Edom came out with many people and refused to give Israel passage.

Aaron died and was buried after that, and Eleazar his son was given his place. The book says the people mourned for Aaron thirty days. Afterward a southern king of Canaan warred against Israel. The sons of Israel vowed a vow to Jehovah to destroy them. Then they defeated them, and utterly destroyed them and all of their cities as they had vowed.

A while later the people again became discouraged, and spoke against God and against Moses. This time Jehovah sent fiery serpents among them, and many of them died. So they came to Moses, and he prayed for them. God told Moses to make a fiery serpent so that whoever looked at it would survive being bitten. Moses made one out of bronze for them.

The next part tells about some of the places they were traveling. One of which was near the Amorites. As with Edom, Moses requested permission to cross their territory, but they refused, and went out to fight with them. However, Israel defeated them, and took all of their cities. And the book says, “**Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites**” (Num. 21:31).

The sons of Israel journeyed again, and “**encamped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan at Jericho**” (Num. 22:1). Balak was the king of Moab, and the record says he was exceed-

ingly afraid of the sons of Israel because he saw what they had done to the Amorites. Therefore, he sent messengers with rewards of divination to a prophet named Balaam, urging him to curse the sons of Israel. He said, “**For I know that he whom thou bless is blessed, and he whom thou curse is cursed**” (Num. 22:6).

Balaam told the messengers to wait until the next day for his answer. Then God said to Balaam, “**Thou shall not go with them. Thou shall not curse the people, for they are blessed**” (Num. 22:12). So Balaam told them Jehovah would not let him go. However, Balak sent even higher officials back to Balaam, promising him much honor. Balaam told his messengers that he could do nothing beyond the word of Jehovah. Nevertheless, he told them to wait and he would see what Jehovah would say again. This time God told him to go with them, but only speak what he was told.

On the way the donkey Balaam was riding kept giving him trouble. First she wandered off the road and went into a field. So Balaam struck her with his staff. Then she crushed his foot against the rock of a narrow place in the road. So Balaam struck her with his staff again. Finally, she just quit walking and sat down. So Balaam struck her with his staff a third time.

Here is what happened next: “**And Jehovah opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, What have I done to thee, that thou have smitten me these three times? And Balaam said to the donkey, Because thou have mocked me. I would there were a sword in my hand, for now I would have killed thee. And the donkey said to Balaam, Am not I thy donkey, upon which thou have ridden all thy life long to this day? Was I ever accustomed to do so to thee? And he said, No.** [Balaam was apparently so furious he was not even shocked when the donkey spoke.]

“**Then Jehovah opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the agent of Jehovah standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand. And he bowed his head, and fell on his face. And the agent of Jehovah said to him, Why have thou smitten thy donkey these three times? Behold, I have come forth as an adversary, because thy way is perverse before me. And the donkey saw me, and turned aside before me these three times. Unless she had turned aside from me, surely now I would have even slain thee, and saved her alive. And Balaam said to the agent of**

Jehovah, I have sinned, for I knew not that thou stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get back again. And the agent of Jehovah said to Balaam, Go with the men, but only the word that I shall speak to thee, that thou shall speak. So Balaam went with the rulers of Balak” (Num. 22:28-35).

Balaam had sinned by asking Jehovah the second time about going with the messengers of Balak. So apparently to punish him, God told him to go the second time, but it would not be to do what Balak wanted. When Balaam arrived Balak took him out to where they could see the camp of the sons of Israel. Three times at three different places Balak built seven altars and sacrificed seven bullocks and seven rams. And each time Balaam blessed the sons of Israel with many words instead of cursing them. The record says that Balak became angry and rebuked Balaam. However, Balaam reminded Balak he could not go beyond the word of Jehovah. Then he uttered an oracle telling how Israel was going to defeat many nations, including Moab. After that Balaam went to his place.

Besides provoking God about going with Balak, Balaam sinned even worse by giving counsel against the sons of Israel. At his advice Moabite women had gone out to lure the sons of Israel to worship their gods. For the record says, “**And the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab, for they called the people to the sacrifices of their gods. And the people ate, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself to Baal-peor, and the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel**” (Num. 25:1-3).

Balaam had apparently informed Balak that if the sons of Israel could be alienated from God, he would have a better chance to defeat them. For the book of Revelation says, “**... Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a snare before the sons of Israel, even to eat idol sacrifices, and to fornicate**” (Rev. 2:14). The text further on also tells of his involvement in that sin (see Num. 31:16). It was not coincidental that American soldiers committed much fornication with Vietnamese women, and America lost the war there.

Because of their sin Jehovah said to Moses, “**Take all the chiefs of the people, and hang them up to Jehovah before the sun, that the fierce anger of Jehovah may turn away from Israel**” (Num. 25:4). Therefore, Moses said to the judges of Israel “**Kill ye every one his men who have joined themselves to Baal-peor**” (Num. 25:5).

Then the book says, “**And, behold, one of the sons of Israel came and brought to his brothers a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the door of the tent of meeting. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from the midst of the congregation, and took a spear in his hand. And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stayed from the sons of Israel. And those who died by the plague were twenty-four thousand**” (Num. 25:6-9).

Because Phinehas was zealous to combat this threatening evil in their camp, Jehovah honored him, saying to Moses, “**Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned my wrath away from the sons of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the sons of Israel in my jealousy. Therefore say, Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace. And it shall be to him, and to his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was jealous for his God, and made atonement for the sons of Israel**” (Num. 25:10-13). Then Jehovah said to Moses, “**Vex the Midianites, and smite them, for they vex you with their wiles, with which they have beguiled you**” (Num. 25:17-18). Midian was apparently a part of Moab.

After the plague Jehovah commanded Moses and Eleazar to take another census. The first census was in preparation for the invasion of their promised land. However, that generation proved unworthy. And now forty years later, the new generation is preparing for the invasion. The names of many families in the tribes are also given in the description. The totals for each tribe are as follows:

• Reuben	43,730
• Simeon	22,200
• Gad	40,500
• Judah	76,500
• Issachar.....	64,300
• Zebulun	60,500
• Manasseh.....	52,700
• Ephraim.....	32,500
• Benjamin	45,600
• Dan	64,400
• Asher,	53,400
• Naphtali.....	45,400

The grand total of the sons of Israel “from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go forth to war” was 601,730, which was 1,820 less than the first census. The promised land was to be divided among them according to the census. Jehovah said to Moses: “**To the many thou shall give more inheritance, and to the few thou shall give less inheritance**” (Num. 26:54). However, the land was to be divided by lot. And since God controls the outcome of such things (see Pro. 16:33), he would determine how the land was divided.

The total number of the Levites from a month old and upward was also given. There were a thousand more of them than at the first census. They were not numbered with the other sons of Israel, “**because there was no inheritance given them among the sons of Israel**” (Num. 26:62).

Of the original population the record says, “**And there was not a man of them left, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun**” (Num. 26:65). That was fulfillment of the curse that God put upon them when they rebelled after being discouraged by the first spies.

Then the daughters of Zelophehad came to Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and the rulers of the congregation at the door of the tent of meeting. They asked to receive their father’s inheritance because he had no son. They said, “**Why should the name of our father be taken away from among his family, because he had no son?**” (Num. 27:4). After bringing the case to him, Jehovah said, “**The daughters of Zelophehad speak right. Thou shall surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father’s brothers, and thou shall cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them**” (Num. 27:7). And he went on to make it an ordinance that if a man died without a son, then his inheritance was to go to the nearest kin.

Sometime after that, Jehovah told Moses that it was time for him to die. Moses asked Jehovah to appoint a man over the congregation to lead them. Jehovah told him to take Joshua, lay his hands upon him, and present him before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation to be his successor. And Moses obeyed God.

Next the book gives Jehovah’s commands about his oblations, the various offerings at the altar. He told them what was required daily, on every sabbath day, and at the beginning of each month. He also told what was required at the Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks and all of the other things required in the seventh month, which

included offerings on the first day, the tenth day (the day of atonement), and the fifteenth day, which began the seven days of the feast of tabernacles. The day after that week was to be another solemn assembly. The record concludes that material with these words: **“These ye shall offer to Jehovah in your set feasts, besides your vows, and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings, and for your meal offerings, and for your drink offerings, and for your peace offerings”** (Num. 29:39).

The text then describes what Moses told the heads of the tribes about some other things Jehovah had commanded about vows. First, he said, **“When a man vows a vow to Jehovah, or swears an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth”** (Num. 30:2). It is very common for men to make a vow to God, then dismiss their part, saying that God does not care. But the Bible teaches otherwise. There was, however, a difference between men and women making vows. The law said that when a man vowed to God, he was bound by what he said. However, that rule was conditional with wives and daughters. God said that a woman’s husband could make it void when he heard about it. If he said nothing, however, then it would stand. And the same thing was the case for a daughter who was living with him. A man could cancel any vow made by his wife or daughter when he first heard of it. But a widow or divorced woman was bound by her vow.

Next Jehovah said to Moses, **“Avenge the sons of Israel of the Midianites. Afterward thou shall be gathered to thy people”** (Num. 31:2). So Moses sent a thousand troops from each tribe, twelve thousand men against Midian. He also sent Eleazar the priest with the vessels of the sanctuary and the trumpets for the alarm. And the troops killed every male, including their kings. The record says they also killed Balaam with the sword. They also burnt all of their cities and encampments, but they took their women and little ones captive, as well as all of their livestock and other goods. Moses, Eleazar, and the congregation all went out to meet them outside the camp when they returned.

However, Moses was angry with the officers, and he said, **“Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against Jehovah in the matter of Peor, and so the plague was among the congregation of Jehovah. Now therefore kill every male among the little**

ones, and kill every woman that has known man by lying with him. But all the women-children, who have not known man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves” (Num. 31:15-18).

He also gave them instructions, with Eleazar the priest, about purifying themselves and the things they brought back with them. Then he told them to inventory all of the living prey or booty that was taken—the virgin girls and the livestock—and divide them into two halves, half for the men who went to battle, and half for all the congregation. Notice that each man who fought received a much great proportion than any who remained in the camp. For they were only twelve thousand out of the six hundred thousand fighting men of Israel. Yet they received half of what was inventoried, in addition to the goods they found for themselves in Midian. During Bible times the men who risked their lives in battle were those who profited most from war, instead of those who sent them, as happens in modern times. They were more just.

Moses also commanded them to levy a tribute to Jehovah of what was inventoried. The men who fought were to give Eleazar one of every five hundred of the girls and of the different kinds of livestock. The congregation was to give the Levites one of every fifty of the girls and of the different kinds of livestock. The text gives the numbers of the girls and of the animals that each received of the prey taken from the Midianites.

Then the officers of the army, who had gone to the war told Moses they had not lost a single man in the conflict. Therefore they said, **“And we have brought Jehovah’s oblation, what every man has gotten, of jewels of gold, ankle-chains, and bracelets, signet-rings, ear-rings, and armlets, to make atonement for our souls before Jehovah”** (Num. 31:50). It was a freewill offering. So Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold, **“and brought it into the tent of meeting, for a memorial for the sons of Israel before Jehovah”** (Num. 31:54).

Sometime later, two of the tribes—the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad—approached Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the rulers of the congregation. They asked to settle on the eastern side of the Jordan river because they had much cattle, and that land was good for them. Moses first rebuked them for discouraging the people from going over into the promised land. But they assured him that, after establishing themselves in the eastern territory, all of their men of war would cross over and fight until the rest of the tribes had acquired their land.

So Moses agreed, as the record says: “**And Moses gave to them, even to the sons of Gad, and to the sons of Reuben, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land, according to the cities of it with their borders, even the cities of the land round about**” (Num. 32:33). Apparently half of the sons of Manasseh also chose to settle on the eastern side.

Next the book says, “**These are the journeys of the sons of Israel when they went forth out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of Jehovah**” (Num. 33:1-2). The description begins with the day after the first Passover when they left Egypt. The words “and they journeyed” occur forty-one times in that listing, which takes about a page in a modern Bible. The last entry says, “**And they encamped by the Jordan ... in the plains of Moab**” (Num. 33:49).

After that Jehovah again told Moses to warn the sons of Israel about driving out the Canaanites, and destroying their objects of religion. Then Jehovah described the exact boundaries of the land they were to take on the western side of the Jordan. And he gave the names of the men who were to allocate the land on that side, one leader from each of the remaining nine and a half tribes.

Next Jehovah commanded Moses about giving cities to the Levites, forty-eight in all, including the adjacent land extending out two thousand cubits all around. Six of them were to be cities of refuge, three on the eastern side of the Jordan, and three on the western side. He said furthermore, “**And concerning the cities which ye shall give of the possession of the sons of Israel, from the many ye shall take many, and from the few ye shall take few. Everyone according to his inheritance which he inherits shall give of his cities to the Levites**” (Num. 35:8).

Regarding the cities of refuge, Jehovah told Moses they were for “**the manslayer who kills any person unwittingly**” (Num. 35:11). Any man who murdered another was to be killed by “**the avenger of blood**” (Num. 35:19), who was usually a kin of the victim. However, if a man, whether a native or a foreigner, killed another unwittingly, then when the congregation judged him “according to these ordinances,” meaning innocent of murder (or negligent homicide, about which laws were given earlier, e.g., Exo. 21:29), they were to protect him from the avenger of blood until he could flee to one of those cities. And he had to remain there until the death of the high priest. If he left earlier, he could be killed legally by the avenger of blood. That would encourage people to be extra careful to avoid accidentally killing someone else. Many accidental deaths could be avoided if we had laws like that.

No murderer was to be slain on the testimony of a single witness. And no ransom could be taken for the life of a murderer, or from the manslayer to leave his city of refuge early. Jehovah said that otherwise the land would become polluted with blood, “**And no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, but by the blood of him who shed it**” (Num. 35:33). Which is one more reason why the land of America is becoming more polluted spiritually.

The book concludes with an adjustment to the land inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad. Some men came to Moses, and warned that if those daughters married outside their tribe, it would lose those lands. Hence, Jehovah commanded all such women to marry only within their tribe so as to preserve the integrity of the tribal lands. And the book says, “**Even as Jehovah commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad**” (Num. 36:10). No doubt Jehovah has foreknowledge of all potential problems. However, he does not want to do everything for us. Remember, he created this world for us to work with him. And finding problems and their solutions is part of our duty.

A Description of **Deuteronomy**

Deuteronomy means second law, because in it Moses reviewed many of their laws, and added some others. The book begins, “**These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness.**” It says Kadesh-barnea at the southern border of Canaan was only eleven days journey from Horeb (Sinai). That was where they had sent the first spies forty years before. It was only an eleven day journey from Sinai to their promised land, but it was forty years before Jehovah allowed them in, because they had been so rebellious. He waited for a new generation. Then the book says, “**And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, according to all that Jehovah had given him in commandment to them**” (Deu. 1:3).

Most of this book is a record of what Moses told that new generation just before they invaded their promised land. He began by reviewing some of the history of the exodus from Egypt. He first said God commanded the sons of Israel at Horeb to go forth to the hill-country of the Amorites, which was the land Jehovah swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. He added that while they were at Sinai he had appointed wise men to be heads over them—captains of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens—to assist him in judging their disputes. And he had commanded them to judge justly.

He said they journeyed from Horeb through “**all that great and terrible wilderness**” (Deu. 1:19). Moses said when they came to the hill-country of the Amorites, he told them to go up, take possession, and fear not. However, they wanted to send men to search out the land. Moses said the thing pleased him, and he selected twelve men, one man from each tribe. When they returned they said, “**It is a good land which Jehovah our God gives to us**” (Deu. 1:25). Yet the people would not go up, but rebelled. He said to them, “... ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because Jehovah hated us, he has brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us” (Deu. 1:27). They said their brothers (the spies) had made their heart melt because they told them the inhabitants were greater and taller than they.

Moses said he tried to calm their fears, assuring them that Jehovah their God would fight for them as

he had in Egypt. But they did not believe Jehovah. Therefore, Jehovah became angry, saying, “**Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see the good land, which I swore to give to your fathers, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh**” (Deu. 1:35-36). Remember, Joshua and Caleb were the only two faithful spies, and Jehovah said they would go in and possess the land. Moses said Jehovah was also angry with him for their sakes, and he was not allowed to go in either. God told the people their little ones, whom they claimed would be a prey, would be given the land. Then Jehovah told Moses to turn, and journey into the wilderness.

Moses then told them how they had confessed their sin after hearing Jehovah’s punishment against them, and they said they would go up and fight. However, Jehovah told him to warn them not to go, because he would not be with them. Nevertheless, they continued to rebel and went anyway. Therefore, they were defeated. He said to them, “**And ye returned and wept before Jehovah, but Jehovah did not hearken to your voice, nor gave ear to you**” (Deu. 1:45).

Notice Jehovah would not forgive them even though they confessed and repented. Men who say he always will, ignore examples like these. When the apostle Paul wrote about those who perished in the wilderness, he said, “**Now all these things happened to those men for examples, and they were written for our admonition, to whom the ends of the ages came**” (1Co. 10:11). However, forgiveness for the salvation of our soul will be given for confession and repentance, because Jesus said, “**I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven to men, but the blasphemy of the Spirit will not be forgiven men**” (Mat. 12:31). What is blasphemy of the Spirit has been much debated, but I believe no man who confesses and repents should worry about it. It probably refers not to a single act but to hearts hostile to the Spirit of God. For Jesus made that statement when his enemies claimed his power to cast out demons was from Beelzebul ruler of demons.

After that Moses told the people of Israel about some of their travels during the forty years they were condemned to remain in the wilderness. At God’s command they avoided armed conflict with the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites. Remember, the Edomites were the sons of Esau, and

the Moabites and Ammonites were the sons of Lot. However, they did fight against Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, utterly destroying their nations.

Moses told how he gave territories on the eastern side of the Jordan to the Reubenites and Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh because they requested it. He allowed them to settle in those lands, but he also commanded their armed men to cross over and fight with their brothers of the other tribes until they had received their inheritance.

Moses also told them how he had besought Jehovah to allow him to enter the promised land. He said, **“I besought Jehovah at that time, saying, O lord Jehovah, thou have begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy strong hand, for what god is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy mighty acts? Let me go over, I pray thee, and see the good land that is beyond the Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.”**

“But Jehovah was angry with me because of you, and did not hearken to me. And Jehovah said to me, It shall be enough for thee. Speak no more to me of this matter. Get thee up to the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold with thine eyes, for thou shall not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him, for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shall see” (Deu. 3:24-28).

Then Moses said, **“And now, O Israel, hearken to the statutes and to the ordinances, which I teach you, to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which Jehovah, the God of your fathers, gives you”** (Deu. 4:1). And he told them to neither add to the word he commanded them nor take from it. He told them how he had taught them the statutes and ordinances of Jehovah, and he urged them to obey them: **“Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what great nation is there that has a god so near to them, as Jehovah our God is whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?”** (Deu. 4:6-8)

Then he told them how the mountain in Horeb **“burned with fire to the heart of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness”** (Deu. 4:11), and how Jehovah spoke to them out of the fire, giving them the ten commandments, which he later wrote upon two tablets of stone. He warned them not to make a graven image, or worship anything else, for God chose them to be his people.

And again Moses told the sons of Israel that because of them Jehovah became angry with him, and swore he could not go over the Jordan. No doubt Moses was deeply disappointed about that, but I suspect Moses used that example to show them that if God would deprive him of that blessing, he certainly would do the same with them if they provoked him. Therefore, let no man be so presumptuous as to think that God will be more forgiving with him than he was with Moses when he sinned. We know that Moses was given eternal life (see Mat. 17:3), but while on earth he had to take the punishment for his sin.

Moses again warned them not to forget their covenant with God, and make for themselves graven images. And he added these words: **“For Jehovah thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God”** (Deu. 4:24). And again, he solemnly warned them that after they had been a long time in the land, and made a graven image, and did evil in the sight of God, they would be utterly destroyed. And Jehovah would scatter the remnant of them among other nations. Yet, in their tribulation, if they sought him with all their heart and with all their soul, then they would find him, and would return to him. He said, **“For Jehovah thy God is a merciful God. He will not fail thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore to them”** (Deu. 4:31).

Moses further encouraged the sons of Israel saying, **“For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from the one end of heaven to the other, whether there has been anything as this great thing is, or has been heard like it? Did a people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou have heard, and live? Or has God assayed to go and take for him a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that Jehovah your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? It was shown to thee, that thou**

might know that Jehovah he is God. There is none else besides him.

“Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee. And upon earth he made thee to see his great fire, and thou heard his words out of the midst of the fire. And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out with his presence, with his great power, out of Egypt, to drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as at this day.

“Know therefore this day, and lay it to thy heart, that Jehovah he is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath. There is none else. And thou shall keep his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy sons after thee, and that thou may prolong thy days in the land, which Jehovah thy God gives thee, forever” (Deu. 4:32-40). After saying those things Moses set apart three cities of refuge on the eastern side of the Jordan

This next part says, **“And this is the law which Moses set before the sons of Israel”** (Deu. 4:44). The sons of Israel were near the Jordan preparing for the invasion, and Moses was going to instruct them again about the **“testimonies, and the statutes, and the ordinances”** (Deu. 4:45) that Jehovah had given them. The book says, **“And Moses called to all Israel, and said to them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and observe to do them. Jehovah our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Jehovah did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. Jehovah spoke with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire”** (Deu. 5:1-4).

Then Moses restated the ten commandments, which say, in brief, (1) Jehovah alone is God, and they should have no others, (2) they were not to make any graven images or worship them, (3) they were not to take his name in vain, (4) they were to observe the sabbath day, no person or animal should do any work on that day, (5) they were to honor their father and their mother, (6) they were not to murder, (7) they were not to commit adultery, (8) they were not to steal, (9) they were not to bear false witness against their neighbor, and (10) they were not to want anything that belonged to their neighbor. The wording of the ten commandments in Deuter-

onomy is virtually the same as that recorded in the book of Exodus. The most noticeable difference between the two listings are the comments made about the sabbath day.

Then Moses reminded them how terrified they were by the fire, the cloud, the thick darkness, and a great voice of Jehovah. They even feared they would die if they heard the voice of God again. Therefore, the leaders asked Moses to speak to them the words of God instead, and they promised to obey. God approved their request, but he told Moses to urge them to obey so that it would go well with them. Of course, that was forty years before, and those people died in the wilderness (all the adults but two) because they did not obey. However, their children were still alive to remember those events. So Moses again urged the sons of Israel to be obedient so that it would be well with them.

Then he gave what Jesus said was the greatest of all the commandments: **“Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah. And thou shall love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might”** (Deu. 6:4-5). And Moses told the sons of Israel to keep Jehovah’s commandments ever present with them: **“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart. And thou shall teach them diligently to thy sons, and shall talk of them when thou sit in thy house, and when thou walk by the way, and when thou lie down, and when thou rise up. And thou shall bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shall write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates”** (Deu. 6:7-9).

The expression “thy gates” is used in Deuteronomy twenty-eight of the thirty-five times it is used in the Bible. It most often refers to any external entryway. Hence, God’s words for them were to be located in their most prominent places. In early America the ten commandments were commonly displayed in public buildings such as courthouses. Indeed, a display of the ten commandments still hangs over the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Moses warned the people again. He said that when they are given the good things of the land which Jehovah promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, they should beware lest they forget Jehovah, and go after other gods. He told them if they did that then Jehovah would destroy them in his anger. And he told them not to challenge God as

they had at Massah (where they demanded water to drink).

Then he told them to teach their sons why they had all those testimonies, and statutes, and ordinances. They were to tell their sons how Jehovah rescued them from slavery in Egypt with a mighty hand, and brought them to the land he had sworn to give to their fathers. Therefore Jehovah gave them all those commandments, so he could bless them and preserve them. And again Moses warned them not to make any covenants (treaties) with the nations they were to dispossess, nor to enter into marriages with them. They were instead to utterly destroy them—without mercy—and break down all their religious objects and burn them.

Moses told them, “**For thou are a holy people to Jehovah thy God. Jehovah thy God has chosen thee to be a people for his own possession, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth**” (Deu. 7:6). He said it was not because they were more numerous than other peoples, but rather that Jehovah loved them, and wanted to keep the oath he swore to their fathers. He said God is faithful and loving to those who love and obey him, but he will repay those who hate him by destroying them. Moses told them if they would “**hearken to these ordinances, and keep and do them**” (Deu. 7:12), then God would love them and bless them. He said, “**Thou shall be blessed above all peoples**” (Deu. 7:14).

Again he told them to destroy the nations they were to dispossess, adding, “**Thine eye shall not pity them. Neither shall thou serve their gods, for that will be a snare to thee**” (Deu. 7:16). He told them not to be afraid of them. He said God would send the hornet against them to drive them out. And he said again that God would drive them out little by little so the land would be preserved for them, and would not fall into decay. With many other words he assured them they would be victorious. And he again warned them to destroy their gods, and burn their graven images. Regarding every object of their worship he said, “**Thou shall utterly detest it, and thou shall utterly abhor it, for it is a cursed thing**” (Deu. 7:26).

He again urged them to be obedient. Then he said, “**And thou shall remember all the way which Jehovah thy God has led thee these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble thee, to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou would keep his commandments, or not. And he humbled thee, and allowed**

thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knew not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of Jehovah. Thy raiment did not grow old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. And thou shall consider in thy heart, that, as a man chastens his son, so Jehovah thy God chastens thee. And thou shall keep the commandments of Jehovah thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him” (Deu. 8:2-6).

Moses continued to speak many words of encouragement to them. He told them what a good land Jehovah was giving them. And he warned them not to become proud, and forget Jehovah when they became prosperous. He said if they went after other gods, then Jehovah would make them perish like the nations they were going to dispossess.

He also rebuked them, saying, “**Do not speak thou in thy heart, after Jehovah thy God has thrust them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness Jehovah has brought me in to possess this land. Whereas for the wickedness of these nations Jehovah drives them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart, do thou go in to possess their land, but for the wickedness of these nations Jehovah thy God drives them out from before thee, and that he may establish the word which Jehovah swore to thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Know therefore, that Jehovah thy God does not give thee this good land to possess it for thy righteousness, for thou are a stiff-necked people**” (Deu. 9:4-6).

He told them not to forget how many times they had rebelled against Jehovah. And he described the case of the golden calf. He said he had been forty days and forty nights on the mount, after which Jehovah gave him the two stone tablets of the covenant. Then Jehovah sent him back down, telling him how the people had corrupted themselves, and turned aside from him. God was going to destroy them because they were a stiff-necked people. Moses said when he saw they had made the calf he broke the two tablets.

Then he said, “**And I fell down before Jehovah, as at the first, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which ye sinned, in doing that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot**

displeasure with which Jehovah was angry against you to destroy you. But Jehovah hearkened to me that time also. And Jehovah was very angry with Aaron to destroy him. And I prayed for Aaron also at the same time” (Deu. 9:18-20).

He told how he destroyed the calf. Then he reminded them how they had rebelled against God’s command to go up and possess the land. He told them they had not believed Jehovah nor hearkened to his voice. Then Moses said, “**Ye have been rebellious against Jehovah from the day that I knew you”** (Deu. 9:24). He said Jehovah told him to bring two more tablets of stone for him to write on to put in the ark. So he went back up the mountain for another forty days and forty nights.

Then Moses again encouraged the people, and urged them to love Jehovah their God: “**And now, Israel, what does Jehovah thy God require of thee, but to fear Jehovah thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of Jehovah, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold, to Jehovah thy God belongs heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that is in it.**

“Only Jehovah had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all peoples as at this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked. For Jehovah your God, he is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great God, the mighty, and the awesome, who regards not persons, nor takes reward. He executes justice for the fatherless and widow, and loves the sojourner in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the sojourner, for ye were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

“Thou shall fear Jehovah thy God. Him thou shall serve, and to him thou shall cling, and by his name thou shall swear. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, who has done for thee these great and awesome things, which thine eyes have seen. Thy fathers went down into Egypt, in souls, seventy. And now Jehovah thy God has made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude. Therefore thou shall love Jehovah thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his ordinances, and his commandments, always” (Deu. 10:12-11:1).

Moses mentioned how Jehovah had drowned the army of Egypt, and had opened the mouth of the

earth to swallow up Dathan and Abiram. Then he said, “**... your eyes have seen all the great work of Jehovah which he did**” (Deu. 11:7). He told them therefore they ought to keep his commandments. He said their promised land was a land “**flowing with milk and honey**” (Deu. 11:9). He said its climate was different from that of Egypt. He said if they obeyed Jehovah he would give them rain and he would bless the land. However, if they served other gods, Jehovah would dry up the land causing them to perish.

And he urged them, as he had earlier, to keep the words of God ever present before them: “**Therefore ye shall lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul. And ye shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when thou sit in thy house, and when thou walk by the way, and when thou lie down, and when thou rise up. And thou shall write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates, that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your sons, in the land which Jehovah swore to your fathers to give them, as the days of the heavens above the earth**” (Deu. 11:18-21).

He told them if they were obedient, then their territory would be large, and they would be mighty among the nations. Indeed, he said, “**There shall no man be able to stand before you. Jehovah your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he has spoken to you**” (Deu. 11:25).

Then he said, “**Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse**” (Deu. 11:26), the blessing for obedience, and the curse for disobedience. He told them that after they had crossed over into the land, they were to set the blessing on mount Gerizim, and the curse on mount Ebal. That meant where to utter them. And again he commanded them to destroy all the religious objects of those nations.

Then he said to them that God would choose a special place where they must make their various sacrifices and offerings. (God later chose Jerusalem for that place.) He said, “**... there ye shall bring all that I command you: your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave-offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow to Jehovah. And ye shall rejoice before Jehovah your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and the Levite who is within your**

gates—inasmuch as he has no portion nor inheritance with you” (Deu. 12:11-12).

And he warned them not to make their burnt-offerings anywhere, but only in the place Jehovah would choose. Nevertheless, he said they could eat flesh in their own places if the one that God chose was too far away, but not their offerings or any blood. Then he said again about where to offer their sacrifices. And he again urged obedience for their welfare.

Moses again warned them against the gods of the nations they were going to dispossess. He said, “**For every abomination to Jehovah, which he hates, they have done to their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods**” (Deu. 12:31). And again he told them to be obedient to what he commanded them, saying they should neither add to it nor diminish from it.

Then he instructed them about prophets and dreamers. He said if any man gives a sign or wonder that comes to pass, then says to go after other gods, they should not listen, but should remain loyal to Jehovah. He said it would be God letting it happen, to prove them, to see if they would remain loyal to him. He said they should put that man to death because he spoke rebellion against Jehovah. And he said that if a brother, or a son, or a daughter, or a wife, or a close friend entices someone to serve other gods, then he should neither listen to him nor pity him nor conceal him, but he and the people should kill him. He also told them to utterly destroy any city, and everything in it, if the people of that city turned away from Jehovah, but only after confirming that it was true.

He told them not to disfigure their appearance when they mourned for the dead, for they were a holy people to Jehovah, chosen to be his own people above all others. God wanted them to look and act with dignity, even in mourning. Then he described the kinds of animals they could eat and not eat. And he spoke of a tithe which they were supposed to eat in the special place Jehovah would choose, although they could exchange it for money if the place was too far, and buy what they needed there. He said, “**And thou shall eat there before Jehovah thy God, and thou shall rejoice, thou and thy household**” (Deu. 14:26). Also every three years they were to store a tithe in their cities. It was to be kept for the Levites, the travelers, the fatherless, and the widows who might live in them so they would always have something to eat. By so doing God would bless their labor.

Next Moses spoke about the seventh year release. He said, “**Every creditor shall release that which he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it from his neighbor and his brother, because Jehovah's release has been proclaimed**” (Deu. 15:2). That probably meant not to exact it during the seventh year. For example, if a man bought an ox he would have to pay all he owed on it, but he would not have to make any payments that year. The year of release was to be a year when people with debt payments could have relief for a year, and not that lenders would lose everything they lent. At least that is what I believe it means, although others have suggested alternate interpretations. The year of release was also most likely the sabbath year of the land when they were not allowed to cultivate crops or harvest them commercially. Those were times of generosity, and Moses encouraged them to be obedient, saying, “**Jehovah thy God will bless thee as he promised thee, and thou shall lend to many nations, but thou shall not borrow, and thou shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over thee**” (Deu. 15:6).

Moses spoke further about the poor. He told the sons of Israel to lend enough for their needs. That probably meant for sustenance not for conveniences. He warned them not to consider the year of release when a poor man wanted to borrow. And he again encouraged them, saying, “**Thou shall surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou give to him, because for this thing Jehovah thy God will bless thee in all thy work, and in all that thou put thy hand to. For the poor will never cease out of the land. Therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shall surely open thy hand to thy brother, to thy needy, and to thy poor, in thy land**” (Deu. 15:10-11).

Unlike ancient Israel, modern America is a socialist country. And so our rulers force us to give our money to the poor and needy, that is, the ones whom they decide need help. It is good for the poor and needy to be helped. However, God’s way was that his people give voluntarily to those they saw that needed help, not their rulers. It is a much more efficient way of doing it, but only if people give generously and wisely as Moses taught.

He also described again the law requiring a bondman to be released at the end of six years service, and he urged them to be generous when the man left. Their bond service was like a man signing up for six years service in the U.S. Army. At the end of the six years he is free to go. However, if the Isra-

elite bondman wanted to stay on, then he could commit himself to lifelong bond service by having a hole punched in his ear. And again Moses said Jehovah would bless them for being obedient.

Moses reminded them that all the firstling males of their herds and flocks were to be sanctified to Jehovah. They were to “**eat it before Jehovah thy God year by year in the place which Jehovah shall choose, thou and thy household**” (Deu. 15:20). They were not to use them for any other purpose. However, if any of the firstlings were blemished in any way, then they were to eat those at their own places. And again he warned them against eating blood.

Moses reminded them to observe the Passover and the other feasts, which, he said, must be done in the place Jehovah chose, not in their own territories. The Passover had to be eaten with unleavened bread, which he called “the bread of affliction.” He told them it was because “**thou came forth out of the land of Egypt in haste, that thou may remember the day when thou came forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life**” (Deu. 16:3).

The feast of unleavened bread came immediately after the Passover. The feast of weeks was seven weeks later. And the feast of tabernacles was to be after they gathered in from their threshing-floors and their winepresses. The book says earlier that the feast of tabernacles was to be during the seventh month. Also several times at this place in the book of Deuteronomy, as well as in other places in the book, Moses commented that the times of their feasts were to be times of rejoicing.

He concluded this last review of their feasts by saying, “**Three times in a year all thy males shall appear before Jehovah thy God in the place which he shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles. And they shall not appear before Jehovah empty. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of Jehovah thy God which he has given thee**” (Deu. 16:16-17).

Then he commanded them to appoint judges and officers “in all thy gates,” which in this case probably meant in all their communities. And he emphasized just judgments, saying, “**... they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. Thou shall not distort justice. Thou shall not respect persons, neither shall thou take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise, and perverts the words of the righteous. Thou shall follow that which is altogether just, that thou may live, and**

inherit the land which Jehovah thy God gives thee” (Deu. 16:18-20).

After that he warned again about foreign gods. He said that any man who worshiped another god should be stoned to death. And he said again that no man is to be put to death from the testimony of a single witness. Then he told them what they should do just before the stoning. He said, “**The hand of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So thou shall put away the evil from the midst of thee**” (Deu. 17:7). The witnesses who testified to that capital crime were also to be the first to cast the stones.

He also said if there was any case or controversy that was too hard for them, then they were to go to the place which Jehovah had chosen. There, he said, “**thou shall come to the priests the Levites, and to the judge who shall be in those days, and thou shall inquire. And they shall show thee the sentence of judgment**” (Deu. 17:9). And he told them they were to abide by the decision. In fact, any man not doing so would be subject to the death penalty. And again he said, “**And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously**” (Deu. 17:13). The book tells of several times when Moses told the sons of Israel that hearing about punishment would be a deterrent to sin.

Next Moses gave the qualifications of a king when they decided to set one over themselves. He had to be an Israelite. He was not to multiply horses for himself (especially from Egypt), or multiply wives for himself, or multiply silver and gold for himself. He was to write a copy of the law in a book, and read in it every day of his life so that he would fear Jehovah and keep all of his laws. That would prevent him from becoming proud and sinning.

After that Moses told them about supporting the priests, the Levites, because they would have no inheritance in the land. Then he warned them against those who burn their children in sacrifice, and those who practice divination. He said those things were an abomination to Jehovah, and he was going to drive out the peoples of Canaan because they did such things.

Next he told them about the Christ who was to come. Jehovah said to Moses, “**I will raise up a prophet for them from among their brothers, like thee. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that who-**

ever will not hearken to my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him” (Deu. 18:18-19). Peter applied that scripture to Jesus, as reported in Acts 3:22-23.

Jehovah also warned the people about false prophets. He said they could be recognize if any of their predictions failed. Then he spoke again about setting apart three cities of refuge for the manslayer, the man who killed his neighbor accidentally, such as might happen if the head of an ax came off and hit him. And he said if God enlarged their border with more land, as he had promised to their fathers, then they were to add three more such cities. Having those places would prevent innocent lives being killed by the avengers of blood. However, murderers were to receive no pity. They were not to be protected by the cities of refuge.

After warning about removing landmarks, Moses spoke about giving testimony. He said again that a single witness could not convict a man for any wrong. He said if a man proved to be a false witness against another man, then whatever punishment would have been given to the accused, should go to him. He said, “**... ye shall do to him, as he had thought to do to his brother. So shall thou put away the evil from the midst of thee”** (Deu. 19:19). Furthermore, he said, “**And thine eyes shall not pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot”** (Deu. 19:21). O what evils would be prevented if Americans knew that was the fate of false witnesses.

Next Moses gave some special laws about going to war. He said when they went forth to battle, the priest was to go with them, and tell the men not to fear, but that Jehovah would fight for them. Then the officers were to say, “**What man is there who has built a new house, and has not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it. And what man is there who has planted a vineyard, and has not used the fruit of it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man use the fruit of it. And what man is there who has betrothed a wife, and has not taken her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her”** (Deu. 20:5-7). The officers were even to say this to the troops: “**What man is there who is fearful and faint-hearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest his brother’s heart melt as his heart”** (Deu. 20:8). It is better to have a few courageous men in war, than a lot of cowards.

Regarding any city they might oppose, Moses told them to first offer terms of surrender, to serve them. But if they refused, then after they had conquered the city they were to kill every male. Everyone else and everything else could be booty for them. However, Moses reminded them that all the people of the cities in the promised land were to be utterly destroyed. God had condemned them. Finally, he said they were not to cut down fruit trees for siege works.

Next he told them what to do in the case of an unsolved murder to exonerate the community nearest the slaying. Then he told them about the rights of female war captives they might marry, and the rights of first-born sons of wives they regarded inferior (in a polygamous relationship). He also told them how parents could have an incorrigible son put to death, after which he again said, “**So thou shall put away the evil from the midst of thee, and all Israel shall hear, and fear”** (Deu. 21:21). Parents were not always blamed for having rebellious sons. Then he gave several brief laws about various things, examples of which are the following:

- “**Thou shall not see thy brother’s ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them. Thou shall surely bring them again to thy brother”** (Deu. 22:1).
- “**A woman shall not wear that which pertains to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for whoever does these things is an abomination to Jehovah thy God”** (Deu. 22:5).
- “**When thou build a new house, then thou shall make a guard rail for thy roof, that thou not bring blood upon thy house, if any man falls from there”** (Deu. 22:8).
- “**Thou shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together”** (Deu. 22:10).

Next he described what is to be done if a man took a wife, and then accused her of not being a virgin when he married her. If she was innocent the man was to be publicly chastised, and pay a hundred shekels (a large sum) to the woman’s father. However, if she was guilty she was to be stoned. And again Moses said, “**So shall thou put away the evil from the midst of thee”** (Deu. 22:21). He also gave regulations about various circumstances when a man rapes a virgin.

Then he said, “**He who is wounded in the testicles, or has his private part cut off, shall not**

enter into the assembly of Jehovah. A bastard shall not enter into the assembly of Jehovah, even to the tenth generation none of his shall enter into the assembly of Jehovah” (Deu. 23:1-2).

What is meant by “assembly of Jehovah” is not well understood, hence, there are various theories. Other passages refer to the assembly of Jehovah as all Israel (see Num 20:4 and 1Ch. 28:8 as examples). Perhaps the above restriction was about those becoming proselytes. Moses also said neither an Ammonite nor a Moabite should ever be allowed into the assembly of Jehovah, nor should they seek their welfare, because they did not aid them when they came out of Egypt, but instead opposed them. However an Edomite and an Egyptian could enter after three generations.

And again Moses listed several brief laws about various things. I only describe some of them here. He said when they went to war they should not leave their body waste on the ground, but should bury it. He said, **“For Jehovah thy God walks in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee. Therefore thy camp shall be holy, that he may not see an unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee”** (Deu. 23:14).

He said they should allow an escaped servant to remain free. None of them should be a sodomite, and none of their daughters should be a harlot. They should not charge interest to a brother Israelite. They should keep their vows to God. He told them how they could eat from another man’s crops. He told them conditions about divorcing a woman. He also gave this interesting law: **“When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out in the army, neither shall he be charged with any business. He shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer his wife whom he has taken”** (Deu. 24:5). That probably meant a first wife, and not every additional one a man might take in those days.

He said, **“The fathers shall not be put to death for the sons, neither shall the sons be put to death for the fathers. Every man shall be put to death for his own sin”** (Deu. 24:16). He also told them that a man could be whipped for punishment, but with no more than forty stripes. That was to prevent humiliating him. For Moses said, **“He shall not exceed, lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem debased to thee”** (Deu. 25:3). Whipping, including adults, was commonly done in

America when there was much less crime and more freedom to live right. Some other nations still do it. For example, in Singapore they whip with a small bamboo rod for minor crimes. They call it caning. And Singapore is one of the safest and most law abiding of countries. I have been there, and the people are prosperous and happy with their government.

Moses also told how they were to punish a man who would not perform the duty of a husband’s brother to his widow. Then he told them again about dealing with Amalek after they had settled in their land. He said, **“... thou shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. Thou shall not forget”** (Deu. 25:19). That was because of their unprovoked attack soon after the sons of Israel had left Egypt.

Next he spoke to them about their offerings of first-fruits to Jehovah, and about the third-year tithe. He even told them the exact words they were to utter when they gave the gift basket of first-fruits to the priest. The baskets of first-fruits were for the priests who attended the altar, and the words were a remembrance of Jehovah’s deliverance of them from Egypt to the promised land. He also told them what they were to say after they finished the third-year tithe. That tithe was to provide food for the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who might be within their gates. What they were to utter was a statement of their honesty about what they gave.

After that he again encouraged them to be obedient. Among his words he said they had avouched Jehovah to be their God that day to obey him. And he said Jehovah had avouched them that day to be a people of his own possession to bless them. He also commanded them to set up and plaster great stones after they had crossed the Jordan, and write the words of the law on them (no doubt meaning the ten commandments). They were also to build an altar with non-carved stones to sacrifice offerings, and eat and rejoice before God there.

Then the book says that Moses and the priests, the Levites, spoke to all the people, saying, **“Keep silence, and hearken, O Israel. This day thou have become the people of Jehovah thy God. Thou shall therefore obey the voice of Jehovah thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day”** (Deu. 27:9-10).

The same day Moses commanded six of the tribes, after they crossed the Jordan, to stand upon

mount Gerizim to bless the people, and the other six were to stand on mount Ebal for the curse. The Levites were to shout the curses, and after each one the people were to say, Truly. There were twelve curses, and they dealt with some of the things they were forbidden to do. Examples were: making a molten image, dishonoring father or mother, removing landmarks, leading the blind astray. The last one said, **“Cursed is every man who does not continue in all the words of this law to do them”** (Deu. 27:26).

Then Moses described Jehovah's blessings for their obedience, and his curses for disobedience. Some of the things he said for obedience were that they would be blessed in the city and in the field. He said the fruit of their body, the fruit of their ground, and the fruit of their livestock would be blessed. He said they would be blessed when they came in and when they went out. They would defeat their enemies, be prosperous, and be a leader among the nations. All of which was contingent upon their faithful obedience to God.

The description of Jehovah's curses against them for disobedience is about four times longer than the one for their blessings. Some of the things he said were that they would be cursed in the city and in the field. The fruit of their body, the fruit of their ground, and the fruit of their livestock would be cursed. They would be cursed when they came in and when they went out. He said, **“Jehovah will send upon thee cursing, discomfiture, and rebuke, in all that thou put thy hand to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly, because of the evil of thy doings, by which thou have forsaken me”** (Deu. 28:20).

God said he would send all kinds of evils against them, including diseases, drought, deprivation, oppression and defeat by enemies. Then he told them of the horrors of war that would come upon them. Their distress and starvation would be so great, that even the most delicate and refined men and women among them would resort to eating their own children in secret, begrudging any of it to anyone else. And in the end their nation would be destroyed, and the remnant of them would be scattered among the nations, where they would struggle to survive in fear and sorrow. It is hard to think of worse things that could come upon a people than the description that Moses gave them of the consequences of their disobedience.

Then Moses gave them more words of encouragement to remain faithful to Jehovah their God. He

reminded them of how Jehovah had continued with them after their exodus from Egypt. He told them of their covenant with God to be his people. And he again warned against turning to the gods of the other nations. He said that in a generation to come both their sons and all the nations will ask why the land was ruined with so many calamities, and men will say it was because they forsook their covenant with Jehovah, and worshiped other gods. Then he said to them that when both the blessing and the curse come upon them in the future, and they returned to Jehovah and obeyed him, then Jehovah would bring them back from where they were scattered, and he would again bless them. He told them that would happen if **“thou turn to Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul”** (Deu. 30:10).

Moses continued to encourage their obedience, saying among other things, **“For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off”** (Deu. 30:11), and, **“I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore choose life, that thou may live, thou and thy seed, to love Jehovah thy God, to obey his voice, and to cling to him, for he is thy life, and the length of thy days, that thou may dwell in the land which Jehovah swore to thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them”** (Deu. 19:20).

Then he said to them, **“I am a hundred and twenty years old this day”** (Deu. 31:2). He said Jehovah would not allow him to cross the Jordan, but God would still be with them. He told them to be strong and of good courage, and fear not, for Jehovah would not forsake them. Then he called Joshua who was to replace him, and gave him words of encouragement.

After that the record says Moses wrote the law, and gave it to the priests and all the elders of Israel. And he told them that during every year of release (every seventh year) at the feast of tabernacles, they were to assemble the people, **“the men and the women and the little ones, and thy sojourner who is within thy gates”** (Deu. 31:12), and read the law to all of them so they could learn it.

Next the record says, **“And Jehovah said to Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die. Call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tent of meeting, that I may give him a command”** (Deu. 31:14). Jehovah appeared to them there in a pillar of cloud, and he commanded Moses to write a song for the people, because he said that

after they had become prosperous in the land, they would turn to other gods, and despise him. He said, “**And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song shall testify before them as a witness, for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed. For I know their imagination which they frame this day, before I have brought them into the land which I swore**” (Deu. 31:21).

The record says that Moses wrote the song that same day, and taught it to the sons of Israel. He commanded the Levites to put the book of the law beside the ark of the covenant. Then he rebuked the people severely, saying, “**For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck. Behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against Jehovah, and how much more after my death? Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days, because ye will do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands**” (Deu. 31:27-29).

Moses spoke the words of the song to the entire assembly of Israel. God knew what they were going to do. So part of the song foretells the future as if it were the past. It begins by saying how good and faithful is Jehovah God, but how corrupt men are. Yet he is their father. It says that God gave to the nations, but Jehovah’s portion is his people, Jacob, and he blessed him greatly. But, the song says, “**Jeshurun [which means upright] grew fat, and kicked. Thou have grown fat. Thou have grown thick. Thou have become sleek. Then he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation**” (Deu. 32:15). They provoked God because of their foolishness. It says God would have scattered them afar if it were not that their enemies would have misjudged the reason why. Jehovah longed for them to be wise, but they produced gall and poison. So God will take his vengeance. And when their calamity comes God will ask them where their gods were to save them (see Judges 10:14 for an example).

In the song Jehovah said, “**See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me. I kill, and I make alive. I wound, and I heal. And there is**

none that can deliver out of my hand” (Deu. 32:39). In the song God said he would cause much bloodshed when he renders vengeance to his adversaries, and will recompense those who hate him. However, it concludes with words of hope: “**Rejoice, O ye Gentiles, with his people. For he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will recompense those who hate him, and will make expiation for his land, for his people**” (Deu. 32:43).

The book says that both Moses and Joshua the son of Nun spoke the words of the song to the people. After which Jehovah told Moses to go up to mount Nebo to see the land of Canaan, and then die on the mountain because he had trespassed against him at the waters of Meribah. However, before that Moses invoked a blessing upon the sons (tribes) of Israel, just as Jacob had. He began by saying that Jehovah loved them, and gave them a law, and became their King. Moses mentioned all of the sons of Israel except Simeon. Although he began with the firstborn Reuben, he does not seem to have spoken about the rest of them in any particular order. He seems to have spoken most highly of Levi and Joseph. Remember, Ephraim and Manasseh were the sons of Joseph that Jacob had adopted so that Joseph would have two tribes represented.

Moses concluded his blessing by praising God, and saying, “**Happy are thou, O Israel. Who is like thee, a people saved by Jehovah, the shield of thy help, and the sword of thy excellency! And thine enemies shall submit themselves to thee, and thou shall tread upon their high places**” (Deu. 33:29).

Afterward the book says that Moses went up on the mountain, and Jehovah showed him all the land, even all of the territory. Then Moses died, and the text says that no man knows of his sepulcher. And I pray that no man ever knows. The sons of Israel mourned for him thirty days.

The last words of this book are a brief eulogy of Moses. It says, “**And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders, which Jehovah sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all the mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel.**”

A Description of **Joshua**

Jehovah told Joshua the son of Nun that his servant Moses was dead, and he was now to lead the people across the Jordan river to the promised land. He described the range of the land, and assured him of victory, saying, "**There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee**" (Jos. 1:5). Remember, they were going to be fighting a lot of strong enemies, so Jehovah told him to be strong and courageous, and not be frightened.

He also urged him to keep all the law, saying to him, "**This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shall meditate on it day and night, that thou may observe to do according to all that is written in it, for then thou shall make thy way prosperous, and then thou shall have good success**" (Jos. 1:8).

Therefore, Joshua commanded the officers to prepare the people to invade the land that Jehovah was giving them within three days. Then he reminded the men from the two and a half tribes, who took their land on that side of the Jordan, of their promise to cross over and support the invasion. And they said they would submit to his command.

After that Joshua sent two spies across to view the land and the city of Jericho. When the men came to Jericho they lodged in the house of a harlot named Rahab. The king of Jericho heard of it, and he sent to arrest them. However, Rahab hid the spies, and told the king's men they had left the city. So they went out and searched for them. After they left she told the spies how terrified the city was of the sons of Israel, and she made them swear to her that they would spare her and her father's house. So they did, and then went away to hide in the mountains until their pursuers quit searching for them. Then they returned to Joshua with a good report.

Three days after arriving at the river, the sons of Israel prepared for the crossing. The officers commanded the people to watch for the ark of the covenant of Jehovah. When they saw the priests carrying it, they were to follow about two thousand cubits behind. Also Joshua said to the people, "**Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow Jehovah will do wonders among you**" (Jos. 3:5). And he told the priests to lead the people with the ark of the covenant. Then Jehovah told Joshua that he would begin to magnify him in the sight of all Israel, as he had with Moses.

And he told him to command the priests with the ark to stand in the river. So Joshua spoke to the sons of Israel, and told them the words of Jehovah. He said their crossing would be a sign to them that Jehovah would support their invasion. He said when the feet of the priests who carry the ark touched the river, the waters would separate.

Therefore, the people moved out to cross the Jordan behind the priests carrying the ark of the covenant. Remember, however, they were commanded to have a space of two thousand cubits (over half a mile) between them. The book says it was harvest time, the time when the Jordan overflowed its banks. Yet the waters separated when the feet of the priests were dipped in the brink, piling up above and flowing away below. So the priests stood on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and they remained there until all the nation crossed over.

Joshua had earlier commanded the people to select a man from each tribe, twelve men. After all the people had crossed the river, Jehovah told Joshua to command those men to take one stone each from where the priests had stood in the river, and bring them to Gilgal where they were going to camp. Joshua did so, and he told the sons of Israel it was for a monument, a sign for future generations of what the mighty hand of Jehovah had done for them. The book says that Joshua also set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan where the priests had stood.

When all the kings of the land heard how Jehovah had dried up the waters that way, the book says, "**... their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the sons of Israel**" (Jos. 5:1). Then Jehovah told Joshua to make knives of flint to circumcise the sons of Israel, because none of those who were born in the wilderness had been. The sons of Israel also kept the Passover in Gilgal. Also they began eating the produce of the land the next day, and the following day the manna ceased.

The book says when Joshua was near Jericho he saw a man opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand. After going to him, Joshua said, "**Are thou for us, or for our adversaries?**" (Jos. 5:13). The man said he came as captain of the army of Jehovah. So Joshua fell on his face and worshiped, saying, "**What does my lord say to his servant?**" (Jos. 5:14). The captain of Jehovah's army told him to

take off his shoes, for the place where he stood was holy. So Joshua did. Then Jehovah told Joshua how he wanted him to defeat Jericho. They were to walk around the city once for each of six days in the following manner: seven priests were to blow seven trumpets made of ram's horn ahead of the ark, with men of war in front and behind. However, they were to utter no other sound. On the seventh day they were to encompass the city seven times, then make a long trumpet blast. When the people hear the trumpet, they were to all shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city would fall down flat. Then they should attack.

Joshua therefore instructed the people accordingly. And the people did as he commanded them. Then on the seventh pass of the seventh day, when the priests gave the trumpet signal, Joshua said to the people, "**Shout, for Jehovah has given you the city**" (Jos. 6:16). And when the people shouted the wall fell down flat, and they utterly destroyed everything alive in the city. Except Joshua sent the two spies to rescue the harlot and all who were with her, as they had sworn. The book says that Rahab dwelt on the wall, so that part of it must have remained standing. They set her and those with her outside the camp of Israel, because she hid the spies. However, Rahab must have stopped being a harlot, because the record says she "**dwelt in the midst of Israel to this day**" (Jos. 6:25). The sons of Israel also burned the city and everything in it except for the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, which were to be for the treasury of the house of Jehovah, as Joshua had earlier instructed them. Then Joshua uttered a curse upon the city. He said, "**Cursed be the man before Jehovah who rises up and builds this city Jericho. With the loss of his firstborn he shall lay the foundation of it, and with the loss of his youngest son he shall set up the gates of it**" (Jos. 6:26). It must have been a very wicked city.

The book then says that the sons of Israel trespassed against Jehovah in what was set apart. A man took some of the things. Hence, God was angry with them, but the people were unaware of it. The next city to be taken was Ai. And when Joshua told men to spy out the land, they returned and said it was a little place; they only needed to send a small force against them. So three thousand troops went, but they were repulsed, with a loss of thirty-six men. The record says when that happened, "**the hearts of the people melted, and became as water**" (Jos. 7:5). Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell on his

face before the ark of Jehovah until evening, he and the elders. They put dust on their heads, and Joshua asked Jehovah why he had brought them over to be defeated. However, Jehovah said to him, "**Get thee up. Why are thou thus fallen upon thy face? Israel has sinned**" (Jos. 7:10-11). Then he told him about the transgression, and commanded him to sanctify the people for the next day. Jehovah was going to first select the guilty tribe, then the guilty family of that tribe, then the guilty household of that family, then its guilty man. And he was to take the man with all that he had, and burn him with fire. It was, Jehovah said, "**because he has wrought folly in Israel**" (Jos. 7:15).

So Joshua rose early the next morning, and did as Jehovah commanded him. And the guilty man was Achan. When Joshua asked him what he had done, he confessed, saying, "**Of a truth I have sinned against Jehovah, the God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoil a goodly Babylon mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them. And, behold, they are hid in the ground in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it**" (Jos. 7:20-21)

Joshua sent messengers who went and brought those things to him and all the sons of Israel, and they laid them down before Jehovah. Then the book says, "**And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the mantle, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his donkeys, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them up to the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why have thou troubled us? Jehovah shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and they burned them with fire, and stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones, to this day, and Jehovah turned from the fierceness of his anger. Therefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, to this day**" (Jos. 7:24-26).

Thirty-eight soldiers lost their lives, and the guilty man's sons and daughters perished with him. It was a single man who sinned, and he did so secretly, although his family must have been aware of it (see Deu. 24:16). Yet Jehovah was angry with the entire nation. In this life sin causes the innocent to suffer as well as the guilty. God's own Son was killed because other men sinned. It is the nature of

this evil world. Why it is that way is not easy to understand. Our duty is to trust God without having to understand everything. Jehovah has a good reason for everything that may happen to us. Indeed, the apostle Paul said, "**And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to purpose**" (Rom. 8:28). Take comfort in those words when you see the innocent suffer.

After Achan was stoned, Jehovah told Joshua to set an ambush behind Ai to take the city. So after setting the ambush, some other troops went to Ai. They retreated as they had before, which drew all of the men out of the city to pursue them. Then Jehovah told Joshua to raise his javelin toward Ai. When he did the ambush entered the city and set it afire. When the men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke rising, the sons of Israel attacked them both in front and behind. They killed all the inhabitants of the city with the sword, which were twelve thousand souls, and they hanged the king on a tree. Joshua did not draw back his hand until they were utterly destroyed, as Jehovah had commanded him.

Then Joshua built the altar of stones at mount Ebal as was written in the book of the law of Moses, and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to Jehovah. The record also says he wrote a copy of the law of Moses on the stones in the presence of the sons of Israel. However, it was probably only the ten commandments.

The book also says, "**And all Israel, and their elders and officers, and their judges, stood on this side of the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, as well the sojourner as the home born, half of them in front of mount Gerizim, and half of them in front of mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of Jehovah had commanded at the first, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who were among them**" (Jos. 8:33-35).

When all the kings on the west side of the Jordan heard of the Israelite victories, they joined forces to fight them. However, the inhabitants of Gibeon decided to trick Israel into making a treaty with them. They sent men who pretended to be ambassa-

dors from a far distant land. They wore old clothes, and they had donkeys carrying old sacks with old bread and wine-skins. They told Joshua and the men of Israel they had heard of their fame, and they wanted to make a covenant with them. The book says that the men of Israel "**did not ask counsel at the mouth of Jehovah**" (Jos. 9:14).

Therefore, Joshua made a covenant of peace with them, and the rulers swore to them. Then after three days they discovered the truth. The congregation murmured against the rulers for allowing them to live, but they said they could not harm them because they had sworn by Jehovah. Joshua asked the Gibeonites why they had deceived them. He said to them, "**Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall never fail to be bondmen of you, both hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God**" (Jos. 9:23). The Gibeonites said it was because they knew Jehovah had commanded Moses to destroy all the inhabitants of the land, and they feared for their lives. So they were made slaves, to do the manual labor required to supply the wood and water for the congregation and for the altar of Jehovah.

Later, when the king of Jerusalem heard about the defeat of Ai and Jericho, and the treaty of Gibeon, he also feared greatly. So he invited the kings of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon to join him in attacking Gibeon. And when the men of Gibeon saw the armies against them, they sent to Joshua for deliverance. Therefore, Joshua and the men of war went up from Gilgal. Jehovah told Joshua to fear not, for none of them would stand before him. The book says that Joshua came upon them suddenly. Moreover, Jehovah confused them so that they were killed with a great slaughter. Also, while they were fleeing from Israel, Jehovah sent great hail stones from the sky upon them. More died from the hailstones than from the sword.

Joshua also prayed to God in the sight of Israel for the sun and the moon to stand still. So the book says, "**And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? And the sun stayed in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that Jehovah hearkened to the voice of a man, for Jehovah fought for Israel**" (Jos. 10:13-14).

The five kings fled and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah. When it was told Joshua, he

commanded them to roll great stones to the mouth of the cave, set guards by it, then continue pursuing their enemies. He also told them not to allow the enemy to enter into their cities. After much killing, with only a remnant of them able to enter into their fortified cities, Joshua commanded the cave to be opened and the kings brought out. Then he called all the men of Israel, and he told the chiefs of the troops to put their feet on the necks of those kings. And he said to them, “**Fear not, nor be dismayed. Be strong and of good courage, for thus shall Jehovah do to all your enemies against whom ye fight**” (Jos. 10:25). Then Joshua killed the five kings and hanged them on five trees until the evening. After which they were cast into the cave and great stones were placed over it.

That same day Joshua took Makkedah, and utterly destroyed it and all the souls in it. After that he fought against several other cities, including three of the four that had joined with the king of Jerusalem against them.

Then the book says, “**So Joshua smote all the land, the hill-country, and the South, and the lowland, and the slopes, and all their kings. He left none remaining, but he utterly destroyed all that breathed, as Jehovah, the God of Israel, commanded. And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even to Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even to Gibeon. And all these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because Jehovah, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp to Gilgal**” (Jos. 10:40-43).

After that the king of Hazor made league with many other kings to come against Israel. The record says there were so many men they were like the sand upon the sea-shore in multitude. And they had very many horses and chariots. But Jehovah told Joshua not to be afraid of them, for he would deliver them all slain before Israel. And he was to hock their horses, and burn their chariots with fire. Therefore, Joshua made another surprise attack, killing them all. And he did to their horses and chariots as Jehovah had commanded him. Then Joshua turned back and took the city of Hazor, killing all who were in it, and burning the city with fire. And he did the same to all the cities of those kings, utterly destroying them as Moses the servant of Jehovah commanded.

The book goes on to say, “**But as for the cities that stood on their mounds, Israel burned none of them, except only Hazor. Joshua burned that.**

And all the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the sons of Israel took for a prey to themselves, but every man they smote with the edge of the sword until they had destroyed them, neither did they leave any who breathed. As Jehovah commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that Jehovah commanded Moses” (Jos. 11:13-15).

Then, after naming a few other territories they had conquered, the record says, “**Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. There was not a city that made peace with the sons of Israel, except the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon. They took all in battle. For it was of Jehovah to harden their hearts, to come against Israel in battle, that he might utterly destroy them, that they might have no favor, but that he might destroy them as Jehovah commanded Moses. ... So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that Jehovah spoke to Moses. And Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land had rest from war**” (Jos. 11:18-23).

Next the book lists the many kings whom the sons of Israel had killed, and describes a little about their territories. First it tells about the two kings, Sihon and Og, and their territories on the eastern side of the Jordan, which Moses had given to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Then it describes the territory on the western side, and lists many cities there. Usually each city had its own king, although some kings apparently dominated others. For example, the record says that the city of Hazor was the head of some other kingdoms. There were thirty-one cities from the western side that are mentioned. Here is a partial listing of those:

“... the king of Jericho, one;
the king of Ai, which is beside Bethel, one;
the king of Jerusalem, one;
the king of Hebron, one;
the king of Jarmuth, one;
the king of Lachish, one ...” (Jos. 12:9-11).

When Joshua was old, Jehovah told him that much land remained to be possessed. He said he would drive their inhabitants out, but he wanted Joshua to allot the land to Israel for an inheritance as he commanded him. He reminded him that the two tribes plus the half-tribe of Manasseh had already received their inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan, and the remaining nine tribes, and the other half-tribe needed theirs. Only the tribe of Levi was given

no inheritance; his was from the offerings of Jehovah. The record next gives a detailed description of the territories of the two and a half eastern tribes—Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh—which were in the plains of Moab. It describes their borders, and the cities and villages of them.

Then it says that Caleb, one of the two faithful spies from the original twelve, came to Joshua in Gilgal. Caleb reminded Joshua of Jehovah's promise to him, that Jehovah would give him certain land. He said, "**And now, lo, I am this day eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me**" (Jos. 14:10-11). Therefore, he asked for the land. So Joshua blessed him, and he gave him Hebron for his inheritance. The book says it was "**because he wholly followed Jehovah, the God of Israel**" (Jos. 14:14).

The book next tells about the lot for the tribe of the sons of Judah. Remember, the lands were to be distributed by lot. It first gives a detailed description of its borders. Then it mentions Caleb. His portion was among the sons of Judah, and the record tells of his conquests. It also tells how he promised to give his daughter as wife to whomever would take one particular city. Afterward, she asked him for springs of water because she was in southern lands, and he gave them to her.

Next is a listing of the many cities in the territory of Judah. One hundred and twelve cities with their villages are named, although the villages themselves are not named. The cities are listed in groups of ten. There are twenty-nine of the "outermost" cities listed. In the lowland there are three groups consisting of fourteen, sixteen, and nine cities with their villages. Also the three major cities of the Philistines are named. Those were, "**Ekron, with its towns and its villages, from Ekron even to the sea, all that were by the side of Ashdod, with their villages. Ashdod, its towns and its villages, Gaza, its towns and its villages, to the brook of Egypt, and the great sea, and the border of it**" (Jos. 15:45-47).

In the hill-country there were six groups consisting of eleven, nine, ten, six, two, and six cities with their villages. That description of the land of Judah ends by saying, "**And as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the sons of Judah could not drive them out, but the Jebusites dwell with the sons of Judah at Jerusalem to this day**" (Jos. 15:63).

After that was the lot for the sons of Joseph—Manasseh and Ephraim. It gives a description of the

borders of the sons of Ephraim first. Then it says, "**This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim according to their families, together with the cities which were set apart for the sons of Ephraim in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages. And they did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer, but the Canaanites dwell in the midst of Ephraim to this day, and have become servants to do task work**" (Jos. 16:8-10).

Next it tells about the lot for the tribe of Manasseh. There were six sons of Manasseh, but one of them, Zelophehad, had no sons; instead, he had five daughters. So the five sons of Manasseh who had a male lineage, plus the five daughters of Zelophehad were combined, as Jehovah had commanded Moses. That gave the tribe of Manasseh ten parts by lot, besides what they had received on the eastern side of the Jordan. Then the text describes the borders of Manasseh. It also lists a few cities, and says, "**Yet the sons of Manasseh could not drive out those cities, but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when the sons of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to task work, and did not utterly drive them out**" (Jos. 17:12-13)

After that it says the sons of Joseph came to Joshua, saying "**Why have thou given me but one lot and one part for an inheritance, seeing I am a great people, inasmuch as until now Jehovah has blessed me?**" (Jos. 17:14). Joshua said if they were a great people then they should go up to the forest and clear the land for themselves. The sons of Joseph also complained that the Canaanites in the land of the valley had chariots of iron. And Joshua said to them, "**Thou are a great people, and have great power. Thou shall not have only one lot, but the hill-country shall be thine, for though it is a forest, thou shall cut it down, and the goings out of it shall be thine. For thou shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong**" (Jos. 17:17-18).

Then the record says, "**And the whole congregation of the sons of Israel assembled themselves together at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there, and the land was subdued before them**" (Jos. 18:1). However, seven tribes remained without their inheritance, and Joshua criticized them for being slow to take possession of the land which God had given them. Therefore, he appointed three men from each of those seven tribes to survey the territory. They were to come to him afterward, and

divide what they had surveyed into seven portions. Then Joshua would cast lots for them before Jehovah there. So they did as Joshua commanded them, and he casts lots for them in Shiloh before Jehovah.

After that the book says, "**And the lot of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin came up according to their families**" (Jos. 18:11). That is followed by details about its borders and cities. Two groups of cities with their villages are named, one with twelve cities, and the other with fourteen, one of which was "the Jebusite," which is Jerusalem. Jerusalem was on the border of Judah and Benjamin.

The second lot came out for Simeon, which was in the midst of the one for the sons of Judah. Two groups of cities with their villages are named, one with thirteen cities, and the other with four. The record says, "**The inheritance of the sons of Simeon was out of the part of the sons of Judah, for the portion of the sons of Judah was too much for them. Therefore the sons of Simeon had inheritance in the midst of their inheritance**" (Jos. 19:9).

The third lot came up for the sons of Zebulun, and their borders are described. They had twelve cities with their villages, although they are not named in a listing. The fourth lot came out for the sons of Issachar, and their borders are described. They had sixteen cities with their villages, and neither are they named in a listing. The fifth lot came out for the sons of Asher, and their borders are described. They had twenty-two cities with their villages, and neither are they named in a listing. The sixth lot came out for the sons of Naphtali, and their borders are described. They had nineteen cities with their villages. The record lists the names of sixteen that were fortified. The seventh lot came out for the sons of Dan, and their borders are described, but it does not say how many cities they had.

After they had made an end of distributing the land by describing all the borders, the book says the sons of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun. It says, "**According to the commandment of Jehovah they gave him the city which he asked**" (Jos. 19:50), which was a city in the hill-country of Ephraim. Then it says, "**These are the inheritances, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the sons of Israel, distributed for inheritance by lot in Shiloh before Jehovah, at the door of the tent of meeting. So they made an end of dividing the land**" (Jos. 19:51).

Then Jehovah spoke to Joshua, and told him to assign the cities of refuge from the avenger of blood for the manslayer who kills any soul unwittingly. God said the manslayer should stand at the entrance of the gate of the city, and declare his case to the elders. Then they were to protect him from the avenger of blood. However, he was not to depart from the city safely until the death of the high priest. Only then could he return to his own house. So they set aside three cities, one in Naphtali, one in Ephraim, and one in Judah. They also set aside three cities on the other side of the Jordan, one each in Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh.

Next the book says, "**Then the heads of fathers of the Levites came near to Eleazar the priest, and to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of fathers of the tribes of the sons of Israel**" (Jos. 21:1). They spoke to them at Shiloh, and reminded them that Moses commanded to give them cities to dwell in, and suburbs for their cattle. So the Levites were given cities with their suburbs (also by lot) according to their three families: Kohath, Gershon, and Merari.

The first lot was for the Kohathites. Of them the sons of Aaron received by lot thirteen cities out of the tribes of Judah, the Simeonites, and Benjamin. The rest of the sons of Kohath received by lot ten cities out of the tribes of Ephraim, Dan, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The sons of Gershon received by lot thirteen cities from the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The sons of Merari received twelve cities out of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun.

Then the book gives the names of the cities given to each group of the Levites, and from which tribe they were taken. It also names the cities of refuge. First listed are the ones for the sons of Aaron the priest, then those for the rest of the sons of Kohath. Next are the ones for the sons of Gershon. Last are the ones for the sons of Merari. There were a total of forty-eight cities with their suburbs that were allotted for the Levites, "**in the midst of the possession of the sons of Israel**" (Jos. 21:41).

After that the text says, "**So Jehovah gave to Israel all the land which he swore to give to their fathers, and they possessed it, and dwelt in it. And Jehovah gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore to their fathers. And there stood not a man of all their enemies before them. Jehovah delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not anything of any**

good thing which Jehovah had spoken to the house of Israel; all came to pass” (Jos. 21:43-45).

Then it says that Joshua called the men of the eastern tribes—the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh—and commended their faithfulness in remaining to help the other tribes win their inheritance. He also said to them, “**Only take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of Jehovah commanded you, to love Jehovah your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cling to him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul**” (Jos. 22:5). Then he blessed them, and sent them away to their tents with all the wealth they had gotten, which was “**very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with bronze, and with iron, and with very much raiment**” (Jos. 22:8). And he told them to share it with their brothers.

So they returned to Gilead, the land of their possession. And when they came to the area near the Jordan on the western side they built an altar. However, when the sons of Israel heard of it, the text says, “**the whole congregation of the sons of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up against them to war**” (Jos. 22:12). Remember, Moses had forbidden making sacrifices anywhere but the place of his choosing. And the sons of Israel had presumed that was the purpose of the altar they made by the Jordan. So they sent Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, and ten rulers, “**one ruler of a fathers’ house for each of the tribes of Israel**” (Jos. 22:14) to the men of the eastern tribes. And they asked them why they had rebelled against Jehovah. They reminded them of some past iniquities, and invited them to take their possession among them if their eastern lands were unclean.

Then the sons of Reuben, and the sons of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh denied building the altar to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings. They said that the Jordan was a border between them, and the altar was to be a witness between them and future generations, to remember that they are a part of Israel. Phinehas and the rulers were well pleased when they heard those words, and Phinehas said, “**This day we know that Jehovah is in the midst of us, because ye have not committed this trespass against Jehovah. Now ye have delivered the sons of Israel out of the hand of Jehovah**” (Jos. 22:31). And when they returned with that report to the sons of Israel, it also pleased them.

The book then says that after Jehovah had given them peace, and Joshua was old, that Joshua “**called for all Israel, for their elders and for their heads, and for their judges and for their officers**” (Jos. 23:2). And he spoke words of encouragement to them as Moses had done just before they crossed the Jordan. He reminded them how Jehovah had fought for them. And he reminded them of the nations that remained to be thrust out for the rest of their inheritance, saying Jehovah would drive them out. He told them to be very courageous, and obey all that is written in the book of the law of Moses.

He warned them against going among the nations that remained among them. He told them not to serve their gods, nor worship them, nor even mention their names. And he told them that if they clung to the remnant of those nations, and made alliances with them, that God would not drive them out. He said, “**... they shall be a snare and a trap to you, and a scourge in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which Jehovah your God has given you**” (Jos. 23:13). He told them they all knew how not one thing had failed of the good that Jehovah spoke of them. And he warned of their destruction if they turned from Jehovah to other gods.

After that the book says Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and again he called for the elders, and heads, and judges, and officers. And they all presented themselves before God. Then Joshua said to them, “**Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel**” (Jos. 24:2). Jehovah first gave a brief summary of their history, beginning with Abraham and the other patriarchs. He spoke of their exodus from Egypt, and the time of their wilderness wandering, and their invasion after crossing the Jordan. Jehovah ended his review by saying, “**I gave you a land in which thou had not labored, and cities which ye did not build, and ye dwell in it. Ye eat of vineyards and oliveyards which ye did not plant**” (Jos. 24:13).

Then Joshua said, “**Now therefore fear Jehovah, and serve him in sincerity and in truth. And put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve ye Jehovah. And if it seems evil to you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah**” (Jos. 24:14-15).

The people answered Joshua and said it would be far from them to forsake Jehovah to serve other gods. They confessed it was Jehovah who brought them out of bondage in the land of Egypt with great signs, and drove out the Amorites who dwelt in their promised land. Therefore, they would serve him. Joshua warned them again about forsaking Jehovah, but the people said, "**No, but we will serve Jehovah**" (Jos. 24:21). After which the text says, "**And Joshua said to the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen for you, Jehovah, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses**" (Jos. 24:22). Then Joshua urged them again to forsake foreign gods, and incline their hearts to Jehovah. And the people again said they would serve Jehovah.

So the record says that Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, setting them a statute and

ordinance in Shechem, and writing the words in the book of the law of God. And Joshua set up a great stone, and told the people that it was a witness against them of what they had said. Then he sent the people away, "**every man to his inheritance**" (Jos. 24:28).

Sometime after that Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Jehovah, died at the age of a hundred ten years, and was buried. The record says, "**And Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, and had known all the work of Jehovah that he had wrought for Israel**" (Jos. 24:31). It also states that they buried the bones of Joseph. Remember, Joseph had told the sons of Israel to bring his bones out of Egypt when they left there. The book ends with a statement about the death of Eleazar the priest, the son of Aaron.

A Description of Judges

After the death of Joshua the sons of Israel asked Jehovah who should go first to fight against the Canaanites. Jehovah said Judah should go, and he would give them victory. The book says Judah invited his brother Simeon to join forces with him, meaning the men of Judah and the men of Simeon went to war together. They killed ten thousand men, and captured their chieftain, cutting off his thumbs and great toes. Upon which he said, "**Seventy kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered scraps under my table. As I have done, so God has requited me**" (Jdg. 1:7). They also conquered Jerusalem, smote it with the sword, and set it on fire. And they conquered several other cities. Next the book adds the story told in the book of Joshua about Caleb giving his daughter to the man who conquered a particular city, and how she asked him for a field. Then later she asked him for springs of water, and he gave them to her.

The book continues by naming a few other places that Judah took. After that it says, "**And Jehovah was with Judah, and drove out those of the hill-country, but he could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron**" (Jdg. 1:19). That is a very puzzling passage. Perhaps Judah could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because Jehovah wanted to test him, for neither iron chariots nor anything else can withstand God. Or perhaps it was for their lack

of desire, for a little further in the book it says Jehovah rebuked them for that. There are many unexplained things in the Bible. Perhaps that is one way God tests our faith in him. The book also says that the sons of Benjamin could not drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem. The southern half of Jerusalem was in Judah, and the northern half containing the stronghold was in Benjamin. It was not until David that the stronghold was conquered.

Next it tells how the house of Joseph (Manasseh and Ephraim) sent spies to Bethel. When they saw a man coming from the city, they said they would spare him if he showed them the entrance to the city, which he did. Then they smote the city, but spared the man and all his family. After that it names some places where Manasseh did not drive out the Canaanites. It also states that Ephraim did not drive out all the Canaanites among them. It also says that Zebulun did not drive them out, but instead put them to forced labor. Neither did Asher drive out all of the Canaanites from their territory, nor did Naphthali, who put them to forced labor. Regarding the tribe of Dan, the book says that the Amorites drove them into the hill-country, while they dwelt in the valley. However, the house of Joseph, which bordered Dan, prevailed over the Amorites, and put them to forced labor.

Then the book says an agent of Jehovah came from Gilgal to Bochim. And through him, Jehovah

told the sons of Israel that he brought them out of Egypt to the land he swore to their fathers. And he said he would never break his covenant with them. He had commanded them to make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land, but to break down their altars. Yet they had not heeded his voice. He said therefore, “**I will not drive them out from before you, but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you**” (Jdg. 2:3). And when the people heard the agent of Jehovah, they lifted up their voice and wept. They also sacrificed there to Jehovah. They loved to make animal sacrifices, but they did not love to be obedient.

After that the book summarizes the cyclic pattern of their relationship with Jehovah. They would be faithful to him for a while, but then would turn to other gods, which would provoke him to give them over to their enemies. After they had suffered a while, they would plead for Jehovah to deliver them. And so he would raise up judges to save them. Yet after a while they would again forsake him for other gods. Here is that summary in full:

“Now when Joshua had sent the people away, the sons of Israel went every man to his inheritance to possess the land. And the people served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of Jehovah that he had wrought for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Jehovah, died, being a hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill-country of Ephraim, on the north of the mountain of Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered to their fathers.”

“And there arose another generation after them that did not know Jehovah, nor yet the work which he had wrought for Israel. And the sons of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served the Baalim. And they forsook Jehovah, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the peoples that were round about them, and bowed themselves down to them. They provoked Jehovah to anger.

“And they forsook Jehovah, and served Baal and the Ashtaroth. “And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that despoiled them. And he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Wherever

they went out, the hand of Jehovah was against them for evil, as Jehovah had spoken, and as Jehovah had sworn to them. And they were exceedingly distressed.

“And Jehovah raised up judges who saved them out of the hand of those who despoiled them. And yet they did not hearken to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods, and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly out of the way in which their fathers walked, obeying the commandments of Jehovah. They did not so. And when Jehovah raised up judges for them, then Jehovah was with the judge, and saved them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For Jehovah regretted because of their groaning because of those who oppressed them and vexed them.

“But it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they turned back, and dealt more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down to them. They did not cease from their doings, nor from their stubborn way. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and he said, Because this nation has transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not hearkened to my voice, I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations that Joshua left when he died, that by them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of Jehovah to walk in it, as their fathers kept it, or not. So Jehovah left those nations, without driving them out quickly. Neither did he deliver them into the hand of Joshua” (Jdg. 2:6-23).

Next the book names the nations which Jehovah left to prove Israel, to see if they would keep his commandments. They were the Philistines, the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in Lebanon. The Israelites never did occupy all of the land that Jehovah had intended for them. So the sons of Israel dwelt among the nations that Jehovah told them to exterminate. Consequently, as Jehovah had warned them, the book says, **“And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons and served their gods. And the sons of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and forgot Jehovah their God, and served the Baalim and the Asheroth” (Jdg. 3:6-7).**

Therefore, Jehovah was angered, and he sold them into the hand of the king of Mesopotamia,

whom they served for eight years. But when the sons of Israel cried to Jehovah, he raised up Othniel the son of Caleb's younger brother to be a savior to them. The book says that the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him and he judged Israel. He fought against the king of Mesopotamia, and Jehovah gave him victory. So the land had rest forty years.

After Othniel died the record says, "**And the sons of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah**" (Jdg. 3:12). Therefore, Jehovah strengthened Eglon king of Moab, who gathered the sons of Ammon and Amalek, and they defeated Israel. Israel served him eighteen years. But they again cried to Jehovah, and he raised up another savior, Ehud the Benjamite. When Ehud went to offer tribute to Eglon, he hid a short-sword under his raiment. The book says Eglon was a very fat man. After giving him the tribute, Ehud departed. However, after going a short distance, he returned and told Eglon he had a secret errand for him. When he was alone with him in an upper room, he told Eglon, "**I have a message from God to thee**" (Jdg. 3:20). Then he got up and thrust the sword through his body. He left Eglon with the sword still in him, and escaped by the porch after locking the doors of the upper room. Then Ehud blew a trumpet in the hill-country of Ephraim, and the sons of Israel there went with him against the Moabites. Since Moab was on the eastern side of the Jordan, the sons of Israel took the fords of the river, and would not allow any man to pass over. The Moabites in Israel must have been trying to flee back to Moab. The book says they killed about ten thousand men of Moab, "**every robust man, and every man of valor**" (Jdg. 3:29); none escaped. So Moab was subdued, and Israel had peace eighty years.

Then the record mentions another man, Shamgar, who also saved Israel. He killed six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad. However, after Ehud was dead the record says, "**And the sons of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah**" (Jdg. 4:1). So Jehovah gave them over to Jabin king of Canaan; his captain was Sisera. The sons of Israel again cried to Jehovah because Sisera had nine hundred chariots of iron, and "**he mightily oppressed the sons of Israel twenty years**" (Jdg. 4:3).

Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was a prophetess, and she judged Israel at that time. She dwelt under a palm tree in the hill-country of Ephraim, and the sons of Israel came to her for judgment. She called Barak out of Naphtali, and gave him a com-

mand from God. Jehovah told him to approach mount Tabor with ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and Zebulun. Jehovah told Barak he would draw Sisera to him at the river Kishron with all his chariots and troops, and he would deliver him into his hand. Mount Tabor is roughly ten miles west of the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, and Kishron flows from it to the Mediterranean Sea. However, Barak told Deborah that he would not go unless she went with him. Deborah said she would go, but the honor of taking Sisera would go to a woman instead of to him.

So they went, and Barak did as Jehovah commanded. When Sisera came against Barak, Deborah told him to attack, for Jehovah was with him. Then the book says, "**Jehovah discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his army, with the edge of the sword before Barak**" (Jdg. 4:15). However, Sisera left his chariot and escaped on foot to the tent of an ally named Heber, leaving his entire army while they were being killed. Heber's wife Jael gave him some milk and a place to sleep. But while he slept she drove a tent-pin through his temple and killed him. Then when Barak went in pursuit of Sisera, she went out and told him where to find him. After that the book says, "**And the hand of the sons of Israel prevailed more and more against Jabin the king of Canaan until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan**" (Jdg. 4:24).

Then it says that Deborah and Barak sang a song of victory. The song praises God, and speaks of his mighty power. It tells how oppressed they had been. It tells how the people had chosen new gods, therefore they were defeated. It tells how some came forth, and some sat back. It tells how the river Kishon swept the enemy away. It praises Jael for killing Sisera. It tells how Sisera's mother waited anxiously for his return, expecting him to bring much plunder. It ends by saying, "**So let all thine enemies perish, O Jehovah, but let those who love him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might**" (Jdg. 5:31).

After that the book says the land had peace forty years. Then it says, "**And the sons of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and Jehovah delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years**" (Jdg. 6:1). The Midianites were also very oppressive. The book says that because of them the sons of Israel made defensive positions in dens, caves, and strongholds. It says the Midianites came "as locusts for multitude" to destroy their crops and their livestock, leaving them no sustenance.

And so the book says, “**Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to Jehovah**” (Jdg. 6:6). Then Jehovah sent a prophet to the sons of Israel. Jehovah told them how he had brought them out of bondage in Egypt, and gave them the land of their enemies. He told them he was Jehovah their God, and he had commanded them not to fear their gods, but they had not hearkened to his voice.

After that the agent of Jehovah came and appeared in Manasseh to a man named Gideon, the son of Joash. He said to him, “**Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valor**” (Jdg. 6:12). Then Jehovah told him to go and save Israel. However, Gideon said, “**Oh, Lord, with what shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house**” (Jdg. 6:15). But Jehovah told him he would be with him. Then Gideon asked for a sign. He asked the agent to wait while he went and prepared some food for him. When he returned the agent brought fire from a rock to consume it, then he disappeared. That frightened Gideon, but Jehovah told him not to fear. And that night he told him to go and break down his father's altar of Baal and the Asherah next to it.

So Gideon took ten of his servants, and he did what Jehovah told him, but at night for fear of his father and the men of the city. When the men of the city arose that morning, and learned what Gideon had done, they demanded that Joash bring his son out because they wanted to kill him. That shows their zeal for Baal. However, Joash replied, “**Will ye contend for Baal? Or will ye save him? He who will contend for him, let him be put to death while it is morning. If he be a god, let him contend for himself because he has broken down his altar**” (Jdg. 6:31). That day Joash his father called him Jerubbaal because he said Baal should contend against him.

Next the record says that all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east came and encamped in the valley of Jezreel. Then it says, “**But the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, and Abiezer [descendents of one of the sons of Manasseh] was gathered together after him**” (Jdg. 6:34). He also sent messengers to all Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali and they joined him. Then Gideon asked Jehovah for another sign that he would save Israel by him. He placed a fleece of wool on the threshing floor, and asked that there be dew on it only, and it

happened. Then he asked that next time there be dew on the ground but not on the fleece, and it happened.

After that Jerubbaal (Gideon) and all his troops went near the camp of Midian. However, Jehovah told him there were too many people. He said if he used that many then Israel would become proud, and claim the victory was theirs not Jehovah's. So he said for him to tell whoever was fearful to return home. And 22,000 left, leaving 10,000 with Gideon, but Jehovah said there were still too many. So he had Gideon bring them to water, and select all who lapped with their hand. There were only 300 men who did so. Jehovah commanded him to send all the rest home.

That night Jehovah told him if he was afraid, to go down with his servant to the Midianite camp, and listen to what they said. That would strengthen his hands. Therefore he went down. The book says the enemy was in the valley like locusts for multitude, and their camels were as numerous as the sand on the sea-shore. When Gideon came he heard a man telling a dream to another man about a cake of bread upsetting a tent in their camp. The other man replied, “**This is nothing else except the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel. Into his hand God has delivered Midian, and all the army**” (Jdg. 7:14). When Gideon heard that he worshiped, and returned to the camp. Then he told his men to arise because Jehovah was going to give them victory. He divided the men into three companies, and gave them trumpets and empty pitchers with torches inside. He said for them to watch, and do as he did. So they came around the edge of the enemy camp in the middle of the night. They broke the pitchers, and held the torches with their left hand, blowing the trumpets with their right hand. They also cried out, “**The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon**” (Jdg. 7:20).

The record says they remained in their place around the camp, but the enemy army began to run and shout and flee. While they blew the trumpets, “**Jehovah set every man's sword against his fellow, and against all the army. And the army fled**” (Jdg. 7:22). Then the men of Israel assembled from Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh to pursue Midian. Gideon also sent messengers to Ephraim to come against Midian, so they also fought. Later they brought the heads of the two princes of Midian to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan, and they criticized him for not calling them when he went to

fight. Gideon convinced them their victory was greater than his. So they were appeased.

During the conflict, Gideon crossed the Jordan with his three hundred men. They were weary, but continued to pursue the enemy. When they came to Succoth they asked for bread. However, the rulers of the city doubted he would be victorious, and so they refused. Gideon told them that after his victory he would return and “**tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers**” (Jdg. 8:7). Then he went to Penuel and made the same request, but they gave him the same reply. So he said to them, “**When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower**” (Jdg. 8:9).

The record says there were 15,000 men left of the 120,000 troops of the enemy army. Gideon smote them, and captured their two kings. Then he returned from the battle, and on the way back he came to Succoth. The book says, “**And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. And he broke down the tower of Penuel, and killed the men of the city**” (Jdg. 8:16-17). When he learned that the Midianite kings had killed his brothers, the sons of his mother, he told them if they had not done it he would have spared their lives. So he killed them too.

Afterward the men of Israel asked Gideon and his son to rule over them. Gideon said, “**I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you. Jehovah shall rule over you**” (Jdg. 8:23). Nevertheless, he asked for the earrings of their spoil, with which he made an ephod. The record says all Israel played the harlot after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family. Then it says the land had rest forty years.

Gideon had seventy sons from his many wives. Another son, named Abimelech, was born of his concubine in Shechem. After Gideon died the sons of Israel again turned “**and played the harlot after the Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god**” (Jdg. 8:33). They neither remembered Jehovah, nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal. Abimelech went to Shechem where the kin of his mother were, and persuaded them to follow him. So he took the money they gave him, and hired “**vain and unstable fellows**” (Jdg. 9:4) to follow him. And he killed all seventy of his brothers, the sons of Jerubbaal, although Jotham the youngest escaped.

Then the men of Shechem made Abimelech king. When Jotham heard about it, he stood on the top of mount Gerizim and spoke a parable to them

about the trees setting the bramble to reign over them. He said if they had done right toward Jerubbaal and his house, then let them rejoice in Abimelech. But if not, then, “**let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo, and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech**” (Jdg. 9:20). Then he fled for fear of his brother Abimelech.

The record says that Abimelech ruled Israel for three years. It also says, “**And God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem, and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and that their blood might be laid upon Abimelech their brother who killed them, and upon the men of Shechem who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers**” (Jdg. 9:23-24).

Further details about how that was done are given in the book. In brief, Abimelech eventually fought against Shechem, killed all the people in it, and destroyed the city. Those who had escaped took refuge in a stronghold, but Abimelech set it on fire and killed all of them. Then when he went against another city, a certain woman threw an upper millstone down, which crushed his head. So it was that the men of Shechem and Abimelech perished. The book says, “**Thus God requited the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did to his father, in slaying his seventy brothers. And the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal came upon them**” (Jdg. 9:56-57). A justified curse can come to pass. However, Solomon said, “**As the sparrow in her wandering, as the swallow in her flying, so the curse that is causeless does not alight**” (Pro. 26:2).

After Abimelech died, a man of Issachar named Tola judged Israel twenty-three years. After him was Jair, the Gileadite, who judged Israel twenty-two years. Then the book says, “**And the sons of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah**” (Jdg. 10:6), and they served many other gods. That aroused the anger of Jehovah, and he sold them into the hand of the Philistines and the sons of Ammon. They oppressed them and fought against them. So much so, the book says, that “**Israel was exceedingly distressed**” (Jdg. 10:9). Then they cried to Jehovah again, confessing they had sinned and forsaken him. Jehovah reminded them of how many times he had saved them in vain. So he said, “**Therefore I will save you no more. Go and cry to the gods which ye have chosen. Let**

them save you in the time of your distress” (Jdg. 10:13-14). Yet they pleaded with Jehovah, and put away the foreign gods from among them to serve him. Jehovah is a loving God who does not enjoy seeing his people suffer. Indeed, the record says, “... **his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel**” (Jdg. 10:16). Sin brings grief to God as well as to men. If you love him, never forget that.

Next the book says the sons of Ammon assembled themselves, and the sons of Israel also assembled together. Both groups were in Gilead, which is the territory to the east of the Jordan. And the Israelite rulers there said that whoever would fight against the sons of Ammon would be head of Gilead. Jephthah was a Gileadite and a man of valor. However, he was the son of a harlot (making him a bastard), so when his brothers grew up they drove him out, denying him any inheritance. Then he fled to a place in Syria, and gathered vain fellows with him. But when the sons of Ammon made war against Israel the elders of Gilead sent for him to be their chief. Jephthah asked them if Jehovah delivered the sons of Ammon to him, would he be their head. And they said yes.

So Jephthah returned, and was made head and chief. Then he sent messengers to the king of the sons of Ammon asking why he came to fight against Israel. The king said it was because Israel had taken what belonged to them. However, Jephthah replied with some history. He explained that during their wilderness wanderings Israel had sought to avoid confrontations, but Sihon king of the Amorites fought against them and was defeated. (The Amorites had apparently taken their land from the sons of Ammon.) So Jehovah then gave it to the sons of Israel, who possessed it for three hundred years. Jephthah said therefore it was wrong of him to want it now. And he said Jehovah would be the judge between them. However, the king did not hearken to his words.

Then the record says the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Jephthah, and he went over to the sons of Ammon. He also made a vow to Jehovah, saying that if he gave him victory he would give to Jehovah as a burnt offering whatever came out of his house to meet him upon his return. It was a very foolish vow that brought sorrow to him and his family. He defeated the sons of Ammon “**with a very great slaughter**” (Jdg. 11:33). But when he returned, his only child, a daughter, came out to meet him. After he saw her, the record says that he tore his clothes, and said, “**Alas, my daughter! Thou have brought**

me very low, and thou are one of those who trouble me, for I have opened my mouth to Jehovah, and I cannot go back” (Jdg. 11:35).

Jephthah even blamed her for the consequences of his foolish vow. Nevertheless, she was a noble maiden who accepted his decision, and merely asked for two months to bewail her virginity in the mountains. After which he did to her as he had vowed. Jehovah expects vows to be kept, but not vows that lead to sin, especially one so horrible. And human sacrifice was strictly condemned in the law of Moses, being a capital crime. Yet it was a common practice among those nations, and Jephthah must have been deceived into thinking it would please God. Remember, killing children (abortion) is commonly practiced throughout the world these days. Jephthah thought he was doing right, but he did very wrong. In memory of her, the book says, “**And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to celebrate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year**” (Jdg. 11:39-40).

The men of Ephraim gathered together, and threatened to burn Jephthah’s house upon him because he had not called them when he went to attack the sons of Ammon. Jephthah defended himself by telling them they had not come to his aid when he called for them earlier. Then he fought them, and 42,000 men of Ephraim perished. The record says he judged Israel six years. After him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel seven years. Next was Elon the Zebulunite, who judged ten years. He had thirty sons and thirty daughters. After him Abdon the Pirathonite judged eight years. He had forty sons.

Next the record says, “**And the sons of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and Jehovah delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years**” (Jdg. 13:1). Then it tells about the birth of Samson. His father was Manoah of the tribe of Dan. His wife was barren, so they had no children. However, an agent of Jehovah appeared to her, and told her she was going to bear a son. And he warned her to drink no wine nor strong drink, nor to eat anything unclean. He also told her that no razor should come upon his head, for he was to be a Nazirite to God from the womb. And he told her that he would begin to save Israel from the Philistines.

When she told her husband Manoah, he prayed to Jehovah to send “the man of God” back to teach them what to do about the child. So the agent

appeared to the woman again, and she ran and told her husband. After hearing the same instructions, they went home, prepared a burnt offering, and brought it to him. Then the agent ascended into heaven in the flame on the altar, which caused Manoah and his wife to fall on their faces. Manoah thought they had seen God and were going to die, but his wife convinced him otherwise.

When she bore the son she called him Samson. When he was grown he saw a daughter of the Philistines, and asked his father and mother to get her for him to wife. They tried to dissuade him but he insisted. For the book says, "**But his father and his mother knew not that it was of Jehovah, for he sought an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines had rule over Israel**" (Jdg. 14:4). While Samson and his father and mother were going to see about the woman, the record says a young lion threatened Samson. Then the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him, and he tore him apart with his bare hands as if he were a kid (a young goat). His father and mother did not see that happen, and the book says he did not inform them.

Later when Samson returned to take the woman he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion. And there was a swarm of bees with honey in the body. So he took the honey and ate as he went. When he came to his father and mother he gave to them, but did not tell them where he got it. At the feast he told a riddle to thirty of the young men there. He said if they could explain it within seven days he would give them thirty linen garments and thirty changes of raiment, otherwise they would have to give him that much. The riddle was: "**Out of the eater came forth food, and out of the strong came forth sweetness**" (Jdg. 14:14). The record says his wife tried to get the explanation from him the whole seven days, weeping about it. And on the seventh day the men threatened to kill her and her family if she did not find it out. So she pressed him greatly and he told her. Then she told them.

Samson knew they had learned it from her. The record says the Spirit of Jehovah came upon him mightily, and he went to one of their cities, Ashkelon, and killed thirty men for their raiment to give to the others. Then he went back to his father's house in anger, and his wife was given to a companion he had among the Philistines. Sometime later he returned to his wife with a kid, expecting to go in to her. However, her father would not allow him because he had given her to another man thinking he

hated her. Then he offered her younger sister to him. Instead, Samson went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied their tails together in pairs with firebrands in-between. Then he set them loose in the standing grain of the Philistines, burning the shocks, the standing grain, and the oliveyards. When the Philistines learned why he did it, they burnt his wife and her father with fire. The Philistines were a savage and brutal people. Because they did that, the record says Samson "**smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter**" (Jdg. 15:8).

Then the Philistines came against Judah. When the men of Judah inquired why, they said, "**We come up to bind Samson, to do to him as he has done to us**" (Jdg. 15:10). Therefore, three thousand men of Judah went to get Samson. They told him that the Philistines ruled over them, and he was causing trouble. Samson replied, "**As they did to me, so have I done to them**" (Jdg. 15:11). The men of Judah said they had come to bind him for the Philistines. Samson allowed them, but only after the men of Judah swore they would not kill him. When he was delivered to the Philistines, he broke the ropes, found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, and killed a thousand of them with it. The book says Samson judged Israel twenty years.

Sometime later he went to Gaza, and went in to a harlot there. The Philistines surrounded the city, but he escaped during the night by lifting up the doors of the gate and the two posts, and carrying them to the top of a mountain. After that he loved a woman named Delilah. So the lords of the Philistines bribed her with much money to find the secret of his strength. With an ambushment near by, she kept prodding him about how he could be bound. He finally gave her an answer, but not the correct one. He told her something three times that way. Each time she tried it while he slept, then she would test him by saying the Philistines were upon him. Yet each time he broke free easily.

Delilah kept urging him, using her feminine wiles, until the record says, "**And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, that his soul was vexed to death**" (Jdg. 16:16). So he told her the truth, saying he was a Nazirite to God, and if his head were shaved all his strength would be gone. Then she called for the lords of the Philistines, and assured them that this time she really knew. Then after Delilah had Samson's head shaved while he slept, the Philistines came and captured him because Jehovah had departed from him. The Philistines put out his eyes,

and brought him to Gaza, bound with fetters of bronze. And he was put to work grinding in the prison.

However, the book says that his hair began to grow back. Later the lords of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their God, and to praise him for delivering Samson to them. When their hearts were merry they called for Samson to entertain them. Samson asked the lad who led him by the hand if he could feel the pillars that supported the house. The record says there were about three thousand men and women on the roof watching him entertain them. When Samson was between the two middle pillars, he prayed to Jehovah saying, **“O lord Jehovah, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes”** (Jdg. 16:28). He also asked to die with the Philistines. Then he pushed with all his might, and the house fell, killing more than all he had before. Afterward his brothers buried him in the burying-place of Manoah his father. The record says again he had judged Israel twenty years.

The last part of this book tells two stories about two different tribes of Israel. These stories may have been included to illustrate how ignorant of the law of Moses the people were, and how sinfully some of them were living.

The first story tells how some of the sons of Dan settled in the far north of Israel. There was a man of Ephraim named Micah. He confessed to his mother that he had stolen the eleven hundred pieces of silver from her (after he heard the curse she made about it). In her joy she said, **“I verily dedicate the silver to Jehovah from my hand for my son to make a graven image and a molten image”** (Jdg. 17:3). That is an example of the confused mix of religious beliefs by the people. One of the ten commandments specifically forbids making such things. She was either unaware of the command, or she rationalized not obeying it as so many people do about his other commands.

Therefore, she took two hundred pieces of the silver to the founder to make a graven image and a molten image for her son. What the images were is not stated. Nevertheless, the record says, **“And the man Micah had a house of gods, and he made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest”** (Jdg. 17:5). Then the record says that a young man, a Levite from Bethlehem-judah, was looking for somewhere to live, so

Micah paid him to become his priest because he was a Levite.

Sometime later five men of the sons of Dan were sent out to spy the land. The record says, **“And in those days the tribe of the Danites sought for them an inheritance to dwell in, for to that day their inheritance had not fallen to them among the tribes of Israel”** (Jdg. 18:1). That must mean they had not yet possessed the full portion of their allotment, perhaps because the powerful Philistines were to the immediate south of them. The five spies were apparently for those sons of Dan who still had no land. On their journey they came to the house of Micah, and learned about the young Levite. So they asked him to inquire of God about their mission. That is yet another example of how confused they were religiously. Besides supporting idolatry that Levite had no more right to inquire of Jehovah than they did. Nevertheless, he gave them an encouraging albeit ambiguous answer. Then they departed and came to Laish, which is in the far northeastern area of the land, and found it a promising place to invade. So they returned to their brothers, and at their urging the family of the Danites set out. The record says there were six hundred men of war for the campaign.

When they came to the house of Micah, the five men told them what he had. Therefore, they sent those men to take the images, the ephod, and the teraphim. Idolatry was exceedingly popular during ancient times. When the Levite asked them what they were doing, they persuaded him to join them, which he happily did. After they had gone a considerable distance, Micah and his neighbors overtook them, and complained about the theft. However, the sons of Dan threatened to kill them if they did not keep quiet about it. So Micah returned because they were too strong for him. Then the sons of Dan attacked the people of Laish, killing them and burning their city with fire. After that they rebuild the city and named it Dan. And they set up Micah's graven image for themselves.

The second story begins by telling about another Levite. He was sojourning in Ephraim, and had taken a concubine out of Bethlehem-judah. The book says, **“And his concubine played the harlot against him, and went away from him to her father's house to Bethlehem-judah, and was there the space of four months”** (Jdg. 19:2). Afterward her husband went to persuade her to come back to him. The record says that when her father saw him he was glad, and he delayed his departure

four days. However, on the fifth day the Levite insisted on leaving, even though he had been delayed again most of the day. So he traveled with his concubine and his servant as far as Jebus (Jerusalem), but he would not lodge there because it still did not belong to the sons of Israel. Instead he went to Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. He planned to spend the night in the street because no man invited them in. However, an old man came in from his work in the field, and brought them into his house, where he cared for them and the donkeys.

The record says that while they were enjoying themselves, certain base men of the city surrounded the house and beat at the door. Like the Sodomites of Abraham's time they said to the old man, "**Bring forth the man who came into thy house, that we may know him**" (Jdg. 19:22). But as with Lot, the old man refused, and rebuked them for their wickedness. He even offered his virgin daughter and the man's concubine to them, but the men of the city would not listen to the old man. Nevertheless, the Levite took his concubine and gave her to them. The book says they abused her all night, and at dawn she fell down at the door of the man's house. When her husband went out to get her, she was dead. It then says that the Levite placed her body on the donkey and went to his destination. When he got there he cut her up limb by limb into twelve pieces, and sent her throughout Israel.

All who saw it said, "**There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the sons of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt to this day. Consider it, take counsel, and speak**" (Jdg. 19:30). Then all the sons of Israel gathered together to Jehovah at Mizpah. There were 400,000 fighting men, and they asked the Levite what had happened. He told them, and asked for their counsel. The book does not say they condemned him, but instead the people were united as one man to go against the city of Gibeah in Benjamin. However, they first sent men through the tribe of Benjamin, demanding that they give up the guilty men. But the sons of Benjamin chose to assemble themselves to fight the sons of Israel. They mustered 26,700 men, among whom, the record says, "**were seven hundred chosen men left-handed. Every one could sling stones at a hair-breadth, and not miss**" (Jdg. 20:16). They faced 400,000 men of war from the other tribes.

Then the sons of Israel went to Bethel to ask counsel of God; the tabernacle was there. When they asked who should go first against Benjamin, Jehovah said Judah. Therefore, the sons of Israel

fought against Benjamin, and the sons of Benjamin killed 22,000 of them. The men of Israel encouraged themselves, and went up and wept before Jehovah until evening. Then they asked Jehovah if they should go again against Benjamin, and he said yes. However, Benjamin again defeated them, killing eighteen thousand men. So they went to Bethel, and wept again, this time fasting until evening. They also offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Jehovah. And they asked him again if they should go out to battle against the sons of Benjamin, or should they cease. Jehovah said, "**Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver him into thy hand**" (Jdg. 20:28).

This time Israel set an ambushment against Gibeah. And on the third day, the sons of Benjamin went out and began to kill again as before. After thirty men of Israel were killed, they began to retreat in order to draw the sons of Benjamin away from the city. That was the same strategy Joshua had used successfully against Ai many years ago. As they retreated, the 10,000 men of the ambushment came out. So the men of Israel killed 25,100 of the sons of Benjamin, and burned the city. Only 600 men were able to escape into the wilderness. The men of Israel also set on fire all the cities they found in Benjamin. The two earlier defeats had apparently aroused strong feelings of vengeance. Jehovah may have wanted that done against Benjamin, so he allowed the Israelites to be defeated at first. But that is just a guess.

The record says, "**Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpah, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter to Benjamin to wife**" (Jdg. 21:1). After the fighting the people came to Bethel and wept bitterly, wondering to Jehovah why there was the loss of a tribe in Israel. The next day they built an altar and offered sacrifices. Then they asked among them who had not come to the assembly of Jehovah, for they had vowed to kill all who did not come. They also questioned among themselves where they could get wives for the men of Benjamin who survived. So when they found that Jabesh-gilead failed to come to the assembly, they sent troops to kill all the inhabitants except the young virgins, of which there were four hundred. Then they sent and made peace with the remaining men of Benjamin, and they gave them the young virgins. However, there were not enough for them. So the elders of the congregation told the sons of Benjamin to raid some of the daughters who came out to dance during the feast in Shiloh. And they said they would

plead for them if any of their fathers or brothers complained. Therefore, the sons of Benjamin went and took them. Then they returned to their inheritance, and began to build cities again.

The book ends by saying, “**In those days there was no king in Israel. Every man did that which**

was right in his own eyes.” That does not mean they lived wrongfully. It means they were free to live by their own conscience, and were not dominated by a government. Centralized authority is no guarantee of righteousness.

A Description of **Ruth**

During the days of the judges there was a famine in the land of Israel, and a certain man of Bethlehem went to live in Moab. He took his wife and two sons with him. His name was Elimelech, and his wife was Naomi. While they were there Elimelech died, and Naomi was left with her two sons, both of whom married women of Moab whose names were Orpah and Ruth. They lived there ten years. Then both of Naomi’s sons also died. Hence, she had neither husband nor children left. Therefore, she decided to return to Bethlehem because she heard that Jehovah had given them food again. As she was departing with her daughters-in-law she told them to go back to their mothers’ houses. She thanked them for their kindness and kissed them. They all wept, and the women said they would go with her. However, Naomi discouraged them, saying she could no longer give them husbands.

So they wept again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. Naomi urged Ruth to go back too, but she replied, “**Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee, for where thou go, I will go, and where thou lodge, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts thee and me**” (Ruth 1:16-17).

Those are very beautiful words of loyalty. They were often quoted by American brides during their marriage ceremony. That was back before most of the people forsook God. And they are rarely if ever spoken now even among Christians because of the dominance of feminism.

Ruth said those words no doubt because she saw goodness in Naomi and Jehovah her God, and she wanted to be a part of it. When Naomi saw that Ruth had made up her mind, she no longer urged her to go back. So they came to Bethlehem. It was a small place, and they all recognized her. The women said, “**Is this Naomi?**” (Ruth 1:19). Naomi told them to

call her Mara instead, because the Almighty had dealt bitterly with her. Naomi means beautiful, but Mara means bitter.

The book says they returned at the beginning of barley harvest, and Naomi had a rich kinsman of her husband named Boaz. Ruth then asked Naomi if she could go to a field and glean from whoever was willing (see Lev. 19:9-10). She said go. Then Ruth began to glean behind reapers, and it happened to be on a field belonging to Boaz. Then the book says, “**Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, Jehovah be with you. And they answered him, Jehovah bless thee**” (Ruth 2:4). He asked who the damsel was, and the foreman said it was the Moabite woman who came back with Naomi, and she had asked permission to glean. He said she had been there since morning, except for a brief delay in the house. Boaz then told her not to go to another field, but to stay with his maidens. He told her he would protect her, and she could drink of their water. After which the book says, “**Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said to him, Why have I found favor in thy sight that thou should take knowledge of me, seeing I am a foreigner?**” (Ruth 2:10). Boaz told her it was because he had heard of all that she had done for her mother-in-law, even leaving her own country. And he blessed her, saying, “**Jehovah recompence thy work, and a full reward be given thee of Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou have come to take refuge**” (Ruth 2:12). Boaz also invited her to eat with his workers. He even ordered them to pull out from what they had harvested, and leave it for her to glean.

Afterward Ruth went into the city, and when she had eaten, she gave Naomi all that was left. Then Naomi asked where she had gleaned. When Ruth told her everything, Naomi praised Jehovah, and said Boaz was a near kinsman. The book says that Ruth kept close to the maidens of Boaz to glean

until the end of both the barley harvest and the wheat harvest.

Later Naomi told Ruth she was going to seek a home for her. Therefore, she was to dress well, and go down to the threshing-floor of Boaz, but to conceal herself until he lay down for the night. Then she was to go in, uncover his feet, and lie down near him. So she did as her mother-in-law commanded her. At midnight Boaz was startled to find a woman lying at his feet. And he asked who she was. She answered and said, "**I am Ruth thy handmaid. Spread therefore thy skirt over thy handmaid, for thou are a near kinsman**" (Ruth 3:9). Boaz replied, "**Blessed be thou of Jehovah, my daughter. Thou have shown more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou did not follow young men, whether poor or rich**" (Ruth 3:10).

Then he told her he would do as she had asked, but there was another man who was a nearer kinsman. And he would speak with him about it. In the morning she rose up early before anyone could see, and left after Boaz had filled her mantle with some barley for her and her mother-in-law. When she

returned and reported to her mother-in-law, Naomi told her to remain until the matter was settled. She said, "... **for the man will not rest until he has finished the thing this day**" (Ruth 3:18). She was a wise woman.

So after inviting the near kinsman to sit down at the gate, Boaz took ten men of the elders of the city for witnesses. Then he told the man how Naomi was selling the parcel of land that belonged to her husband Elimelech, and he had the first right to redeem it. The near kinsman said he would. However, when Boaz said he would also have to take Ruth for a wife, the man said that would mar his own inheritance, so he declined. Then Boaz told the elders to witness that he had purchased all that was Elimelech's and his sons, including Ruth. And they said, "**We are witnesses**" (Ruth 4:11). Then they called for a blessing from Jehovah upon him and Ruth and all their offspring.

So Ruth became his wife, and she bore him a son. And all the women rejoiced for Naomi, who also became a nurse to it. The child's name was Obed, who became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

A Description of **First Samuel**

There was a man of Ephraim named Elkanah, and he had two wives: Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. This man went to Shiloh each year to worship and sacrifice to Jehovah (the tabernacle and the altar were there). On the day of sacrifice he gave portions to his wives and children, but he gave a double portion to Hannah because he loved her. However, Jehovah had closed her womb, and her rival provoked her greatly because of it each time they went to the house of Jehovah. Therefore, Hannah wept and would not eat, although Elkanah her husband tried to comfort her. Women in those days knew their primary role in life was to bear and rear children.

After they had eaten, Hannah went and wept and prayed to Jehovah in the bitterness of her soul. She also made a vow, saying, "**O Jehovah of hosts, if thou will indeed look on the affliction of thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thy handmaid, but will give to thy handmaid a man-child, then I will give him to Jehovah all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head**" (1Sa. 1:11).

Eli the priest saw her mouth moving but heard no words. He thought she was drunk, so he rebuked her for it. But Hannah told him no, she was sorrowful, and had poured out her soul before Jehovah. Then Eli called upon God to grant her petition. When she returned home in Ramah, Jehovah remembered her and she bore a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "**Because I have asked him of Jehovah**" (1Sa. 1:20). Samuel means "name of God," or "God hears."

Hannah did not go with her husband to the yearly sacrifice until Samuel was weaned. After he was weaned she took some things for an offering, and brought him to the house of Jehovah in Shiloh to Eli the priest. She told him that she was the woman he saw praying to Jehovah. She said she had prayed for that child, and was now giving him to Jehovah as long as he lived. Then she worshiped there and prayed again. In her prayer she told how joyful she was. She told how wonderful Jehovah was, and how he brings down the proud but lifts up the poor and needy. And she told how he defeats the wicked. She ended her prayer, saying, "**Jehovah will judge the ends of the earth, and he will give strength to his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed**" (1Sa. 2:10).

The record says that the sons of Eli were base men, who knew not Jehovah, which probably means having no faith in him. The custom of the priests was for their servant to use a flesh-hook to take meat out of the boiling pot of a man's sacrifice. Whatever came out was taken for the priest. However, the sons of Eli demanded the raw flesh, including the fat. And if a man refused before they burned the fat, they would threaten to take it by force. Thus, the book says, "**And the sin of the young men was very great before Jehovah, for the men despised the offering of Jehovah**" (1Sa. 2:17).

Samuel ministered before Jehovah wearing a linen ephod. His mother also made him a little robe each year. She would bring it when her husband came to offer sacrifice. Eli blessed them, and asked Jehovah to give them more children. And Jehovah gave her three sons and two daughters.

The record says Eli was very old, and he heard of the evil his sons did to Israel. They even lay with the women who gathered at the door of the tabernacle. He rebuked them for their sinfulness. And he said, "**Ye make Jehovah's people to transgress**" (1Sa. 2:24). He warned them against offending Jehovah. However they would not listen, for Jehovah had already intended to kill them. But Samuel was different, as the book says: "**And the child Samuel grew on, and increased in favor both with Jehovah, and also with men**" (1Sa. 2:26).

Then a man of God came to Eli, and spoke words of Jehovah to him. Jehovah reminded Eli of what he had done for the house of his father (Aaron). Then he said, "**Why do ye kick at my sacrifice and at my offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honor thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chief of all the offerings of Israel my people? Therefore Jehovah, the God of Israel, says, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me forever, but now Jehovah says, Be it far from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed**" (1Sa. 2:29-30).

Eli had warned his sons, but he spared them punishment. By so doing he had more regard for his sons than he had for God. So Jehovah uttered a curse against Eli and all his house. He said none would live to old age. He also said both his sons would die in one day, and that would be a sign to

him of what Jehovah said. Jehovah told him he would raise up a faithful priest who would do his will, but the remnant of Eli's house would live in poverty.

After that Jehovah warned Eli once again, this time through Samuel. He was still a child serving Jehovah with Eli, and one night, after Samuel lay down where the ark of God was, Jehovah called to him. When Samuel heard, he thought it was Eli, so he went to him. But Eli said he had not called him. That happened three times. The third time Eli perceived it was Jehovah who was calling Samuel. And he told him the next time he should say, "**Speak, Jehovah, for thy servant hears**" (1Sa. 3:9). Therefore, Samuel went and lay down again. And the record says that Jehovah came, and stood, and called him the fourth time. When Samuel answered as Eli had instructed him, Jehovah said, "**Behold, I will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of everyone who hears it shall tingle**" (1Sa. 3:11). Then he said he was going to do all that he spoke against Eli and his house because he would not restrain the iniquity of his sons. And he said the iniquity of Eli's house would never be expiated. Samuel arose that morning and opened the doors of the house of Jehovah, but he was afraid to tell Eli the vision. However, Eli demanded to know all of it. When Samuel told him, Eli said, "**It is Jehovah. Let him do what seems him good**" (1Sa. 3:18). Eli was a very weak man of character, a wimp.

The book says that Samuel grew, and Jehovah blessed him so that nothing he said failed. Then all Israel knew that Samuel was going to be a prophet of Jehovah. The book says, "**Jehovah appeared again in Shiloh, for Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah**" (1Sa. 3:21). Jehovah would speak to Samuel, and Samuel would speak to all Israel, for he was a spokesman of God.

Sometime later Israel went out to fight the Philistines, but they were defeated, losing about four thousand men. Then the elders decided to get the ark of the covenant of Jehovah from Shiloh, and take it with them to battle, believing it would save them. When the ark of the covenant of Jehovah came into the camp the people shouted so much that the Philistines heard. And when the Philistines learned why they shouted, the record says they were afraid, saying God had come into their camp. They said, "**Woe to us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all manner of**

plagues in the wilderness" (1Sa. 4:8). However, they mustered their courage, and strengthened themselves to fight vigorously so they would not become servants to the Hebrews. Consequently, they defeated Israel again, killing thirty thousand of them. Moreover, they captured the ark of God, and killed the two sons of Eli.

When that happened a soldier from Benjamin came to Shiloh, with his clothes torn, and dirt upon his head. Eli was sitting on his seat by the wayside, anxious about the ark of God. The man announced what happened, and all the city cried out. The man also came and told Eli. The book says that Eli was ninety-eight years old and unable to see. And when he heard about the ark of God, he fell backward from his seat, broke his neck and died, for he was a heavy man. He had judged Israel forty years. His daughter-in-law was with child, and as soon as she heard all those things, she brought forth, but she died in the process.

The Philistines took the ark of God to their city of Ashdod, and brought it into the house of their god Dagon. When they arose the next morning, Dagon had fallen on his face before the ark of Jehovah. So they set him back up on his place. The day after that Dagon had fallen upon his face the same way, but this time his head and the palms of his hands were cut off; only his stump was left to him. The record also says that the hand of Jehovah came heavy upon the citizens there, destroying them, and afflicting them with tumors. Therefore, the men of Ashdod gathered all the lords of the Philistines, and asked counsel of them. They told them to send the ark to Gath. When they did, the book says Jehovah smote all the men of that city with tumors.

Next the Philistines sent the ark of God to Ekron, but when the Ekronites saw it, they cried out, "**They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people**" (1Sa. 5:10). They gathered all the lords of the Philistines, and told them to send the ark of the God of Israel back. The record says the ark of Jehovah was in the country of the Philistines seven months. Their priests and psychics also advised sending the ark back with a trespass offering. They recommended five golden images of tumors, and five golden images of mice, one for each lord of the Philistines. They warned them not to harden their hearts as Pharaoh and the Egyptians had done. They also advised preparing a new cart with which to send the ark of God and the jewels of gold. They said to watch and see if it goes to its own border. That would tell them whether it

was God or chance that caused what happened to them. And the men did so, using two milk cows whose calves were kept from them.

The record says the cows went straight to a city of the sons of Israel, lowing as they went. The lords of the Philistines followed behind them to the border of the city. Those of the city were reaping their wheat harvest, and when they saw the ark, they rejoiced. The cart came into the field of a man named Joshua, and stood where there was a great stone. The Levites took down the ark of Jehovah, and removed the coffer with the jewels of gold. Then they split the wood of the cart, and offered the cows for a burnt offering to Jehovah. When the lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned to Ekron the same day.

However, Jehovah struck down 50,070 men there because they had looked into the ark of Jehovah. Such a large number suggests many came from different parts of Israel to look. The book says the people of that city mourned because so many died, and they sent messengers to have it taken to another place. So it was taken to the house of a man named Abinadab, and remained there twenty years. It was never taken back to Shiloh.

Then the book says all the house of Israel lamented after Jehovah. And Samuel spoke to them saying, “**If ye do return to Jehovah with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you, and direct your hearts to Jehovah, and serve him only. And he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines**” (1Sa. 7:3).

The sons of Israel did so, and Samuel told them to gather all Israel to Mizpah, and he would pray for them to Jehovah. When they came together, they drew water, poured it out before Jehovah, and fasted that day, confessing their sin against him. However, when the Philistines heard they had gathered to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. When the sons of Israel heard it, they were afraid, and they told Samuel not to cease crying to Jehovah to save them.

Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a whole burnt offering to Jehovah. The record says, “**And Samuel cried to Jehovah for Israel, and Jehovah answered him**” (1Sa. 7:9). As the Philistines approached, Jehovah thundered a great thunder upon them, and they were struck down before Israel. So the men of Israel went out and smote them in pursuit. Then Samuel set up a stone, and called it Ebenezer, saying, “**Jehovah has helped us to now**”

(1Sa. 7:12). Ebenezer means “stone of help.” Therefore, the Philistines were subdued, and all the cities they took were restored to Israel.

Samuel was judge of Israel, and he went from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, about a thirty mile circuit, year to year. His home was in Ramah where he was born, which was six miles from Jerusalem, and he built an altar there to Jehovah. When Samuel was old he made his sons judges, but they did not walk in his ways. They took bribes, and perverted justice. So the elders of Israel assembled, and went to Samuel to his home at Ramah. They told him he was old, and his sons were not as he was. Then they said, “**Now make for us a king to judge us like all the nations**” (1Sa. 8:5).

Samuel was not pleased with their request and he prayed to Jehovah. Jehovah told Samuel to hearken to their voice. He told Samuel they had not rejected him, they had rejected Jehovah from being king over them. He told Samuel it had been their pattern, since he brought them up out of Egypt, to forsake him. He also told them to strongly protest, and show them the way of the king who would reign over them.

Therefore, Samuel told the people all the words of Jehovah. And he said, “**This will be the manner of the king who shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them to him for his chariots, and to be his horsemen, and they shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint them to him for captains of thousands, and captains of fifties. And he will set some to plow his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks. And ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king whom ye shall have chosen you, and Jehovah will not answer you in that day**” (1Sa. 8:11-18).

The book says the people refused to listen to Samuel; they insisted on having a king. They wanted to be like all the nations. And they wanted their king to judge them, and go out and fight their

battles. When Samuel repeated all their words to Jehovah, he told Samuel to make a king for them. Then Samuel told the people to return to their homes.

The record next tells about Saul. It says there was no man of Israel who was better looking than Saul, and he was taller than any of the people. Now the donkeys of his father Kish became lost, and he told Saul to take one of the servants and go look for them. Saul traveled about through Ephraim and Benjamin without finding them, so he told his servant they were going to go home lest his father worry about them. However, the servant said there was a man of God with a good reputation in the city nearby. And he advised inquiring of him. Saul said they had nothing to give him, but the servant said he had the fourth part of a shekel of silver. So they came to the city, and asked some young maidens there about the seer. They said he was there, and they told how to find him. He was coming out to bless the sacrifice the people were making in the high place.

Therefore, they went to the city, and Samuel came out toward them on his way to the high place. The book says that the day before, Jehovah told Samuel, "**Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. And he shall save my people out of the hand of the Philistines, for I have looked upon my people, because their cry has come to me**" (1Sa. 9:15-16).

When Samuel saw Saul, Jehovah told him he was the chosen man. Then Samuel invited Saul to eat with him at the high place. And he told him not to worry about the donkeys, they had been found. He also told him that all Israel desired him. When Saul heard that, he spoke of how small his tribe was, and how lowly his family was. And he asked why Samuel spoke that way to him. But Samuel took him and his servant, and made them sit in the chief place in the guest-chamber of the thirty men who had been invited. Then Samuel told the cook to set the reserved portion in front of Saul for him to eat.

Early the next morning Samuel called for Saul to send him on his way. When they came to the edge of the city Samuel told Saul to send his servant ahead of them, because he wanted to tell him the word of God. Then Samuel anointed Saul's head with oil, kissed him, and said, "**Is it not that Jehovah has anointed thee to be prince over his inheritance?**" (1Sa. 10:1). After that Samuel told Saul in great

detail about many of the people he was going to meet that day, and what he should do each time. The last ones would be a band of prophets, at which time the Spirit of Jehovah would come mightily upon him. Then he would prophesy with them, and would be turned into another man. And he told Saul to go ahead of him to Gilgal. Samuel said he was going to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings there, and Saul should wait for him seven days till he came. Then he would show him what he should do. The book says that when Saul turned to go, God gave him another heart, and all those signs came to pass that day.

When Saul was prophesying with the other prophets, the people who knew him said to each other, "**What is this that has come to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?**" (1Sa. 10:11). Later his uncle asked the two men where they went. Saul told him about Samuel, but not what he said about the kingdom.

Then Samuel called the people together to Jehovah to Mizpah. And he said to the sons of Israel, "**Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all the kingdoms that oppressed you, but ye have this day rejected your God who himself saves you out of all your calamities and your distresses, and ye have said to him, No, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before Jehovah by your tribes, and by your thousands**" (1Sa. 10:18-19).

So all the tribes were brought, and Benjamin was taken. Then all the families of Benjamin were brought, and the family of the Matrites was taken. Then Saul the son of Kish was taken, but he could not be found. Therefore, they inquired of Jehovah, and he told them that Saul had hidden himself among the baggage. They went for him, and when he stood among all the people he was head and shoulders taller than them all. Samuel told the people to notice there was no man like him, whom Jehovah had chosen. Then the record says, "**And all the people shouted, and said, Live, O king!**" (1Sa. 10:24). Next Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom. He also wrote it in a book, and laid it up before Jehovah. Then he sent all the people to their homes. And mighty men whose hearts were touched by God went with Saul. However, the record says that certain worthless fellows scoffed at him, and brought him no present, but Saul held his peace.

After that the book says that Nahash the Ammonite came against a city of Israel on the eastern side of the Jordan. And the men of the city asked for a peace treaty to serve him. Nahash said he would, but only if all their right eyes were put out, which would be a reproach for all Israel. The elders of the city asked for seven days to send messengers for help from Israel, and if none came then they would come out to him. When Saul heard about it the Spirit of God came mightily upon him, and his anger was greatly kindled. He took a yoke of oxen, cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout Israel by messengers, saying, **“Whoever does not come forth behind Saul and behind Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen”** (1Sa. 11:7). Therefore, the fear of Jehovah came upon the people, and they came out united. When he numbered them there were 300,000 sons of Israel, and 30,000 men of Judah. And they went and smote the Ammonites, defeating them utterly. Then the people wanted to put to death the men who had scoffed at Saul, but he would not allow it.

After that Samuel told the people to go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom. So the men of Israel went there, made Saul king before Jehovah, offered sacrifices, and rejoiced greatly. Samuel told them he was now old, and he wanted to know who he had ever cheated or oppressed. They said he had never done any such thing. Then he reminded them that Jehovah is he who brought their fathers out of Egypt. He told them how Jehovah had sent Moses and Aaron to bring them to this place. But they forgot Jehovah, so he gave them over to their enemies. And when they cried for his help he sent deliverers. Yet they asked for a king when Jehovah was their king. So Jehovah set one over them. Then he warned them to fear Jehovah and serve him. Otherwise Jehovah would be against them as he was their fathers.

It was the time of wheat harvest, and Samuel told them he was calling upon Jehovah to sent thunder and rain so they would know the greatness of their wickedness in asking for a king. When it happened the people greatly feared, and asked him to pray for them. Samuel told them to fear not, but be faithful to Jehovah, who would not forsake them unless they still did wickedly. He also said he would continue to pray for them, and instruct them **“in the good and the right way”** (1Sa. 12:23).

The book says that after Saul reigned two years he chose several thousand men for him, dividing them between himself and his son Jonathan. When Jonathan struck a Philistine garrison, Saul and the

Philistines assembled their troops for war. The Philistines had 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and people as the sand of the sea-shore. When the men of Israel saw the bind they were in, they went into places like caves and thickets to hide. Some went over the Jordan away from the Philistines, but Saul remained in Gilgal with his trembling troops. When Samuel was late coming, the people began scattering from him. So he offered the burnt offering himself. After Samuel arrived he asked what he had done. Saul tried to justify himself, but Samuel rebuked him, saying he had done foolishly. Therefore, his kingdom would not continue. He said, **“Jehovah has sought for him a man after his own heart, and Jehovah has appointed him to be prince over his people, because thou have not kept that which Jehovah commanded thee”** (1Sa. 13:14). Then Samuel left, and Saul counted 600 men who remained with him.

The record says there was no blacksmith in all Israel because the Philistines were afraid they would make weapons. So when it came time for battle, only Saul and Jonathan had sword and spear. Then one day Jonathan and the young man who bore his armor left his father's camp, without informing him, and they went to one of the garrisons of the Philistines. Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, **“Come, and let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that Jehovah will work for us, for there is no limitation to Jehovah to save by many or by few”** (1Sa. 14:6). Jonathan told him if the Philistines invited them over, that would be a sign Jehovah had given the Philistines into their hand.

When they showed themselves to the Philistines, they told him to come over and they would show him something. Then Jonathan said to his armor bearer, **“Come up after me, for Jehovah has delivered them into the hand of Israel”** (1Sa. 14:12). So they went and killed about twenty men. Then the book says there was an earthquake and a great trembling in the camp of the Philistines. And the watchmen of Saul saw the Philistine multitude scatter. Saul checked, and found Jonathan and his armor bearer missing. Then he called for the ark of God, and while he talked with the priest the tumult in the camp of the Philistines increased. So Saul and his army came to the battle, and saw all the Philistines attacking each other in great confusion. Then all the Hebrews who were in the Philistine camp, and those who had hid themselves joined in the battle. And the book says Jehovah saved Israel that day.

However, the men of Israel were distressed because Saul had uttered a curse on any man who ate anything that day. There was much honey on the ground in the forest, but no man ate for fear of the oath. Jonathan had not heard about it, so he ate. When one of the people told him what his father had done, Jonathan said his father had troubled the land, and prevented a great victory. The men were very faint, and when they did eat they ate meat with the blood, which sinned against Jehovah. Therefore, Saul commanded them to bring their animals to him to be slaughtered. And he built an altar to Jehovah. When Saul inquired of Jehovah about a further attack he received no answer. So Saul investigated to see who had sinned, and he learned that Jonathan had tasted a little honey. Saul was going to kill him, but the people defended Jonathan, saying he wrought a great salvation in Israel. And they would not let Saul harm him.

The book says that when Saul became king he fought victoriously against all of Israel's enemies: Moab, the sons of Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah (in Syria), and the Philistines. Then it says that Samuel came to Saul, and told him Jehovah wanted him to go against Amalek. Jehovah remembered how Amalek had impeded Israel's departure from Egypt. Jehovah said, "**Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not, but kill both man and woman, infant and sucking, ox and sheep, camel and donkey**" (1Sa. 15:3). Then Saul summoned the people—210,000 men—and went to attack the city of Amalek. He destroyed all the people, but he kept Agag the king, all the best of the livestock, and all that was good.

Then Jehovah spoke to Samuel, and said he regretted making Saul king, for he had been disobedient. The record says that Samuel was angry, and cried out to Jehovah all night. The next morning he went out to meet Saul. When he came to him, Saul blessed him, and said he had done Jehovah's commandment. Samuel asked him about the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen that he heard. Saul told him the people spared the best to sacrifice to Jehovah. But Samuel said to him, "**Stop, and I will tell thee what Jehovah has said to me this night**" (1Sa. 15:16). Then he reminded Saul how little he had considered himself, and yet he was made king of Israel. And Jehovah sent him on a mission to "**utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites**" (1Sa. 15:18). He asked him why he had not

obeyed Jehovah, but had plundered, and done evil in his sight.

Saul insisted he had been obedient, but he brought Agag the king back. He said it was the people who took the chief things to sacrifice to Jehovah. Samuel replied, "**Has Jehovah as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim**" (1Sa. 15:22-23). Then he told Saul because he had rejected the word of Jehovah, God had rejected him from being king.

Saul finally admitted he had sinned, saying he was afraid of the people, and obeyed their voice. Then he asked Samuel to pardon his sin, and go with him to worship. Samuel said he would not, for Jehovah had rejected him. When Samuel turned to leave, Saul grabbed the skirt of his robe and it tore. Samuel responded by saying Jehovah had torn the kingdom from him, and given it to a better man. Saul said he sinned, but he wanted Samuel to honor him before the elders and the people that he may worship Jehovah. So Samuel went, and Saul worshiped Jehovah. Then Samuel called for Agag the king, who came cheerfully, saying, "**Surely the bitterness of death is past**" (1Sa. 15:32). But Samuel replied, "**As thy sword has made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women**" (1Sa. 15:33). Then he hacked him to pieces before Jehovah in Gilgal, and went to his home in Ramah.

The book says that Samuel came no more to see Saul, but mourned about him. Then Jehovah asked him how long he was going to mourn for Saul, since he had rejected him. He told him to take oil, and go to Jesse at Bethlehem, for he had chosen one of his sons to be king. Samuel asked him how he should go because Saul would kill him if he heard about it. Jehovah told him to take a heifer, and say it was for a sacrifice. Then he was to call Jesse to the sacrifice, and Jehovah would show him the one to anoint to him.

Samuel went, and the elders of the city came to him fearful. He assured them it was for a sacrifice, and he invited them. He also called for Jesse and his sons. When the time came, and Samuel saw Jesse's firstborn, he thought surely he was the one. However, Jehovah said to him, "**Do not look on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For Jehovah sees**

not as man sees, for man looks on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looks on the heart” (1Sa. 16:7).

Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Jehovah did not choose any of them. Then Samuel asked Jesse if those were all of his sons. Jesse said there was yet the youngest (David), who was keeping the sheep. Samuel said to get him, for they would not sit down until he came. When he was brought in, the record says that he was ruddy and good looking. And Jehovah told Samuel to anoint him, for he was the one. So he anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the book says the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward. Then Samuel returned to his home in Ramah.

However, the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul, and he sent an evil spirit to trouble him. Hence, Saul’s servants recommended he find a man skilful with the harp to play for him whenever the evil spirit came. That would make him well. When Saul told them to find such a man, one of the young men said, “**Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is skilful in playing, and a mighty man of valor, and a man of war, and prudent in speech, and a comely man, and Jehovah is with him**” (1Sa. 16:18).

Therefore, Saul sent messengers to ask Jesse for his son David. So Jesse sent David with gifts for Saul. The book says that Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer. Whenever the evil spirit came upon Saul, David played the harp, and Saul was refreshed, and the evil spirit left him. Making David his armor bearer may have happened right after he killed Goliath.

Next the book tells the story of David and Goliath. The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and the men of Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, each set in battle array. There was only a valley between them. Their champion Goliath was six cubits and a span (over nine feet) tall. He was well protected with armor of bronze, and his spear was like a weaver’s beam. He stood and cried out to the men of Israel, and he challenged any one of them to a duel. He said whoever won would decide which nation would rule the other. When he said that, all Israel was dismayed and fearful.

Now the three eldest sons of Jesse had gone with Saul to the battle. And David went back and forth, going to Saul, then back again to feed his father’s sheep at Bethlehem. The book says the Philistine made his challenge morning and evening forty days.

Meanwhile Jesse told his son to take some provisions for his brothers in the army, and see how they fared. So David arose early the next morning, and went as his father had commanded him. When he arrived at the camp, he left his baggage with the keeper, and ran to salute his brothers. While he spoke with them Goliath came out and made the same challenge. The book says that when the men of Israel saw him, they fled in fear.

They told David about him and the reward the king said he would give to the man who killed him. David inquired further, saying, “**What shall be done to the man who kills this Philistine, and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?**” (1Sa. 17:26). However, his eldest brother became angry, and rebuked him for coming. Nevertheless, David turned away from him, and continued to speak to the people the same way. Saul heard of it and sent for him. And David told Saul he would go and fight the Philistine. Saul told him he was not able to go, for he was only a youth, and Goliath was a seasoned man of war.

Then the record says, “**And David said to Saul, Thy servant was keeping his father’s sheep, and when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth. And when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and killed him. Thy servant smote both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God. And David said, Jehovah who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine**” (1Sa. 17:34-37). David was a strong young man at the time, and not a mere boy as is commonly portrayed.

At first Saul clad David with armor, but David was not used to it, so he took it all off. Instead, he took his staff, and then chose five smooth stones from the brook, which he put in his shepherd’s bag for his sling. Then he came near the Philistine. When the Philistine approached he saw David. And he disdained him because he was a youth, ruddy and handsome. He said to David, “**Am I a dog, that thou come to me with sticks?**” (1Sa. 17:43). And he cursed David by his gods. He told David if he came to him he would feed his flesh to the vultures and the beasts of the field.

David replied, “**Thou come to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a javelin, but I come to thee in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou have defied. This day Jehovah will deliver thee into my hand, and I will smite thee, and take thy head from off thee. And I will give the dead bodies of the armies of the Philistines this day to the birds of the heavens, and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that Jehovah saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is Jehovah’s, and he will give you into our hand”** (1Sa. 17:45-47).

As the Philistine approached him, David ran forward, took out a stone from his bag, and struck the Philistine in his forehead. David had hurled the stone in his sling with such force that it plunged into his forehead like a bullet, and Goliath fell down on his face. Since David had no sword, he drew the one Goliath had, and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw it they fled. Then the men of Israel arose with a shout, and pursued after the Philistines, slaying many for quite a distance. And when they returned they plundered their camp.

David brought the head of the Philistine to Jerusalem, and his armor to his tent. When Saul saw David go against the Philistine he asked Abner the captain of his army who he was, and Abner said he did not know. It may be that Saul was told nothing about David when he was first brought to play for him. And Saul’s need for him to play may not have been frequent enough for him to remain with him. Perhaps all he knew was that he was a young musician who had occasionally calmed his spirit. Anyways, the king told Abner to inquire about whose son he was. So Abner took David to Saul who asked him. When David finished speaking with Saul, the book says, “... the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (1Sa. 18:1). It also says that Saul took David, and would not allow him to return to his father’s house. That may have been when he made him his armor bearer. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, and he gave him his robe and his apparel, and also his weapons.

The record says that David behaved himself wisely, and Saul set him over the men of war, which pleased all the people and Saul’s servants. When they returned from war with the Philistines the women came out of the cities to meet king Saul, singing and dancing with musical instruments. And

they sang, “**Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands**” (1Sa. 18:7), which made Saul angry. He also became suspicious of David after that. The book tells how Saul threw a spear at him when he was playing music for him. It also says he was afraid of him because Jehovah was with David and not with himself. As a result he sent David from him, and made him captain over a thousand. David behaved wisely in all his ways, which caused Saul to fear him. However, all Israel loved David because he went among them. The book also says that Saul hoped David would be killed fighting the Philistines.

Once he offered his daughter Mereb to him. However, she was given to another man. When it was told Saul that his daughter Michal loved David, he decided to give her to him, thinking she would be a snare to him. When Saul’s servants told David of his offer of Michal, he said he was only a poor man. When his servants told Saul what David said, the book says, “**And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king does not desire any dowry, but a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king’s enemies. Now Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines**” (1Sa. 18:25).

Then David and his men went and brought two hundred of their foreskins. Saul gave him Michal, but the record says, “**And Saul was yet the more afraid of David, and Saul was David’s enemy continually**” (1Sa. 18:29). Indeed, Saul told Jonathan and all his servants to kill David. However, Jonathan warned David, telling him to hide himself, and he would speak to his father about him. After he did Saul brought David back in his presence as before. Nevertheless, again while he was playing Saul threw a spear at him. David escaped, so Saul sent messengers to his house to kill him. However, his wife Michal let him down through a window to escape, then she told the messengers he was sick in bed. When Saul discovered he had escaped he rebuked Michal, saying, “**Why have thou deceived me thus, and let my enemy go, so that he is escaped?**” (1Sa. 19:17). She said David threatened to kill her.

David fled to Samuel’s home in Ramah, and told him everything. Hence, he and Samuel went to dwell in Naioth near Jerusalem where a group of prophets lived. When Saul heard, he sent messengers. However, the Spirit of God caused them to prophesy when they came. Saul sent messengers three times, and each time they prophesied. There-

fore, he went himself. And he too prophesied, stripping off all his clothes, and laying naked all day and night. The book says, “**Therefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?**” (1Sa. 19:24).

David fled from Naioth, and came to Jonathan. He asked him why his father wanted to kill him. Jonathan did not believe it was so. However, he said he would do what David wanted. So David told him how he wanted Jonathan to test Saul, to see if he was determined to harm him. Then they planned a way for Jonathan to get back to David. And they made a covenant together, for Jonathan loved David as his own soul.

When he went back to Saul, Jonathan defended David’s absence. And the book says, “**Then Saul’s anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, Thou son of a perverse rebellious woman, do I not know that thou have chosen the son of Jesse to thine own shame, and to the shame of thy mother’s nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the ground, thou shall not be established, nor thy kingdom. Therefore now send and fetch him to me, for he shall surely die**” (1Sa. 20:30-31).

When Jonathan asked him what David had done to deserve death, Saul threw a spear at him. Then Jonathan knew his father was determined to kill David. So he went back to him as they had planned. After they kissed each other and wept about it, Jonathan returned to his father, but David went to the city of Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech came to him fearful, and asked why he was alone (probably meaning without any other men from the king). David said the king sent him on secret business with the young men with him. Then he asked for bread. The priest told him there was only the holy bread, and he asked if the young men had kept themselves from women. David assured him they had, and so the priest gave him the showbread. However, Doeg the Edomite a servant to Saul was there, and he saw what was done. David also asked if there were any weapons available, and he gave him the sword of Goliath whom he had killed.

Then David fled to Achish, king of Gath of the Philistines. However, his servants discovered who he was, and David became afraid. So he pretended to be mad and acted crazy. Achish rebuked his servants for bringing a crazy man to him. Therefore, David escaped to the cave of Adullam. Adullam was a city about fifteen miles southwest of Jerusalem.

Then the record says, “**And when his brothers and all his father’s house heard it, they went down there to him. And every man who was in distress, and every man who was in debt, and every man who was discontented, gathered themselves to him, and he became captain over them. And there were with him about four hundred men**” (1Sa. 22:1-2). David went from there to Moab, and he asked the king to allow his father and mother to live there until he saw what God did for him. Then the prophet Gad told David not to remain in the stronghold, but to go to the land of Judah. So he went into a forest.

Saul was in Gibeah sitting under a tree with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him. He asked them if David would give them property and make them captains. Then he complained that they had all conspired against him, none telling him about his son’s league with David. He said, “**And there is none of you who is sorry for me, or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?**” (1Sa. 22:8). He lied about David to the people. That is a common way rulers keep their followers. Then Doeg the Edomite told him about David and Ahimelech. Therefore, Saul called for him and all his father’s house, and they came.

Saul then accused Ahimelech of conspiring against him with the son of Jesse. Ahimelech told him he knew nothing about any such conspiracy. Nevertheless, Saul said he was going to die. Then he commanded the guard to kill the priests of Jehovah, but none of them would. So he commanded Doeg, and he killed them all, eighty-five priests. The record also says, “**And Nob, the city of the priests, he smote with the edge of the sword, both men and women, sons and sucklings, and oxen and donkeys and sheep, with the edge of the sword**” (1Sa. 22:19). Saul had become quite a monster, like king Herod of Jesus’ time. However, Abiathar one of the sons of Ahimelech escaped and fled to David, and he told him what Saul had done. David said he knew when he saw Doeg that he would inform Saul. And he blamed himself for making an occasion for their deaths.

David was told the Philistines were fighting against Keilah and robbing the harvest. Keilah was also about fifteen miles southwest of Jerusalem. The record says that David inquired of Jehovah about going against them, and he said go. However, the men were afraid to fight against the armies of the Philistines. Therefore, David inquired of Jehovah

again, and Jehovah told him he would deliver them into his hand. So they went and fought, killing with a great slaughter, and taking their cattle. Thus David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. When Saul heard that David was in Keilah, he said that God had delivered him into his hand. He thought David would be trapped in the city. Abiathar the priest had brought an ephod with him when he came to David. So David prayed to God about remaining in Keilah. He had heard that Saul was going to destroy the city to get him. And he asked Jehovah if the men of Keilah would hand him and his men over to Saul. Jehovah said they would.

Therefore, David and his men left Keilah, and went about wherever they could. The book says that Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand. David saw that Saul was seeking to slay him, but Jonathan came to him in the forest, and encouraged him, saying, "**Fear not, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee. And thou shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to thee. And that, Saul my father also knows**" (1Sa. 23:17). They made a covenant before Jehovah, and Jonathan went to his house.

Then the Ziphites told Saul where David was. They also told Saul they would help him get David. Ziph is about fifteen miles west of the Dead Sea half way down its length. Saul told them to go and make sure of where he stays, and he would go with them to find him. David heard he was coming, and so he began to move away. But Saul kept pursuing him until his men surrounded David. However, a messenger told Saul to come quickly because the Philistines had made a raid on the land. Consequently, Saul turned and went against the Philistines. Then David went and dwelt in the strongholds of En-gedi, which are along the shore of the Dead Sea due east of Ziph.

Afterward Saul was told where he was, and he took three thousand chosen men to seek for him. As he searched for David, he came upon a cave which he used to cover his feet. That expression apparently described dropping his robe to relieve himself. David and his men were hiding in the innermost parts of the cave, and his men told him that Jehovah had delivered his enemy into his hand. However, David went and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe unawares. David told his men he would not put forth his hand against Jehovah's anointed. When Saul left the cave David cried out to him and bowed his face to the ground. Then David told him what he had done, which proved he intended no harm to

him, so there was no reason to pursue him. Saul responded, saying, "**Is this thy voice, my son David?**" (1Sa. 24:16). Then the book says that Saul wept and told David he was more righteous than himself. He also said that he knew David was going to become king, and he made him swear he would not destroy his name. So David swore to it and Saul went home.

The book next says that Samuel died. Therefore, all Israel gathered to mourn and bury him. After that it tells about a man named Nabal who had large flocks and herds. His wife's name was Abigail. She was wise and beautiful, but Nabal was churlish and evil. When David heard that he was shearing his sheep, he sent ten young men to greet him. He told them to inform Nabal how they had protected his flocks and his shepherds, and for him to confirm it with his young men. Then they were to ask for something in return. However, after they spoke those things to him, Nabal scoffed at them. So they returned to David, and told him what he said. Then David ordered his men to arm themselves, and he led four hundred of them out. But one of the young men told Abigail about Nabal's response to David's messengers. He also told her about how good David's men had been to them, sheltering them from harm. And he advised her to do something lest evil come to his master and his house. The young man said, "**For he is such a worthless fellow that a man cannot speak to him**" (1Sa. 25:17).

Then Abigail rushed to prepare provisions for them, including two hundred loaves, five dressed sheep, plus other things, which she loaded on donkeys. Next she told the young man to go ahead of her, but not to tell her husband Nabal. As she rode on her donkey, she met David and his men. David had prepared to attack and slay Nabal and all of his men.

When Abigail saw him she rushed and fell on her face to the ground, saying, "**Upon me, my lord, upon me be the iniquity, and let thy handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine ears, and hear thou the words of thy handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this worthless fellow, even Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him**" (1Sa. 25:24-25). She said she had not seen his young men. And she asked him, since Jehovah had kept him from blood guiltiness, to accept her present and forgive her trespass. She said Jehovah was going to make his house sure, because he was fighting the battles of Jehovah, even though men had risen to pursue him. And she said that

when he was appointed prince over Israel, then this would be no grief to him, not having shed blood without cause or having avenged himself. And last of all, she said, "**And when Jehovah shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thy handmaid**" (1Sa. 25:31).

When David replied he blessed Jehovah for sending her, and he blessed her and her discretion for keeping him from doing the violence he had intended. Then David took what she brought, and sent her back in peace. When she came to Nabal he was holding a feast and was very drunk. So she said nothing until morning when he was sober. When she told him everything, the book says, "... **his heart died within him, and he became as a stone**" (1Sa. 25:37). And after ten days he died. When David heard of it, he blessed Jehovah again for keeping him from evil, and for returning the evil-doing of Nabal upon his own head. Then he sent servants to Abigail to take her for a wife. Therefore, she arose, with five of her damsels following, and went to become David's wife. David also took another woman for a wife, so he then had two wives with him. Saul had given his first wife Michal to another man.

The Ziphites again told Saul where David was hiding, so he again took three thousand chosen men of Israel with him to seek David. David discovered that Saul was coming. And one night he and Abishai, one of his mighty men, went with him into Saul's camp while they slept. Saul lay near his spear, which was stuck in the ground. Abishai asked David if he could smite him with it, but David would not allow him. He said Saul would die another way, but not by his hand, for he was Jehovah's anointed. However, he did tell Abishai to take Saul's spear and the cruse of water. Then they left. None in the camp awoke because Jehovah had caused a deep sleep to fall upon them.

When David was on the other side, far off on the top of the mountain, he cried out to the people and to Abner captain of Saul's army. He rebuked Abner for not keeping watch over the king. Then he asked him to look for the king's spear and the cruse of water near him. Saul said, "**Is this thy voice, my son David?**" (1Sa. 26:17). David said yes, and he asked Saul what evil he had done to cause him to pursue after him. Saul told David to come back, and he would not harm him because he had preserved his life. Saul said, "**Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly**" (1Sa. 26:21). David then told him to send one of the young men to come

and get his spear. And David asked Saul to spare his life, as he had spared him. Saul blessed David and they both departed.

Nevertheless, David feared Saul; he had become an evil man, not to be trusted. So David decided to escape into the land of the Philistines, hoping that Saul would tire of seeking him in the borders of Israel. Therefore, he and his six hundred men with their families went to Gath, a city of the Philistines. Their king was Achish, and David asked him for a place to dwell. Therefore, he gave him the city of Ziklag, which is about thirty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. David dwelt there one year and four months. During which time he and his men would make raids upon various enemies of the Israelites. The book says, "**And David smote the land, and saved neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the donkeys, and the camels, and the apparel, and he returned, and came to Achish**" (1Sa. 27:9).

When Achish asked David who he had gone against, David said the men of Judah and the Kenites. Achish believed David, concluding that he had made himself abhorrent to the people of Israel, and would therefore serve him from then on. Achish invited David to join the Philistine armies and become his bodyguard. David said he would.

Sometime later the Philistines and the Israelites gathered again for war. The record says that when Saul saw their army he was full of fear. And when he inquired of Jehovah, he received no answer regardless of what means he chose. Saul had put away all the mediums, but in desperation he told his servants to find one. Saul disguised himself, and went in the night with two other men to a woman they had found. He told her to divine for him and bring up someone. The woman told how Saul had been against them, but he swore by Jehovah that she would not be punished. When the woman asked who he wanted brought up, he said Samuel. But when the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice that he had deceived her, having discovered that he was Saul. She was no doubt surprised to actually see Samuel, because such women have no real power; they used illusion in their divination. However, God allowed it to happen that time. When she accused Saul he told her not to fear, but to tell him what she saw.

The woman said, "**I see gods coming up out of the earth**" (1Sa. 28:13). Saul asked how he looked, and she said he was an old man covered with a robe. Saul recognized Samuel, and so he bowed with his

face to the ground. Samuel then asked why he brought him up. Saul said he was greatly distressed about the Philistines, and Jehovah would not answer him. He wanted Samuel to tell him what to do. Samuel said Jehovah had become his adversary because of his disobedience, and tomorrow he and his sons would be where Samuel was. Moreover, Jehovah was going to deliver the army of Israel to the Philistines. Saul became full of fear, and he fell flat on the ground. He was also weak from not having eaten. The woman said she would feed him, but he said he would not eat. Nevertheless, his servants persuaded him, and she brought him food. Then they left during the night.

When the rulers of the Philistines saw David and his men, they protested to Achish. Achish defended David, but they insisted he not go with them to the battle. So Achish apologized to David, and sent him and his men back. On the third day they arrived back to Ziklag, and found that the Amalekites had raided the city and burned it with fire. They also took captive the women and all who were in it. When David and his men saw what happened to the city, and to their wives and children, they lifted up their voice and wept. David was greatly distressed, because the people were so grieved about their families that they spoke of stoning him. Then David told Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod, and he inquired of Jehovah whether to pursue or not. Jehovah told him to go and he would succeed. Therefore, David took four hundred of his men because two hundred were too faint to go. On the way they found an Egyptian slave who had been left behind because he became sick, and he told David what they had done. David promised to free him if he told him where they were. When they came to the bandits, the book says, “... behold, they were spread abroad over all the ground, eating and drinking,

and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah” (1Sa. 30:16).

David smote them all night and all the next day. Only four hundred young men escaped on camels. So they rescued everyone and recovered everything. David also took all the flocks and herds of their spoil. When they returned to their camp, the record says that all the wicked men and base fellows who had gone to fight said not to share the plunder with those who remained behind. But David made them share alike, and it became an ordinance for Israel. When David came to Ziklag, he sent some of the spoil as a present to the elders of Judah who were his friends. And the book lists many of their places and their cities.

When the Philistines fought they defeated Israel and killed all of Saul’s sons, including Jonathan. Saul was severely wounded by the archers. Therefore, he told his armor bearer to kill him lest he be captured alive and abused. However, the armor bearer refused. Consequently, Saul took his own life by falling upon his sword. When his armor bearer saw he was dead, he also killed himself. After that many of the men of Israel forsook their cities, and the Philistines came and dwelt in them. When the Philistines came to strip the slain the day after the battle, they found Saul and his three sons. So they spread the news of his death to their people. They also cut off his head, put his armor in the house of one of their gods, and fastened his body to the wall of one of their cities. However, when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard about it, valiant men went by night, and recovered his body and the bodies of his sons. Then they returned, buried them, and fasted seven days.

A Description of **Second Samuel**

Three days after the death of Saul a man came to David with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. He fell down to him, and told him about the defeat of the army, and that Saul and Jonathan were both dead. He was an Amalekite, and he claimed Saul asked him to kill him because he was severely wounded. He said he did it because he saw he was not going to survive. Then he took Saul's crown and bracelet to bring to David. When David heard, he and his men tore their clothes, mourned, and wept, and fasted until evening. David asked the Amalekite why he was not afraid to destroy Jehovah's anointed. Then he called for one of the young men to strike him dead. David said his blood was upon his own head because he testified against himself.

David lamented Saul and Jonathan with a song, which he commanded them to teach the sons of Judah. The song says the glory of Israel was slain. It says not to report it among the Philistines lest their daughters rejoice. It asks that the mountains of Gilboa (where Saul camped) become a desert because of their defeat. It mentions how Jonathan and Saul slew many. It says they were loved and pleasant. It tells the daughters of Israel to weep over Saul who gave them good things. It says, "**How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan is slain upon thy high places**" (2Sa. 1:25). Then it tells how David sorrowed over the loss of his beloved Jonathan. It ends with a short statement of defeat.

My soul has urged me to make some comments about that psalm. I believe it can be said with confidence that its words were not supported by God. Like king Herod of later times, Saul deserved no praise, but rather condemnation. Both God and Samuel had forsaken him. David was a great man of God, beloved by him. And that makes it hard for me to understand how he could speak well of Saul, knowing the man was a vicious murderer who slaughtered many innocent priests of God, including their women and children. Perhaps he was blinded by his grief for Jonathan. Jonathan was certainly a righteous man, but his downfall was a result of his loyalty to his evil father.

After that David asked Jehovah if he should go into Judah, and God told him to go to Hebron in Judah. Therefore, David and his men brought all of their families there. Then the men of Judah came and anointed David king over Judah. When they

told him about the men who buried Saul, he sent messengers to give his blessing for them, to encourage them, and to say that he had been anointed king over them.

However, Abner the captain of Saul's army had made Ish-bosheth the son of Saul to be king over all Israel. Ish-bosheth was forty years old, and he reigned two years. David reigned over Judah seven years and six months. There came a time when Abner went out with the servants of Ish-bosheth to Gibeon. Joab, David's captain, took servants of David, and met Abner by the pool of Gibeon. The two groups sat down on opposite sides of the pool. Then the book says, "**And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men, I pray thee, arise and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise**" (2Sa. 2:14).

Therefore, twelve went for Ish-bosheth, and twelve went for David. And each man killed his opponent, so that they died together. The conflict spread, and the battle was very severe, but the forces of Abner were beaten. The record says the three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Asahel was very swift, and he ran after Abner. Abner warned him to turn away from him. He did not want to kill him and offend Joab. When Asahel refused, Abner thrust the rear of his spear into him and he died. Joab and Abishai pursued Abner and his men until sundown. Then Abner called to Joab and said, "**Shall the sword devour for ever? Know thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be then, before thou bid the people return from following their brothers?**" (2Sa. 2:26). So Joab blew the trumpet and they ceased fighting. Joab had lost 19 men and Asahel, while Abner had lost 360 men.

The book says there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David, with David growing stronger, but the house of Saul growing weaker. Then it tells of six sons born to David in Hebron, one from each of six wives he had. As the civil war continued, Abner made himself stronger in the house of Saul. However, a time came when he took one of Saul's concubines, and Ish-bosheth criticized him for it. Abner became angry and rebuked him. He also told him he was going to transfer the kingdom to David. Ish-bosheth gave no answer because he was afraid of Abner. So Abner sent messengers to David. They said that Abner would give all Israel to him if he would make a treaty with

Abner. David agreed, but he demanded his wife Michal. Ish-bosheth apparently agreed to give up the kingdom, for he commanded her be taken from the husband she then had. Her husband wept after her, but Abner ordered him back.

Then Abner said to the elders of Israel, “**In times past ye sought for David to be king over you. Now then do it, for Jehovah has spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies**” (2Sa. 3:17-18). Abner also went with twenty men to speak to David. David made a feast for them and sent them away in peace.

However, when Joab heard that Abner had been there, he sent messengers to bring him back, although David was unaware of it. Then Joab went and killed him because of his brother Asahel. When David heard it, he uttered a curse against Joab and his house. And he commanded Joab to tear his clothes, wear sackcloth, and mourn for Abner. David and all the people wept at the grave of Abner. David lamented for him, saying, “**Should Abner die as a fool dies? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters. As a man falls before the sons of iniquity, so did thou fall**” (2Sa. 3:33-34). David also fasted that day. So all the people of Israel knew that David did not want Abner killed. He told his servants that a prince and a great man had fallen that day, and he was weak, even though king. And he spoke against the sons of Zeruiah (Joab and Abishai).

After that two men who were officers in Ish-bosheth’s army came into his house while he was resting in bed, and they killed him. Then they cut off his head and fled to David in Hebron. They told David that Jehovah had avenged him of Saul and his seed. However, David told them what he did to the man who came to him and claimed he had killed Saul, thinking he brought good news. Then David said, “**How much more, when evil men have slain a righteous man in his own house upon his bed, shall I not now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?**” (2Sa. 4:11). So he commanded them be killed. Then he had their hands and feet cut off, and their bodies hanged beside the pool in Hebron. And they buried the head of Ish-bosheth in the grave of Abner.

Next the book says that all the tribes of Israel came to David, and said they wanted him to be king over them. David was thirty years old when he first became king, and he reigned forty years: seven

years and six months in Hebron over Judah, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem over all Israel.

When David and his men went against the Jebusites of Jerusalem they ridiculed him, saying, “**Unless thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shall not come in here**” (2Sa. 5:6). That probably meant they were so confident their city was impregnable, that they thought the blind and the lame could defend it. Nevertheless, the book says, “**David took the stronghold of Zion; the same is the city of David**” (2Sa. 5:7). He told whoever was willing, to go up the watercourse to smite the lame and the blind, the men who were hated by his soul because they taunted him. The watercourse was a subterranean passage into the city. Therefore, he took the stronghold and dwelt in it. And he kept growing greater because Jehovah was with him.

Hiram king of Tyre sent men and materials to build David a house. David also took more wives and concubines after he came to Jerusalem. And the book gives the names of the eleven children that were born to him there. When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel they came to look for him. Therefore, David inquired of Jehovah whether he should go against them. Jehovah told him to go, and he would deliver them into his hand. So David went and defeated the Philistines. The book says they left their images behind and David took them away. However, they came again, and spread themselves in a valley a few miles south of Jerusalem. David inquired again of Jehovah, and he told him not to go up, but to circle behind them. And when he heard their sound in the trees, he was to take action. “**For then,**” the book says, “**Jehovah has gone out before thee to smite the army of the Philistines**” (2Sa. 5:24). David did as Jehovah commanded him, and smote them for about twenty miles.

Then David went with his people to bring up the ark of God. They set it upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab where it had been. The sons of Abinadab, Uzzah and Ahio, drove the cart, with Ahio going in front. David and all Israel were bringing the ark of Jehovah with a great musical parade. However, when they came to the threshing-floor of Nacon, Uzzah took hold of the ark because the oxen stumbled. Then the record says, “**And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error, and he died there by the ark of God**” (2Sa. 6:7). The record also says David was displeased by it, and afraid of Jehovah that day. And he said, “**How**

shall the ark of Jehovah come to me?" (2Sa. 6:9). So he carried it to the house of Obed-edom instead of bringing it to Jerusalem.

It was in the house of Obed-edom three months, and Jehovah blessed him and all his house. When David heard it, he went to bring the ark of God into the city of David with joy. After those who carried the ark of Jehovah had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. The book also says that David danced before Jehovah with all his might, wearing a linen ephod. And it says, "**So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of Jehovah with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet**" (2Sa. 6:15). When they came into the city, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out the window. When she saw king David leaping and dancing before Jehovah, she despised him in her heart.

After the ark of Jehovah was set up in the tent that David had pitched for it, he made burnt offerings and peace offerings before Jehovah, and he blessed the people in the name of Jehovah. Then he gave each person, both man and woman, a portion of food, and they went to their houses. When David returned to his household, Michal came out to meet him, and rebuked him for what she said was uncovering himself in the eyes of the handmaids like a vain fellow. David reminded her how Jehovah had chosen him over her father. And he said, "**Therefore I will play before Jehovah. And I will be yet more vile than this, and will be base in my own sight, but of the handmaids of whom thou have spoken, of them I shall be had in honor**" (2Sa. 6:21-22). The book says, "**And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death**" (2Sa. 6:23)

After Jehovah had given David peace he went to Nathan the prophet, and told him that he lived in a house of cedar, but the ark of God was in a tent. Nathan told David to do what was in his heart because Jehovah was with him. That very night the word of Jehovah came to Nathan telling him to speak his words to David. Jehovah said he had dwelt in a tent, and not in a house, since the sons of Israel came out of Egypt. And he never asked why they had not built him a house of cedar. He told him to say to David that he had taken him from being a shepherd to become prince over his people Israel. And he said he had been with him wherever he went. Jehovah said he would make him a great name, and would also provide a secure place for his people Israel. He told David that after his death, his son would build a house for the name of Jehovah.

The last thing Jehovah said to him was, "**And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever**" (2Sa. 7:16). Jesus was a descendant of David, and he was the fulfillment of that promise.

After David heard the words of Nathan about the vision, he went in and sat before Jehovah, and said, "**Who am I, O lord Jehovah, and what is my house, that thou have brought me thus far? And this was yet a small thing in thine eyes, O lord Jehovah, but thou have spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and this too according to the manner of men, O lord Jehovah! And what can David say more to thee? For thou know thy servant, O lord Jehovah. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, thou have wrought all this greatness, to make thy servant know it. Therefore thou are great, O Jehovah God, for there is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears**" (2Sa. 7:18-22). As he continuing his prayer, David spoke about how God had redeemed Israel from Egypt to be a special people for him. He praised Jehovah, and asked him to do as he had spoken about the house of David, that he would bless it, and continue it forever.

Next the book mentions some of David's other military victories, and it tells how he subdued many of the neighboring countries. He also dedicated much of the silver, gold, and bronze taken in war. The book says, "**And Jehovah gave victory to David wherever he went And David reigned over all Israel. And David executed justice and righteousness to all his people**" (2Sa. 8:14-15). It also names some of his chief men.

Then David asked if there was anyone left of the house of Saul that he could show kindness to for Jonathan's sake. So they called one of Saul's servants named Ziba. He told David about Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. He had become lame in both his feet as a child when he fell while fleeing the Philistines. David sent for Mephibosheth, and when he came he fell on his face before David. David said to him, "**Fear not, for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore to thee all the land of Saul thy father, and thou shall eat bread at my table continually**" (2Sa. 9:7). Mephibosheth was apparently the master of Ziba. So David commanded Ziba to till Mephibosheth's land for him, and bring the fruits to his son. Mephibosheth himself would always eat at the table of David with the king's sons.

Sometime later Hanun the king of the sons of Ammon died. His son took his place, and David sent his servants to comfort him because Hanun had shown kindness to David. However, the rulers of the sons of Ammon accused them of being spies. So the new king shaved off half their beards, cut off their garments at the buttocks, and sent them away greatly ashamed. Then the sons of Ammon hired several thousand Syrians with some other mercenaries. When David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the mighty men. Joab and his brother Abishai led separate armies to help each other in the fight when needed. They defeated the sons of Ammon and the Syrians, and Joab returned to Jerusalem.

After that the Syrians built up their forces and came out again. When it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, crossed the Jordan, and fought them. The Syrians were routed, losing the men of seven hundred chariots and forty thousand horsemen. The book says the Syrians were afraid to help the sons of Ammon anymore. It also says that later, at the time of year kings go out to battle, David sent Joab to destroy the sons of Ammon, and besiege their city of Rabbah (which is now the capital of Jordan), but he remained in Jerusalem.

Next the book tells the story of David and the wife of Uriah. It begins, “**And it came to pass at evening, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to look upon**” (2Sa. 11:2). When David asked about her, they said she was Bathsheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite. David sent for her and lay with her. Then she went back to her house. Later she sent and told him she was with child.

So David sent for Joab to sent Uriah back to him. When Uriah came, David inquired of him about the war. Then he sent him to his house, followed by a gift. However, the book says Uriah slept with all of David’s servants instead. When it was told David, he asked him why he had not gone to his house. Uriah replied, “**The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in booths, and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open field. Shall I then go into my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As thou live, and as thy soul lives, I will not do this thing**” (2Sa. 11:11). Although he was a Hittite Uriah was a noble man. The next day David again called for him, and he made him drunk. However, at evening Uriah still went back to sleep with David’s servants.

David should have confessed his sin to Uriah and begged his forgiveness. Instead he conspired to have him killed. Therefore, in the morning David sent a letter by Uriah to Joab. In the letter he told Joab to set Uriah in the front of the hottest battle, then pull back so that he would be struck and die. Joab did as he was commanded, and Uriah the Hittite was killed. Then Joab wrote David a letter about the war, and he told the messenger to tell him that Uriah had also been killed. When David received the message, he told the messenger to tell Joab not to be displeased about the matter. He also told the messenger to encourage Joab in the fight. Then, after the wife of Uriah had finished mourning her husband, David took her for a wife, and she bore him a son. David had compounded his adultery with murder to cover it up.

What David did was completely out of character for him. He had never done anything so wicked before, and he never did again. It is easy to understand how he was tempted to sin with Bathsheba, but it is hard for me to understand how he could conspire to have Uriah killed. Perhaps all of his successes caused him to become proud, and that blinded him.

The book says, “**But the thing that David had done displeased Jehovah**” (2Sa. 11:27), and he sent Nathan to David. Nathan told him about a rich man and a poor man in a city. The rich man had much livestock, but the poor man had only one little ewe lamb. The lamb grew up with him, and lived with him like a daughter. A traveler came to the rich man, but he would not take of his own animals. Instead, he took the poor man’s lamb to feed the man. When David heard the story, the record says his anger was greatly kindled against the rich man, judging him worthy of death because he had no pity.

Nathan said to David, “**Thou are the man**” (2Sa. 12:7). Then he told him what Jehovah said. Jehovah reminded him how he had anointed him king, and had delivered him from Saul, giving him his house and his wives, and all the house of Israel and Judah. Jehovah said to him if that had been too little, he would have added to him other things.

Then he said, “**Why have thou despised the word of Jehovah, to do that which is evil in his sight? Thou have smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be thy wife, and have slain him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah**

the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus says Jehovah, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house. And I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them to thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun” (2Sa. 12:9-12).

David confessed to Nathan he had sinned. Nathan told him that Jehovah had put away his sin; he would not die. However, the child that was born would die. I am strongly opposed to infanticide. There are many places in the Bible where God commanded against it. However, there are exceptions to almost everything. There were times when God commanded all the souls of a community be killed, including children of any age. I am against abortion, except in cases of rape. I believe it is wrong to force a woman to bear and rear the child of a rapist. Moreover, any such child would be yoked with that stigma all his life. Therefore, I believe this and other examples of God taking the lives of certain children support that option.

Nathan told David, “**by this deed thou have given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme”** (2Sa. 12:14). And truly it has been throughout the centuries. David was one of the most righteous men of the Bible. But the enemies of God love to point a condemning finger at David, and scoff about righteousness.

When Jehovah made the child very sick, David fasted and lay upon the ground. His servants tried to raise him up, but he would not, nor would he eat. Nevertheless, on the seventh day the child died. When David learned of it, he arose, washed, and went to the house of Jehovah to worship. Then he came back and ate. When his servants asked him about his unusual behavior, he said that while the child lived there was hope, but now he was dead. David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and she bore a son, whom he called Solomon. And the book says that Jehovah loved Solomon.

When Rabbah was near defeat, Joab sent for David to bring the rest of the people, and take the city so that David would have the honor. David did, and he put the crown of their king upon his own head. The book says he also took all the cities of the sons of Ammon and killed the people in them (see Deu. 20:13 for God’s law about that). He must have spared the villages.

Next the book tells the story of Tamar and Amnon. That episode appears to be the beginning of

Jehovah’s curse upon David. It says, “**Absalom the son of David had a fair sister whose name was Tamar. And Amnon the son of David loved her. And Amnon was so frustrated that he fell sick because of his sister Tamar. For she was a virgin, and it seemed hard to Amnon to do anything to her”** (2Sa. 13:1-2). He had a friend who was very sly, a nephew of David named Jonadab. He advised him to lay in bed pretending illness, and ask his father to send Tamar to nurse him. So he did, and when she prepared bread for him, he refused to eat. Instead he had everyone else leave, and he took hold of her telling her to lie with him. She tried to dissuade him, but he forced her.

Afterward the book says, “**Then Amnon hated her with exceedingly great hatred, for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her”** (2Sa. 13:15). When he ordered her out she said that would be an even worse wrong. Nevertheless, he called his servant to put her out. She was wearing a special garment of various colors that was worn by all the virgin daughters of the king. She tore it, put ashes on her head, and cried aloud as she went. The book says Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom’s house. David was very angry when he heard those things, but the book does not say he did anything.

Absalom did not speak to Amnon about the matter, but after two years he found a way to kill him away from David. When David first heard about the killing, he was told all of his sons had been killed. Therefore, he tore his clothes, and lay on the ground in grief. However, his nephew Jonadab told him that it was only Amnon who was dead, because Absalom had determined to have him killed from the day he forced his sister Tamar. Absalom then fled to king Talmai of Gehur in Syria, and was there three years. Talmai was his grandfather, the father of his mother.

After a while David longed for Absalom, and Joab noticed it. So he sent for a wise woman, and instructed her to put on a pretense before David. She was to claim she was a widow who had two sons. The two sons fought, and one killed the other. And now her family wanted to have her remaining son put to death because of it. David told her he would protect her son. Then she brought up his situation with Absalom as a similar case. David asked her if Joab was involved with her. With gracious words, she said that Joab told her to say all those things to change the situation. So David told Joab to bring

Absalom back, but he was not permitted to see David.

The book says, “**Now in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty; from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him**” (2Sa. 14:25). And he would cut his hair once a year because it became so heavy. Two years after he came back to Jerusalem he called for Joab to send him to the king, but Joab would not come. After a second try, he told his servant to set Joab’s field on fire. Then Joab came to Absalom and demanded why. Absalom said he wanted to send him to the king to tell him he wanted to see him again. So David received Absalom back and kissed him.

After that Absalom prepared a chariot and horses with fifty men to run before him. And he would rise up early to stand beside the gate to greet every man who had a case to bring to David for judgment. He told them if he were judge, he would give them justice. And whenever any man approached to bow before him, he would take the man and kiss him. Hence, the book says, “**And on this manner Absalom did to all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel**” (2Sa. 15:6). Today we would say he was an expert politician.

Then Absalom requested leave of the king. He said the reason was to pay a vow in Hebron. When he left, however, he sent spies throughout Israel to rally men behind him. He planned to destroy David, and seize the throne. Absalom took two hundred men from Jerusalem with him who were unaware of his plot. When they learned of it each of those men may have thought the others knew about it. That would have made them hard to oppose it. Absalom also sent for Ahithophel, David’s counselor, and the record says the conspiracy was growing strong. Then a messenger came to David and said, “**The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom**” (2Sa. 15:13). So David commanded all his servants to flee with him quickly lest Absalom smite the city with the sword. Therefore, David and all his loyal men departed, leaving behind ten of his concubines to keep the house. The book says all the country wept loudly as they went. David caused suffering to many others as a result of his terrible sin. But that is the way sin works, for even Jesus our Savior suffered because of the sins of others. Remember that when you are tempted.

When Zadok the priest came with the Levites carrying the ark of the covenant of God, David told

him to take it back to the city. It is to David’s credit that he would not subject Jerusalem to attack for his sake, but chose to flee. David also told Zadok he would wait for a report from him. So Zadok and Abiathar the other priest brought the ark of God back to Jerusalem and remained there. The book says David went up by the mount of Olives. He wept, going barefoot with his head covered. And all the people with him went weeping with their heads covered. When David heard that Ahithophel was among the conspirators, he prayed that Jehovah would turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness.

On the way, Hushai the Archite met him with his coat torn and dirt on his head. David told him he would be of more use to him if he returned to the city, and told Absalom that he would serve him. That way he could defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. David also told him to pass what he learned to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, who could then send the information to him by their two sons. So Hushai returned and met Absalom in Jerusalem.

During his escape Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him with some provisions, and he told him that Mephibosheth had abandoned him. So David gave all that was Mephibosheth’s to Ziba. Also Shimei, a man related to Saul, came out and cursed David. He threw stones at David and his servants, cursing and casting dust as he went. Abishai wanted to go take off his head, but David would not allow him. He said, “**It may be that Jehovah will look on the wrong done to me, and that Jehovah will reward me good for his cursing of me this day**” (2Sa. 16:12).

When Absalom and all the men of Israel came to Jerusalem, Hushai told him he recognized him as king instead of David. Then Absalom asked Ahithophel for his counsel. Ahithophel told Absalom to lie with his father’s concubines to show all Israel that he had become abhorrent to his father. That would strengthen his supporters. And Absalom did so. That was further fulfillment of God’s curse against David.

The book says that the counsel of Ahithophel was “**as if a man inquired at the oracle of God**” (2Sa. 16:23). Ahithophel also asked for twelve thousand men to pursue David immediately while he was weary and weak. He said the people with David would scatter, and he would only smite the king. Absalom and all the elders of Israel liked that advice. However, Absalom called for Hushai to hear his counsel. When he told Hushai what Ahithophel advised, Hushai said, “**The counsel that**

Ahitophel has given this time is not good” (2Sa. 17:7). He warned him that his father and the men with him were mighty men, chafed in mind as a bear robbed of her cubs, and he knew how to hide. He said all Israel knew David was a mighty man, and if there were any losses to Absalom, the hearts of his supporters would melt. He counseled Absalom to gather all Israel together in a great multitude, and then lead them in person to overwhelm David. Absalom and all the men of Israel said Hushai’s counsel was better than Ahithophel’s. The book says, “**For Jehovah had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that Jehovah might bring evil upon Absalom”** (2Sa. 17:14).

Hushai then informed Zadok and Abiathar the priests of everything, and told them to quickly warn David not to delay his retreat. The two sons of the priests were Jonathan and Ahimaaz. A maid-servant would go to them outside the city with messages for David. However, a lad informed Absalom, so they fled and hid in a well. A woman then covered the well and spread grain on the cover. Therefore, Absalom’s servants were unable to find them. Afterward they came out of the well and informed David, warning him to cross the Jordan quickly. So by morning they had all crossed over. When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he went home, set his house in order, and hanged himself. He was apparently wise enough to know Absalom was going to be defeated, and he would be killed anyway.

David came to Mahanaim, a city on the eastern side of the Jordan. While he was there several of his allies brought many provisions for him and his people. Then Absalom crossed the Jordan with all his men. He had set Amasa over the army instead of Joab. David divided his troops into three groups, one led by Joab, one by Abishai, and one by Ittai the Gittite. When he told the people he was going with them, they would not allow him. They said he was too valuable to them. So he stood by the gate-side. He also commanded his three captains to deal gently with Absalom, and all the people heard.

So the battle began, and the people of Israel were defeated by the servants of David. Now Absalom happened to meet the servants of David, and his head became caught in the boughs of a great oak tree. He was left hanging in midair while his donkey went on. A certain man told Joab, who rebuked him for not killing Absalom. The man reminded him of David’s command. Nevertheless, Joab went with his

ten armor bearers, and they killed Absalom. Then Joab blew the trumpet, and his troops returned from pursuing Israel. They threw the body of Absalom into a pit, and raised a great heap of stones over it. Then all Israel fled to their tents.

Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, one who had carried messages to David, wanted to run with the news to the king, but Joab would not allow him to go tell David his son was dead. Instead, he sent a Cushite. When the Cushite left, Ahimaaz asked again if he could run. Joab let him go, but he outran the Cushite. When he came to David he bowed himself, and told him of the victory. When David asked about Absalom, he simply said he saw a tumult, but knew not what it was. So the king told him to stand and wait. Then the Cushite came, and told him of the death of Absalom. Upon which the king went to his chamber and wept, crying out with a loud voice, saying, “**O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!”** (2Sa. 18:33).

The book says the victory that day was turned into mourning because of the grieving of the king for his son. Joab was told about it, and so he went to David and rebuked him, saying, “**Thou have shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, who this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines, in that thou love those who hate thee, and hate those who love thee. For thou have declared this day that rulers and servants are nothing to thee. For this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it would have pleased thee well. Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak graciously to thy servants. For I swear by Jehovah, if thou do not go forth, there will not remain a man with thee this night. And that will be worse to thee than all the evil that has befallen thee from thy youth until now”** (2Sa. 19:5-7). David hearkened to him, and he went out and sat in the gate. Then all the people came to him, for they had all melted away to their tents.

After that all the tribes of Israel contended about David coming back. David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests to speak to the elders of Judah about bringing him back. He also said he would make Amasa captain of the army in place of Joab. Finally, all the men of Judah went for him.

On the way back Shimei rushed out, fell down before him, and begged his forgiveness. Abishai wanted to put him to death, but David swore he

would not kill him. Mephibosheth also came to meet him. He had not trimmed his beard or washed from the day the king departed. And he told David how Ziba had deceived him, and then slandered him, because he was lame and could not walk. So David said they could divide the land.

Barzillai was one of those who had aided David in his flight. He was eighty years old, and a man of great wealth. David invited him to live with him in Jerusalem, but Barzillai said he was too old. He wanted to die in his own city. However, he suggested David take a certain other man to be with him. So David took the other man, and he kissed Barzillai goodbye.

When the king came to Gilgal the men of Israel contended with the men of Judah about bringing the king back. The book says, **“And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel”** (2Sa. 19:43). However, a base fellow named Sheba blew the trumpet, and said, **“We have no portion in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. Every man to his tents, O Israel”** (2Sa. 20:1). So all the men of Israel left following David, and they followed Sheba, but the men of Judah remained loyal to him. When David came to Jerusalem he shut up the ten concubines, and they lived from then on in widowhood. The innocent suffer with the guilty in this sinful world, but Christ promised a better world for his disciples.

Then the king told Amasa to call the men of Judah together within three days. Amasa went, but he delayed longer than the appointed time. Therefore, David said to Abishai that Sheba would do them more harm than Absalom. And he told him to take men and pursue Sheba lest he escape. Abishai took Joab with him, and they met Amasa in Gibeon. Joab asked about his welfare, kissed him, and then struck him with a sword, spilling his bowels on the ground so that he died. After that Joab and Abishai went to pursue Sheba. However, all the men stood watching Amasa wallow in his blood on the road. So a young man carried him into a field and covered him with a garment. Then all the people followed Joab after Sheba.

Sheba had entered the city of Abel, a city in the far north of Israel. So they besieged the city, casting up a mound against it. And all the people with Joab were battering the wall. Then a wise woman in the city cried out for Joab. When he came near, she said, **“They were accustomed to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask counsel at Abel, and so they ended the matter. I am of those who are**

peaceable and faithful in Israel. Thou seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why will thou swallow up the inheritance of Jehovah?” (2Sa. 20:18-19).

Joab said it was far from him to swallow up or destroy. He was after Sheba who had lifted up his hand against the king. If he was delivered, Joab said he would leave the city. The woman told Joab the man’s head would be thrown out to him. And in her wisdom she persuaded all the people of the city to behead Sheba. So Joab blew the trumpet and every man went home. Then the book names a few of David’s chief men.

Sometime later there was a famine in the land that lasted three years. David inquired of Jehovah, and he said it was because of Saul and his bloody house having killed Gibeonites. They were the ones that had tricked Joshua and the sons of Israel into swearing not to harm them when they invaded the promised land. Yet in his zeal for the sons of Israel, Saul had sought to kill them. So the king called the Gibeonites and asked them what he could do. They said it was not a matter of money, nor was it for them to initiate killing in Israel. They asked the king to give them seven of Saul’s sons to hang before Jehovah in Gibeah. The king agreed, but he spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, because of the oath between him and Jonathan. He took the two sons from one of Saul’s wives and the five sons from one of his daughters, and the Gibeonites hanged them. The mother of the two sons guarded their bodies and refused to bury them. So David went and took the bones of Saul and Jonathan, and he buried them with the sons who were hanged. The book says that God then accepted their appeals for the land, which had suffered from the drought. Dear reader, beware lest you question God about such things. Remember, he knows everything about everybody, and he is always just. Remember the story of Job.

Sometime later in a battle with the Philistines David grew faint. He was almost killed by the son of one of their giants, but Abishai saved him by killing the Philistine. So the men of Israel would not let David go into battle again. The book tells about other wars with the Philistines. In one of them they killed a Philistine who had twenty-four fingers and toes.

Then the book gives the words of a song that David spoke to Jehovah when he was delivered from his enemies. It is the same as Psalm 18 in the book of Psalms. David began by saying that Jeho-

vah was his rock, his fortress, his deliverer and savior. He said, “**I will call upon Jehovah, who is worthy to be praised. So I shall be saved from my enemies**” (2Sa. 22:4). Then he tells how he was made afraid by the waves of death and the floods of ungodliness. In his distress he called upon Jehovah, and he heard his voice. Then he said the earth shook because Jehovah was angry. And he came down in thick darkness, thundering from heaven, sending out his arrows, opening the foundations of the world with the blast of his nostrils. David said Jehovah drew him out of many waters, delivering him from his strong enemy. He said Jehovah rewarded him according to his righteousness, because he kept his ways and his ordinances. He said to Jehovah, “**With the merciful thou will show thyself merciful. With the perfect man thou will show thyself perfect. With the pure thou will show thyself pure. And with the perverse thou will show thyself contrary**” (2Sa. 22:26-27).

He said Jehovah was his lamp to lighten his darkness, and by him he has strength. He praised God, saying his word was tried. He said God was his strong fortress, guiding him in his way, lifting him up, and teaching him to war. He told God that he had given him salvation and made him great. David told how he (David) had destroyed his enemies because God strengthened him. David said he crushed them as the mire of the streets. David said Jehovah had delivered him, and kept him to be head of the nations. Even foreigners would fear and obey him. He blessed Jehovah, the rock of his salvation, who executed vengeance for him, saved him from his enemies, and lifted him up over them. He ended the psalm, saying, “**Therefore I will give thanks to thee, O Jehovah, among gentiles, and will sing praises to thy name. He gives great deliverance to his king, and shows loving kindness to his anointed, to David and to his seed, for evermore**” (2Sa. 22:50-51).

Then the book says, “**Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse says, and the man who was raised on high says, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: ...**” (2Sa. 23:1). David said that God both spoke by him and to him. In spite of his great sin against Uriah, David was a man of God who wrote many of the psalms of the Bible. David said the man who rules over men righteously, ruling in the fear of God, would be as light in the morning. David said his house was not so with God (perhaps remembering his great sin), yet Jehovah made an

everlasting covenant with him for his salvation. David said that worthless men were like thorns to be thrust away and utterly burned with fire.

Then the book names the mighty men of David. Chief of the captains was Josheb-basshebeth, also called Adino, who killed eight hundred at one time. After him was Eleazar, who was with David and two other mighty men to defy the Philistines when the men of Israel departed. He slew them until his hand was weary holding the sword. About him, it says, “**And Jehovah wrought a great victory that day, and the people returned after him only to take spoil**” (2Sa. 23:10). After him was Shammah, who stood in the middle of a plot of ground full of lentils after the people fled a troop of Philistines. He defended it and killed the attackers. The book also adds, “**And Jehovah wrought a great victory**” (2Sa. 23:12).

Next it tells about three of the thirty chief men who went to David when he was in the stronghold. The Philistines had a garrison in Bethlehem, and David told his men that he longed for a drink of water from the well there. So the three mighty men broke through the army of the Philistines, and brought back water from the well for David. But he poured it out on the ground, saying, “**Be it far from me, O Jehovah, that I should do this, to drink the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?**” (2Sa. 23:17).

The book says Abishai the brother of Joab was chief of the three. He used his spear to kill three hundred. He was the most honorable, and therefore was made their captain. It says, however, that he did not attain to the first three. Then it names Benaiah, and tells of some of his exploits. One of which was killing a lion in a pit. Another was when he plucked the spear from an Egyptian, and killed him with his own spear. He was more honorable than the thirty, but he did not attain to the first three. It does not name the third man.

Next it names thirty-one men. The list begins with Asahel the brother of Joab, saying he was one of the thirty. It ends with Uriah the Hittite, saying there were thirty-seven in all. The first three, plus the second three, plus the thirty-one, equals thirty-seven.

The last part of Second Samuel tells the story of a census that David took. The story begins with the words, “**And again the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, saying, Go, number Israel and Judah**” (2Sa. 24:1). Consequently, David told Joab the cap-

tain of the army to go and number the people. Joab tried to dissuade him but David insisted. Jehovah was behind it, but they were unaware. So Joab spent nine months and twenty days going throughout the land. After he returned he gave the number to David. The book says, **“And there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men”** (2Sa. 24:9). It also says that David’s heart smote him for numbering the people. He said he had done very foolishly.

The next day Jehovah spoke to the prophet Gad, David’s seer, and told him to tell David to select one of three choices: seven years of famine, three months of defeat by his enemies, or three days pestilence. You see, the law of Moses required a poll tax be paid by each man, otherwise a plague would come (see Exo. 30:12). That was a way God had of testing the people, and apparently they failed by not paying the tax. David chose the three days of pestilence, saying that Jehovah’s mercies were great. He did not want to fall into the hands of his enemies.

Therefore, Jehovah sent a pestilence upon Israel, and seventy thousand men died. Then the book says, **“And when the agent stretched out his hand**

toward Jerusalem to destroy it, Jehovah relented of the evil, and said to the agent who destroyed the people, It is enough. Now stay thy hand. And the agent of Jehovah was by the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite” (2Sa. 24:16). When David saw the agent, he spoke to Jehovah saying that he had sinned, and he asked what those sheep (the people) had done. David asked Jehovah that he and his father’s house be punished instead. However, God was angry with the people, not David. He must not have known that.

At some time that day, Gad came to David, and told him to rear an altar to Jehovah in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. So David went as he was commanded. When Araunah saw the king, he bowed to the ground and asked why he came. David said to buy the threshing-floor, and build an altar to Jehovah so that the plague would be halted. Araunah told him to take it, the oxen, and the instruments as a gift, saying, **“Jehovah thy God accept thee”** (2Sa. 24:23). However, David insisted on paying for it all. Then he built the altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So Jehovah was entreated and the plague ceased.

A Description of **First Kings**

This book begins by saying that king David was very old, and could not get warm even when covered with clothes. Therefore, his servants recommended they find a young virgin to care for him, and to lie in his bosom for warmth. They found a fair damsel named Abishag and she ministered to him. However, he knew her not, meaning he kept her a virgin.

Then the book says, “**Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king**” (1Ki. 1:5). Adonijah was a son of David, and as Absalom had done, he prepared chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run ahead of him. The book says that his father had never displeased him by questioning his actions. Also like Absalom, he was a very handsome man. Adonijah conferred with Joab and Abiathar the priest, and they helped him. However, Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, David’s mighty men, and some other leaders were not with Adonijah. Nevertheless, Adonijah held a great feast, and he called all his brothers, except for Solomon. He also called all the men of Judah. But he did not call Nathan the prophet, nor Benaiah, nor David’s mighty men.

Nathan asked Bathsheba the mother of Solomon if she had heard about Adonijah taking the throne without David’s knowledge. Then he advised her how to save her life and that of Solomon. He told her to go to king David, and remind him of his oath to set Solomon on his throne. Then she was to ask him why Adonijah reigns. Nathan said he would come afterward and confirm her words. So she went and bowed to David. When the king asked her what she wanted, she spoke as Nathan had advised her. Then she said, “**And thou, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou should tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him**” (1Ki. 1:20). She said if he did not, then she and Solomon might be considered offenders. While she was speaking Nathan the prophet came in and bowed before the king. He confirmed what Bathsheba said, and asked David if it was his doing.

King David called for Bathsheba, and he swore to her that Solomon would sit upon his throne that very day. Then he called for Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah. He told them to take his servants, and cause Solomon to ride upon his own mule. They were to take him where Zadok

and Nathan would publicly anoint him king. Then they were to blow the trumpet and say, “**Live, king Solomon**” (1Ki. 1:34). After that Solomon was to come and sit upon his throne, for he had appointed him to be prince over Israel and Judah. Then Benaiah said, “**Truly, Jehovah, the God of my lord the king, say so too. As Jehovah has been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David**” (1Ki. 1:36-37).

Solomon was anointed king as David had commanded, and all the people followed along with a musical parade rejoicing with great joy. When Adonijah and all his guests heard the sound of the trumpet, they wondered what it was. Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came, and he told them everything that had happened. Then all of Adonijah’s guests were afraid, and they departed to their own places. Adonijah was afraid of Solomon, so he went and caught hold of the horns of the altar. When it was told Solomon, he said, “**If he shall show himself a worthy man, there shall not a hair of him fall to the earth, but if wickedness be found in him, he shall die**” (1Ki. 1:52). Then Adonijah came and did obeisance to king Solomon, and he sent him home.

Sometime later David was near death, and he gave his last instructions to Solomon. He urged him to be obedient to Jehovah his God, and keep all his laws and commandments. He said that way Jehovah would fulfill his word about keeping his descendants on the throne. Then he told Solomon not to let Joab die in peace, because he had “**shed the blood of war in peace**” (1Ki. 2:5) when he killed the two captains of the armies of Israel, Abner and Amasa. He told him to show kindness to Barzillai who helped him when he fled Absalom. But in his wisdom to find a way to put Shimei to death, because he cursed him grievously when he fled. For David had sworn not to kill him. Then David slept with his fathers, and was buried in Jerusalem. He had reigned over Israel forty years: seven in Hebron, and thirty-three in Jerusalem.

After Solomon’s throne was established Adonijah went to Bathsheba. He complained that the kingdom was his, but Jehovah gave it to Solomon. Then he asked her to appeal to Solomon for Abishag to be his wife. So Bathsheba went to Solomon. When he saw her, the book says, “**And the king rose up to**

meet her, and bowed himself to her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a throne to be set for the king's mother. And she sat on his right hand" (1Ki. 2:19). She said she had a small petition of him. The king said he would not deny her. However, when she told him who Adonijah wanted, Solomon said, "**And why do thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also, for he is my elder brother, even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah**" (1Ki. 2:22).

Solomon apparently considered that request to be a veiled challenge to his throne. Therefore, he swore to put Adonijah to death that day, and he sent Benaiah to slay him. He also told Abiathar the priest to leave Jerusalem to his own fields because he was worthy of death. Yet he would not kill him because he had been loyal to David. So he took the priesthood from him, which the book says was fulfillment of the word of Jehovah against the house of Eli. When Joab heard those things, he fled to the tent of Jehovah, and took hold on the horns of the altar. Solomon heard about it, and he sent Benaiah to fall on him. When Benaiah came to the tent of Jehovah, he told Joab that the king wanted him to come forth. Joab said no, he would die there. Benaiah went back and told Solomon what Joab said.

Solomon replied, "**Do as he has said, and fall upon him, and bury him, that thou may take away the blood, which Joab shed without cause, from me and from my father's house. And Jehovah will return his blood upon his own head, because he fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and killed them with the sword, and my father David did not know it, namely, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the army of Judah. So shall their blood return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed forever. But to David, and to his seed, and to his house, and to his throne, there shall be peace forever from Jehovah**" (1Ki. 2:31-33).

Then Benaiah went and killed Joab. And the king put Benaiah in his place over the army. He also put Zadok as priest in place of Abiathar. After that the king called for Shimei. He told him if he ever left Jerusalem he would die, and his blood would be on his own head. Shimei said the saying was good, and he would do it. However, three years later two of his servants ran away, and he went out to bring them back. When it was told Solomon, he called for Shimei, and reminded him of his warning. He also

said to him, "**Thou know all the iniquity which thy heart is privy to, what thou did to David my father. Therefore Jehovah shall return thy iniquity upon thine own head**" (1Ki. 2:44). And he commanded Benaiah to go out and kill him. Thus, the record says the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon. Solomon also made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter.

The book says that Solomon loved Jehovah and walked in the statutes of David, but he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places. He went to the high place at Gibeon, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on the altar there. While he was at Gibeon Jehovah appeared to him in a dream at night. In that vision God said, "**Ask what I shall give thee**" (1Ki. 3:5). Solomon spoke to God about his great kindness. He said he was now king of the great people that God had chosen, yet he was a little child. He then made his request, saying, "**Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to judge this thy great people?**" (1Ki. 3:9).

The record says Jehovah was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. And he told Solomon that he would do according to his word, giving him a wise and understanding heart, one beyond that of any man before him or after him. Moreover, he would give what he had not asked, both riches and honor. And he said he would lengthen his days if he remained obedient to him as his father David had. When Solomon awoke, he returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. He also made a feast for all his servants.

Then two harlots came to him with a dispute. Each had born a child. And the first woman who spoke claimed the other woman laid on her child in the night and it died. She said the other woman took her live one, and put the dead one in its place. Then when she woke, she discovered what had been done. The other woman disputed her accusation, claiming the live child was her own. So Solomon ordered a sword be brought, and the living child be cut in two halves, one for each woman. The first woman pleaded with Solomon to give the child to the other woman and not kill it, but the other woman said to divide it. Then Solomon commanded the child be given to the first woman, because she was the mother of it. And the book says, "**And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had**

judged. And they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do justice” (1Ki. 3:28).

Next the book names the rulers that Solomon had. Then it says that Solomon had twelve officers to provide provisions for him and his household. Each man was responsible for one month of the year, and it lists their names. Solomon ruled Judah and Israel during a time of great peace and prosperity. The record says the people were as numerous as the sand by the sea, and they ate and drank and made merry. It says he ruled over all the kingdoms from the River (which usually refers to the Euphrates) to Egypt; they served him and brought him tribute. Then it tells of his daily provisions, and of his many horses and horsemen.

After that the book says, “**And God gave Solomon exceedingly much wisdom and understanding, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore. And Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the sons of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men: than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame was in all the nations round about. And he spoke three thousand proverbs, [only 600 of which are in the Bible] and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of creeping things, and of fishes”** (1Ki. 4:29-33). That last part means Solomon had much knowledge of natural science. The book also says, “**And there came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom”** (1Ki. 4:34).

Hiram king of Tyre was a devotee of David, and he sent servants to Solomon. Solomon told Hiram that David wanted to build a house for God, but he could not because of all his wars. However, now there was peace, and so he was going to build it, as Jehovah had said he would. He told Hiram that he would pay him to provide cedar trees and men to work with his servants. When Hiram heard his words, he rejoiced greatly, and blessed Jehovah for giving David a wise son over his people. Hiram told Solomon that his servants would make the timber into rafts to send by sea. In return Solomon gave him quantities of wheat and oil year by year. Then Solomon conscripted 30,000 men, and sent them to Lebanon in monthly shifts of 10,000. Each man

spent a month in Lebanon and two months at home. He also had 150,000 laborers, and 3,300 officers over them. They hewed out great and costly stones for the foundation.

Then the text says, “**And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Jehovah”** (1Ki. 6:1). The house king Solomon built for Jehovah was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. The porch in front of it spanned the full width of the temple, and extended ten cubits out. Remember, a cubit is a measure of length believed to be the distance from a man’s elbow to the tip of his middle finger, which is roughly a foot and a half.

Solomon made its windows of fixed lattice-work. Up against the walls of the house, round about, were stories and side-chambers. There were three stories. The first was five cubits wide, the second six cubits, and the third seven cubits. There were offsets in the outside wall of the house so that beams would not be attached to it. Each story was five cubits high, resting on the house with timber of cedar. There was also a spiral staircase from the first to the third story. The house was made of stone covered with planks of cedar. Each stone was shaped at the quarry. Indeed, all the parts of the temple were prefabricated, for the record says there was no sound of a tool while it was being assembled. It then says that the word of Jehovah came to Solomon telling him if he remained obedient then he would do what he told David, and he would dwell among the sons of Israel.

The book next says that Solomon finished the house. That probably means the main structure because next it gives details about the inside. The inner walls were also covered with cedar, and the floor was covered with boards of fir. The rear section of the house was the oracle, which was the most holy place containing the ark of the covenant of Jehovah. It was a room of twenty cubits square overlaid with gold. The section in front of it (the holy place) was forty cubits long. There were chains of gold across in front of the oracle. The book says the whole house inside was overlaid with gold.

There were two cherubim of olive-wood in the oracle. Each one was ten cubits high with wings five cubits. They stood beside each other with their wings spread out. Each cherub had a wing that touched a wing of the other cherub, and a wing that

touched one wall, so that together they spanned the entire width of the oracle. The cherubim were also overlaid with gold. The record also says, “**And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, inside and outside**” (1Ki. 6:29). The entrance of the oracle had two doors of olive-wood with similar carvings, and they also were overlaid with gold. The entrance of the temple also had two similar doors. Finally, it says the inner court was built with three courses of hewn stone, and a course of cedar beams.

In the fourth year of king Solomon the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid, and in the eleventh year the house was finished. Thus, it took seven years to build. The book says that Solomon took thirteen years to build his own house. It was larger than the temple, being a hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. However, the interior was not overlaid with gold. The house had four rows of fifteen pillars each, which supported beams holding the roof, all of cedar. It had windows and porches. One was the porch of judgment where cases were tried before him. It too was covered with cedar. His house was probably like the White House of our president: a combination office building and dwelling for the head of state. He also made a house for Pharaoh’s daughter whom he had married. The book says all the houses were of hewn stones cut with saws.

King Solomon also sent for another man named Hiram from Tyre. This Hiram was the son of a Hebrew woman and a man of Tyre. The book says he was a craftsman in bronze. He made two pillars of molten bronze, each of which was eighteen cubits high topped with ornate capitals. The pillars were set up at the porch of the temple. He also made the molten sea for the water of purification. It was ten cubits in diameter and five cubits high, and was supported by twelve bronze oxen, three facing east, three facing south, three facing west, and three facing north. The sea was the thickness of a hand-breadth, and had a brim like a cup, like the flower of a lily. It held two thousand baths (a bath is said to be six gallons).

He also made ten basins of bronze each holding forty baths. Each basin was supported by a bronze four-wheeled wagon. Each wagon had a base like a box that was four cubits square and three cubits deep. The sides of each wagon were engraved with cherubim, lions, and palm trees, below which were wreaths of hanging work. The wheels were like

chariot wheels with spokes, and they were beneath the base. At the top of each base was a round band half a cubit high (probably to encompass the basin). The book says that each base was one casting of bronze. Five were set on the right side of the house, and five on the left. The sea was set near the right front side of the house; that is, to the southeast. Hiram also made some pots, shovels, and bowls. Everything was cast in the plain of Jordan.

Next the book says, “**And Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of Jehovah: the golden altar, and the table whereupon the show-bread was, of gold, and the lampstands, five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle, of pure gold, and the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs, of gold, and the cups, and the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and the firepans, of pure gold, and the hinges, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, namely, of the temple, of gold**” (1Ki. 7:48-50). Hiram probably did not make those, for they were among the holy items of the interior.

When all the work was finished, Solomon brought all of the silver, gold, and vessels which David had dedicated, and put them in the treasuries of the house of Jehovah. Then he assembled all the leading men of Israel to bring up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah. And at the feast in the seventh month the priests brought the ark of Jehovah, with the tent of meeting and the vessels in it. And the book says they sacrificed sheep and oxen that could not be numbered.

Then it says, “**And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of Jehovah to its place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and the staves of it above**” (1Ki. 8:6-7). The text says there was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone. The manna and Aaron’s rod that budded did not survive, which is understandable after several centuries. The ark of the covenant was the most sacred object of the Israelites. Its purpose was to hold and protect the two tablets of stone. Remember, they had the ten commandments written on them. The most important thing about the ark was the ten commandments. Yet they venerated the box and the stones instead of the commandments.

When the priests came out the cloud filled the house of Jehovah so that they could not stay and

minister. It was the glory of Jehovah that filled the house. Then Solomon said, “**Jehovah has said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built thee a house of habitation, a place for thee to dwell in forever**” (1Ki. 8:12-13). Solomon said the temple he built would last forever. Yet nothing in this sinful world lasts forever, except the word of God. The temple, with its ark of the covenant and the tablets in it, perished long ago, but the words of the covenant—the ten commandments—endure. They are the real treasure, having power to transform the world from evil to good.

He turned around, and while all the assembly of Israel stood, he blessed them. He said that Jehovah was blessed, the God of Israel who chose David and spoke to him. Solomon said it was in the heart of David his father to build a house for the name of Jehovah. Jehovah approved of his desire, but he told David that his son would built it. And Jehovah had fulfilled his word. Solomon said he had made a place for the ark, in which was the covenant of Jehovah.

Then Solomon stood before the altar, spread forth his hands toward heaven, and prayed. It was a lengthy prayer, taking about a page and a half in a typical modern Bible. In his prayer Solomon first told Jehovah how there was no God like him. Solomon said Jehovah was faithful and kind to his servants. He asked Jehovah to keep his promise to David that he would always have a son on the throne of Israel if they remained obedient.

Then he said, “**But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee. How much less this house that I have built! Yet have thou respect to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Jehovah my God, to hearken to the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prays before thee this day, that thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place whereof thou have said, My name shall be there, to hearken to the prayer which thy servant shall pray toward this place. And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place. Yea, hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and when thou hear, forgive**” (1Ki. 8:27-30).

In his prayer, Solomon asked God to bring justice to whomever might come to the altar, condemning the wicked and justifying the righteous. Then he mentioned several different circumstances when men might pray to him, and he asked Jehovah that

he would answer their prayer. He mentioned times when his people Israel might suffer military defeat, or experience famine in the land, or have some other plague because they sinned against him.

He asked that if they returned to him, and prayed there, confessing their sins, “**... then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and render to every man according to all his ways, whose heart thou know (for thou, even thou only, know the hearts of all the sons of men), that they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gave to our fathers**” (1Ki. 8:39-40).

He asked that Jehovah hear the foreigner who might come and pray there. He asked that Jehovah hearken to his people when they went into battle and prayed toward the house. Finally, he asked that if they were carried captive because of their sinfulness, and they return to him with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies, that he forgive them and have compassion on them, because they were his people, his inheritance brought forth from Egypt, and separated from all the peoples of the earth.

Then the book says, “**And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication to Jehovah, he arose from before the altar of Jehovah, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread forth toward heaven**” (1Ki. 8:54). And he blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice. He reminded them that none of Jehovah’s promises had failed. And he hoped Jehovah would always be with them to encourage their obedience so that all peoples would know that Jehovah alone is God.

Then the king and all Israel offered sacrifice of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep before Jehovah. They had to make offerings in the middle of the court as well because the altar was too little for so many. So the house of Jehovah was dedicated. The book says that Solomon also held the feast at that time. The required feast in the seventh month was the feast of tabernacles, which was to last seven days. However, the book says Solomon held a feast fourteen days. The book of Second Chronicles says the first seven feast days were for the dedication of the temple. Solomon sent the people away on the eighth day (after the feast of tabernacles), and they departed having joyful and glad hearts for all the goodness Jehovah had shown.

After that Jehovah appeared to Solomon a second time. He said he had heard his prayer and sup-

plication, and had hallowed the house for his name. And he again told Solomon that if he remained faithful to him, as David his father had, he would establish his throne forever. Also he warned Solomon if he turned away and served other gods, that he would cut off Israel out of the land. And Jehovah said he would cast out the house that he hallowed, and it would become a reproach to them, and a sign to other peoples that they had forsaken him for other gods.

At the end of twenty years, seven for the temple and thirteen for his own house, Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. However, when Hiram came from Tyre to see them he was not pleased. The book also says that Hiram sent the king a hundred twenty talents of gold. Then it says the reason for Solomon's conscription was for all of his construction work: the house of Jehovah, his own house, the wall of Jerusalem, and other places. It says Solomon made bondmen of all the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites that the sons of Israel had not driven out.

And it says, "**But of the sons of Israel Solomon made no bondservants, but they were the men of war, and his servants, and his rulers, and his captains, and rulers of his chariots and of his horsemen. These were the chief officers who were over Solomon's work, five hundred and fifty, who bore rule over the people that labored in the work**" (1Ki. 9:22-23). King Solomon also had a navy of ships for the Red Sea. And Hiram sent experienced shipmen from his navy with Solomon's servants to bring gold from Ophir, which might have been in Arabia, or perhaps even Africa or India.

Next the book tells about the queen of Sheba. She had heard of Solomon's fame concerning the name of Jehovah, and she came to test him with hard questions. She came to Jerusalem with a very large caravan bringing spices, very much gold, and precious stones. Solomon answered all of her questions. And when she saw all the grandeur around him, the book says there was no more spirit in her.

She said to him, "**It was a true report that I heard in my own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom. However I did not believe the words until I came, and my eyes had seen it. And, behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee, who hear thy wisdom. Blessed be Jehovah thy God,**

who delighted in thee to set thee on the throne of Israel. Because Jehovah loved Israel forever, therefore he made thee king, to do justice and righteousness" (1Ki. 10:6-9). Then after exchanging much goods with the king, she returned to her own land.

Next the book says the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents, besides that brought by traders. Among other things he made three hundred shields of beaten gold. And he made a great throne of ivory overlaid with gold. It says, "**There were six steps to the throne, and the top of the throne was round behind. And there were supports on either side by the place of the seat, and two lions standing beside the supports. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps. There was not the like made in any kingdom**" (1Ki. 10:19-20). It says all his vessels were of gold. For silver was accounted of nothing in his days; it was as common as stones.

The record also says, "**So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And all the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart**" (1Ki. 10:23-24). Moreover, he accumulated horsemen and chariots. King Solomon also accumulated wives. The book says, "**Now king Solomon loved many foreign women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites, of the nations concerning which Jehovah said to the sons of Israel, Ye shall not go among them, neither shall they come among you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods. Solomon clave to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods. ... And Solomon did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah**" (1Ki. 11:1-6). The law of Moses commanded kings against accumulating horses, or wives, or gold (see Deu. 17:16-17). Solomon did all three.

Then the book says, "**And Jehovah was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from Jehovah, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep that which Jehovah commanded**" (1Ki. 11:9-10). God told Solo-

mon that because of it, he was going to divide the kingdom after his death. He would give only one tribe to Solomon's son, and that was for his servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which Jehovah had chosen.

Then Jehovah raised up adversaries to Solomon who did mischief against him. One was Hadad the Edomite. Another was Rezon who reigned in Syria. A third was Jeroboam, a man of Ephraim who was a mighty man of valor. He had been so industrious that Solomon set him over all the labor of the house of Joseph. However, a time came when the prophet Ahijah met Jeroboam. They were alone in a field, and Ahijah tore his new garment into twelve pieces. Then he told Jeroboam to take ten of them, for Jehovah was going to tear the kingdom from Solomon, and give ten tribes to him because they had forsaken him for other gods. He said God would do it after Solomon died. He told Jeroboam that Jehovah would make him king of the ten tribes of Israel, and would be with him if he was obedient like David had been. Therefore, Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam, but he fled to Egypt until Solomon was dead.

The time came when Solomon died. He had reigned over Israel forty years. Rehoboam his son reigned in his place. Rehoboam went to Shechem, a city in Ephraim about forty miles north of Jerusalem, where all Israel came to make him king, and Jeroboam was called to be there. Jeroboam and all the people told Rehoboam that his father made their yoke grievous. They said they would serve him if he lightened their load. Rehoboam told them to give him three days to answer.

When he asked counsel of the old men who were with his father, they said, "**If thou will be a servant to this people this day, and will serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants forever**" (1Ki. 12:7). However, Rehoboam also asked counsel of the young men he grew up with. They told him to make their yoke heavier. Rehoboam took their advice, and spoke harshly to the people, saying, "**My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions**" (1Ki. 12:14). The book says it was brought about by Jehovah so that he would fulfill the prophecy of Ahijah to Jeroboam. Therefore, the people revolted from Rehoboam, but those of the tribe of Judah stayed with him. The tribe of Benjamin also stayed with him, but the two were considered one tribe.

Later, when Rehoboam sent his taskmaster to Israel for workmen, they stoned him to death. Rehoboam had to flee in his chariot to Jerusalem. Israel made Jeroboam king over them. After Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem he mustered his troops, 180,000 warriors, to fight against Israel, and bring the kingdom back to him. However, the word of Jehovah came to Shemaiah the man of God. Jehovah commanded him to tell Rehoboam, and all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and the rest of the people not to fight against their brothers the sons of Israel. They were to go home, because the thing was from Jehovah. So they all went their way.

Jeroboam built Shechem and dwelt there, but he was afraid the kingdom would return to the house of David. He said to himself that if they went to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem they would return to Rehoboam and would kill him. Therefore, after taking counsel, he made two calves of gold, and told Israel they were the gods that brought them out of Egypt. He set one south in Bethel near the border of Judah, and the other north in Dan near the northern border. The book says it became a sin because the people went to worship the one in Dan. Jeroboam also made houses of worship in high places, and priests of men who were not Levites. He also ordained a feast in the eighth month to substitute for the one in Judah. And he promoted Bethel as a place to worship the calves.

While Jeroboam was worshiping on the altar in Bethel during the feast he had ordained, a man of God came out of Judah by the word of Jehovah. He cried out against the altar, saying, "**O altar, altar, thus says Jehovah: Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name. And upon thee shall he sacrifice the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones they shall burn upon thee**" (1Ki. 13:2). That happened many years later (see 2Ki. 23:16).

Then he told of a sign that Jehovah had spoken. He said the altar would be split and its ashes poured out. When the king heard his words, he put out his hand, and told his men to seize him. When he did, his hand dried up, and he could not draw it back. Also the altar was split and the ashes were poured out. The king asked the man of God to appeal to Jehovah to restore his hand again. And when he did it was restored as before.

Then the king invited the man of God to come home with him to be refreshed and receive a reward. But the man of God said he would not because Jehovah commanded him to neither eat nor drink nor

return by the way he came. Therefore he departed by another way. However, there was an old prophet dwelling in Bethel. And when one of his sons told all that happened, he went on his donkey to the man of God. He found him sitting under an oak tree. When he invited him to come home and eat bread with him, the man of God told him what Jehovah had said to him. The old man answered and said that he too was a prophet, and an agent spoke to him by the word of Jehovah saying that he should bring him back to his house to eat and drink. However, the book says he lied to him (I have no doubt that Jehovah used the old prophet to test the man of God). So the man of God went and ate and drank in his house.

While they sat at the table the word of Jehovah came to the old prophet, and he cried out to the man of God, saying, **“Thus says Jehovah, Forasmuch as thou have been disobedient to the mouth of Jehovah, and have not kept the commandment which Jehovah thy God commanded thee, but came back, and have eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which he said to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water, thy body shall not come to the sepulcher of thy fathers”** (1Ki. 13:21-22).

After the man of God departed a lion killed him and stood by his body with the donkey. Men who passed by reported it in the city. When the old prophet heard of it, he told his sons it was the man of God who had been disobedient to Jehovah. Then he had them saddle his donkey, and he went to the body, with the donkey and the lion still standing by. He laid the body on the donkey, and brought it back to mourn and bury him. He even laid the body in his own grave, saying, **“Alas, my brother!”** (1Ki. 13:30). After the burial he commanded his sons to bury him in the same place, laying his bones beside the bones of the man of God. He said the prophecy of the man of God would surely come to pass.

Why would God test his prophet that way? Remember, the Bible was written to teach us about God and his will for us. And such things are examples for us to learn from. When Paul was writing about the Israelites when they departed Egypt, he said, **“But these things became our examples ...”** (1Co. 10:6). I believe Jehovah used the old prophet to test the man of God, and use him as an example for us, whether he passed or failed. That example teaches us to never accept the word of another man who claims God told him something that violates what God commanded us. Mohammed, founder of Islam, and Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism,

were both false prophets who have led millions of souls astray. God stopped commanding men directly after the New Testament was written. Therefore, the Bible is our only safe guide for obedience to God. And it is deadly to our souls to listen to other men, no matter how convincing they may be, who claim knowledge of God’s will not found in the Bible.

But back to Jeroboam. Even though he saw those signs when the man of God was there he did not turn from his evil way, which led to the destruction of his house. The text says Jeroboam had a son named Abijah, who became sick. So Jeroboam told his wife to disguise herself, and go to Shiloh to Ahijah the prophet who told him he would be king. He told her to take gifts of food, and Ahijah would tell her what would happen to the child. Ahijah was old and could not see, but Jehovah told him about Jeroboam’s wife. When Ahijah heard her coming to the door, he said, **“Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam. Why feign thou thyself to be another? For I am sent to thee with heavy news”** (1Ki. 14:6).

Then he gave her a message from Jehovah to Jeroboam. Jehovah reminded him how he made him prince over Israel after dividing the kingdom. Yet he did not keep his commandments as his servant David had, but had done evil above all who were before him, making other gods. Therefore, Jehovah was going to utterly sweep away the house of Jeroboam like sweeping away dung. They would all be eaten by dogs or by vultures. Ahijah told Jeroboam’s wife that when her feet entered into the city upon her return the child would die. He alone would come to the grave because Jehovah found some good in him. He also said that Jehovah would root up Israel out of the land, and would scatter them beyond the River (Euphrates) because of their idolatry. Then when Jeroboam’s wife left and came to the threshold of her house the child died. The house must have been on the border of the city. The people mourned for him as Ahijah prophesied. And sometime later Jeroboam also died. He had reigned twenty-two years, and his son Nadab reigned in his stead.

Rehoboam began to reign in Judah when he was forty-one years old, and he reigned seventeen years. The book says, **“And Judah did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, above all that their fathers had done”** (1Ki. 14:22). The book says there were even sodomites in the land. Alas, America is becoming filled with sodomites. Then in the fifth year of Rehoboam,

Shishak king of Egypt came against Jerusalem, and he took away the treasures of the house of Jehovah and the kings house. The book also says there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.

Then Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried. Abijam his son took his place. He reigned three years, and he walked in all the sins of his father. The book says, "**Nevertheless for David's sake Jehovah his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem, because David did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite**" (1Ki. 15:4-5).

When Abijam slept with his fathers, Asa his son took his place. He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem, and he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah as David had done. He put away all the sodomites and removed all the idols. The record says, "**And also he removed Maacah his grandmother from being queen because she had made an abominable image for an Asherah. And Asa cut down her image, and burnt it at the brook Kidron**" (1Ki. 15:13). However, the high places were not taken away. The high places were where they offered animal sacrifices. However, God had commanded in the law of Moses that they make their sacrifices only on his altar (see Lev. 17:8-9).

The book says the heart of Asa was perfect with Jehovah all his days, and he brought the dedicated treasures into the house of Jehovah. It also says there was continual war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel. When Baasha began building Ramah as a blockade against Asa, Asa took all the silver and gold in the house of Jehovah and the kings house, and hired Ben-hadad king of Syria to break his treaty with Baasha. So Ben-hadad attacked some of the cities of Israel, and Baasha quit building Ramah. Then Asa commanded all Judah to carry away the timber and stones of Ramah, with which he built a couple of other cities. The book says that in his old age Asa was diseased in his feet (Second Chronicles tells why). Then he also slept with his fathers, and Jehoshaphat reigned in his stead.

In the second year of Asa, Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel. He reigned two years, and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. Baasha killed him in a conspiracy and reigned in his stead. And as soon as he was king, Baasha killed all the house of Jeroboam, which fulfilled the prophecy of Ahijah. The book says there

was war between Asa and Baasha all their days. Baasha reigned twenty-four years, and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, walking in the way of Jeroboam. Then the word of Jehovah came to Jehu against Baasha. Jehovah told Baasha he had raised him up to be prince over his people Israel, but he had walked in the way of Jeroboam. Therefore, Jehovah was going to utterly sweep away Baasha and his house, and do to it as he had the house of Jeroboam.

Sometime later Baasha slept with his fathers, and Elah his son replaced him. He began in the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. Zimri, captain of half of his chariots, conspired against him. While Elah was making himself drunk, Zimri went in and killed him. Then he reigned in his stead. And as soon as he sat on the throne he smote all the house of Baasha. The book says, "**He left him not a single man-child, neither of his kinfolks, nor of his friends**" (1Ki. 16:11). Thus he fulfilled the word of Jehovah against Baasha. Zimri reigned seven days because all Israel made Omri, the captain of the army, king while they encamped against the Philistines. So Israel went and besieged Tirzah where Zimri was. When Zimri saw the city was taken, he went into the kings house, and burnt it over him. Thus, he died for his sins, in walking in the way of Jeroboam.

Half the people of Israel followed Omri, and half followed Tibni. Those who followed Omri prevailed, and so Tibni died and Omri reigned. He reigned in the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned twelve years. Apparently he reigned five years over half of Israel, and seven years over all Israel when Tibni died. He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, dealing wickedly above all who were before him.

When Omri slept with his fathers, Ahab his son reigned in his stead, and he reigned twenty-two years. He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. Moreover, he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of the king of the Sidonians, and served Baal. The book says, "**And Ahab did yet more to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him**" (1Ki. 16:33). Then Elijah the prophet told Ahab that there would be neither dew nor rain except by his word. In other words, he was calling for a drought.

So Jehovah told Elijah to go to a certain place with a brook to drink from. Jehovah also said he had commanded the ravens to feed him there. However, after a time the brook dried up, so Jehovah told him

to go to a widow in Sidon. Jehovah said he had commanded her to sustain him. When he saw her he asked for a little water. After she got it for him he asked for a morsel of bread she had in her hand. She told him all she had was a handful of meal in the jar, and a little oil in the cruse. She said she was going to prepare it for herself and her son to eat and then die. Elijah told her not to fear, but to make a little cake for him first, then for herself and her son. He said to her, "**For thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, The jar of meal shall not be used up, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that Jehovah sends rain upon the earth**" (1Ki. 17:14). Therefore, she went and did as he said. And they all ate many days from the jar of meal and cruse of oil as the word of Jehovah foretold.

Sometime later the son of the woman fell sick, and there was no breath left in him. Therefore, the woman went to Elijah, and he carried him into the chamber where he stayed. Then he cried out to Jehovah to spare the child's life. After stretching himself out over the child, and crying to Jehovah that his soul would return to him, Jehovah hearkened to him, and the child revived. The woman said she now knew that he was a man of God with the true word of God.

In the third year of the drought Jehovah told Elijah to show himself to Ahab, and he would send rain upon the earth. Ahab had called Obadiah (who was over the household), and told him to search out the land for water and grass. Ahab went one way and Obadiah went another way. Now the record says that Obadiah was a man who feared Jehovah greatly, and had saved the lives of a hundred prophets by hiding them from Jezebel. When Obadiah met Elijah, he fell on his face before him. Then Elijah told him to tell Ahab he was there. Obadiah feared Elijah would depart, because Ahab had searched many kingdoms to find him. However, Elijah assured him he would show his face to Ahab. So he went to inform Ahab.

When Ahab saw Elijah, he said, "**Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?**" (1Ki. 18:17). Elijah replied, "**I have not troubled Israel, but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of Jehovah, and thou have followed the Baalim**" (1Ki. 18:18). Then he told Ahab to gather all Israel to him at mount Carmel. Mount Carmel is on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea due west of the Sea of Galilee. Elijah also told Ahab to bring the 450 prophets of Baal, and the 400 prophets of the Asherah, who ate at Jezebel's table. Eating at

her table was obviously a figurative expression for getting their sustenance from her.

When they all assembled, Elijah asked the people how long they were going to limp between two sides. He said if Jehovah is God then follow him, but if Baal then follow him. However, the people gave no answer. Then Elijah said, "**I, even I only, am left a prophet of Jehovah, but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men**" (1Ki. 18:22). He told the prophets of Baal to bring two bullocks. They would select one, cut it in pieces, lay it on wood with no fire, then call upon their god. Elijah would do the same with the other one, calling upon Jehovah. The book says they cried out for Baal from morning until noon, leaping about the altar. At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "**Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is meditating, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he sleeps and must be awakened**" (1Ki. 18:27). The book says they cried aloud, cutting themselves till the blood gushed out on them, but nothing happened.

Then Elijah called all the people to come near him, and he repaired the altar of Jehovah that had been thrown down. He took twelve stones, according to the number of tribes of Israel, and built an altar in the name of Jehovah. He made a trench around it, laid wood in order, cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. Then he commanded four jars of water be poured on the burnt offering and the wood. He had them fill and pour the water jars on four times until the trench was full of water. It was probably sea water. Then at the time of the evening oblation, Elijah prayed that Jehovah would hear him, and turn the hearts of the people back again. When he said that, the fire of Jehovah fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and all the water in the trench. Then the book says, "**And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces. And they said, Jehovah, he is God, Jehovah, he is God**" (1Ki. 18:39). Elijah told them to seize all the prophets of Baal. And he took them to the brook Kishon, and killed them there.

Then Elijah said to Ahab "**Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of abundance of rain**" (1Ki. 18:41). So Ahab did, and Elijah went up on the top of Carmel. There he bowed himself to the earth, and told his servant to go look toward the sea. His servant returned and said there was nothing. Elijah told him seven times to go, and at the seventh time he said he saw a cloud rising from the sea, as small as a man's hand. Then Elijah sent him to tell Ahab to get his chariot ready and go lest the rain

stop him. And after a while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, which brought a great rain. The book says the hand of Jehovah was on Elijah, and he ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

When Ahab told Jezebel everything, including the killing of the prophets, she sent a messenger to Elijah saying that he too was going to die. Therefore, Elijah fled for his life and came to Beersheba, which is in the far south of Judah, about a hundred miles from Jezreel. He left his servant there, and went a day's journey into the wilderness. Then he sat under a juniper tree, and prayed, "**It is enough, now, O Jehovah, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers**" (1Ki. 19:4). He was obviously very discouraged by his failure to turn the hearts of the sons of Israel fully to Jehovah. Then he slept, but an agent woke him, and gave him food and water. He slept again, and the agent awoke him again to eat. The book says that Elijah went forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God (Sinai) on the strength of that food.

He lodged in a cave, until the word of Jehovah came, asking what he was doing there. Elijah said, "**I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts. For the sons of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword. And I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away**" (1Ki. 19:10).

Jehovah told him to stand on the mountain before him. Then Jehovah sent a great wind, an earthquake, and a fire, but Jehovah was not in any of those. After the fire there was a still small voice. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out to the entrance of the cave. Jehovah again asked him what he was doing there, and Elijah gave the same answer. Jehovah then told him to go and anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, Jehu to be king over Israel, and Elisha to be prophet in his place. And Jehovah said to him, "**Yet I have reserved for me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him**" (1Ki. 19:18).

So Elijah departed, went to Elisha, and cast his mantle upon him. Elisha had been plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he asked if he could first kiss his father and mother. Elijah said, "**Go back again, for what have I done to thee?**" (1Ki. 19:20). Prophets of Jehovah suffered much persecution (see Mat. 5:12). Elisha cooked the oxen, ate with the people, and then went to minister to Elijah.

Next the record says that Ben-hadad the king of Syria came against Samaria with his army. He sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel claiming all his gold, silver, wives, sons, and the best he had. The king of Israel accepted his claim. Then the messengers came again saying that Ben-hadad was going to send his servants to go through his house to take whatever was pleasant in the eyes of Ahab. The king of Israel was offended by that, and all the elders and the people told him not to consent. When Ben-hadad heard his response, he sent back saying something to the effect that he had a massive army. The king of Israel replied, "**Tell him, Let not him who girds on his armor boast himself as he who puts it off**" (1Ki. 20:11). When Ben-hadad heard it, he told his servants to prepare to go against the city.

Then a prophet came near to Ahab and said, "**Thus says Jehovah, Have thou seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into thy hand this day, and thou shall know that I am Jehovah**" (1Ki. 20:13). When Ahab asked him by whom, he told him Jehovah said by the young men of the rulers of the provinces, and he was to begin the battle. Then he mustered the 232 young men and 7,000 sons of Israel. They went out at noon while Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk with the 32 kings who helped him. Ahab defeated the Syrian army with a great slaughter, but Ben-hadad escaped on a horse.

Later the prophet told the king of Israel to expect the king of Syria to come back at the return of the year. The servants of the king of Syria told him the god of Israel was a god of the hills, so they should fight them in the plain. Therefore, he went to fight against Israel at the return of the year. A man of God came to the king of Israel, and told him Jehovah said because the Syrians claimed Jehovah was a god of the hills, and not of the valleys, therefore he would deliver them into his hand. Then the king of Israel would know that he was Jehovah. So on the seventh day the sons of Israel killed 100,000 Syrians in one day. Ben-hadad fled into a city, and his servants suggested they put on sackcloth, and go to the king of Israel because they heard the kings of Israel were merciful. When they came to the king of Israel, he called for Ben-hadad and made a covenant with him, allowing him to go.

Then a certain man of the sons of the prophets told another man Jehovah wanted him to smite him, but the man refused. Therefore, he told him because he had not obeyed the voice of Jehovah, a lion would kill him as soon as he left, and it happened.

Then he found another man who did smite and wound him. After that he waited for the king by the way, disguising himself with a headband over his eyes. When the king passed by, he cried out to him with a story about being fined for losing a man he was supposed to have guarded. The king of Israel said in effect that it was his own fault. Then the man quickly removed the headband, and the king saw he was of the prophets. The prophet said, "**Thus says Jehovah, Because thou have let go out of thy hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people**" (1Ki. 20:42). That saying made the king displeased and depressed.

Sometime later Ahab wanted the vineyard of a man named Naboth because it was near his palace. However, Naboth said, "**Jehovah forbid it of me that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to thee**" (1Ki. 21:3). So Ahab became sullen and would not eat. When his wife Jezebel heard why, she conspired against Naboth charging him with cursing God and the king. And she found two base fellows who testified to it. Therefore, they held a hearing, and condemned him to death by stoning. Then Ahab arose and took possession of Naboth's vineyard.

After that the word of Jehovah came to Elijah telling him to go meet Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth. He was to say to him that in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, the dogs would lick his blood. When Ahab saw Elijah, the book says, "**And Ahab said to Elijah, Have thou found me, O my enemy? And he answered, I have found thee because thou have sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah**" (1Ki. 21:20). Then he told him what Jehovah said. He said Jehovah was going to make his house like the house of Jeroboam, utterly swept away. He also said the dogs would eat Jezebel by the rampart of the city. When Ahab heard those words he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, fasted, and went softly. Then Jehovah told Elijah that he would not bring the evil during Ahab's lifetime because he had humbled himself before God.

Israel and Syria remained three years without war. In the third year, Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came to the king of Israel, who had invited him to go to battle with him to take back Ramoth-gilead. That was a city due east of Jezreel about twenty-five miles across the Jordan. Jehoshaphat agreed, but asked that they first inquire of Jehovah. So the king of Israel gathered his four hundred prophets and

asked them if he should go. They said go and Jehovah would deliver the city to him. However, Jehoshaphat asked if there was not a prophet of Jehovah besides. The other prophets must have been polytheists, thinking Jehovah was just another god. The king of Israel said there was yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, but he hated him because he never prophesied good about him, only evil. Jehoshaphat encouraged him to send for Micaiah, and so he did. A man named Zedekiah had made horns of iron, and he told the king that was how he would defeat the Syrians.

When the messenger came to Micaiah he told him he should join the other prophets and speak good. However, Micaiah said, "**As Jehovah lives, what Jehovah says to me, that I will speak**" (1Ki. 22:14). And when he came to the king he told him to go and prosper, for Jehovah would deliver it into the hand of the king. But the king said, "**How many times shall I adjure thee that thou speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of Jehovah?**" (1Ki. 22:16).

Micaiah said he saw Israel scattered as sheep without a shepherd. Moreover, he said, "**Therefore hear thou the word of Jehovah. I saw Jehovah sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And Jehovah said, Who shall entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before Jehovah, and said, I will entice him. And Jehovah said to him, With what? And he said, I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shall entice him, and shall also prevail. Go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, Jehovah has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and Jehovah has spoken evil concerning thee**" (1Ki. 22:19-23).

Then Zedekiah struck him on the cheek, and they exchanged a few words. Also the king of Israel commanded Micaiah be put in prison, and fed with bread of affliction (unleavened) and water until he returned in peace. Micaiah told all of them that if the king returned in peace, then Jehovah had not spoken by him.

Nevertheless, the two kings went up to Ramoth-gilead. The king of Israel told Jehoshaphat he was going to disguise himself in the battle, but for him to put on his robes. The king of Syria had commanded the captains of his chariots to fight with no man

except the king of Israel. Therefore, when they saw Jehoshaphat they attacked him. However, they broke off the attack when they found he was not the king of Israel. Then the book says a certain archer shot an arrow at random, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of his armor, which wounded him severely. Nevertheless, he was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians the rest of the day. That evening he died, and his blood ran into the bottom of the chariot. At about sundown a cry went out for the armies to disburse. They buried the king in Samaria. And when they washed his chariot the dogs licked up his blood, which fulfilled the word of Jehovah. Then Ahaziah his son took his place.

Jehoshaphat began to reign over Judah in the

fourth year of Ahab. He was thirty-five years old when he began, and he reigned twenty-five years. The book says he walked in all the way of his father Asa, doing that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah. However the high places where people sacrificed and burned incense were not taken away. Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. He also put away the remnant of the sodomites. When Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers his son Jehoram reigned in his stead.

The book says that Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat, and he reigned two years. He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, serving and worshiping Baal, provoking the anger of Jehovah as his father had done.

A Description of Second Kings

Most of the first third of Second Kings is about the prophets Elijah and Elisha and their work for Jehovah in Israel (the ten northern tribes). The middle third alternates between describing events of Israel and events of Judah. The last third is about Judah only. Second Kings tells how the people of both countries were eventually conquered and carried away captive. However, the nation of Israel was destroyed about a hundred thirty years before Judah. That is why the last third of the book is only about Judah.

The book begins by saying that Ahaziah son of Ahab fell from his upper chamber. Then he sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, about his recovery. However, the agent of Jehovah told Elijah to meet the messengers, and ask if there was no God in Israel because they went to inquire of Baal-zebub. Then he was to tell them Ahaziah was going to die. When the messengers went back to Ahaziah he asked them why they returned, and they said to him what they had been told. When he asked them what kind of man spoke to them, they said he was a hairy man, girded about with a leather belt. Ahaziah said that was Elijah.

Then he sent fifty men with their captain to get him. Elijah was sitting on the top of the hill. And when the captain came he said, "**O man of God, the king has said, Come down**" (2Ki. 1:9). Elijah told him if he were a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven to consume him and his fifty, and it happened. Then the king sent another fifty,

and the same thing happened to them. When the king sent a third fifty, their captain fell on his knees and pleaded with Elijah to spare their lives. Then the agent of Jehovah told Elijah to go with him and fear not. So he went to the king, and he told him because he had sent to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, he would not recover. Therefore, he died and Jehoram began to reign instead.

The time came when Jehovah was going to take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven. So Elijah and Elisha went from Gilgal. That was where the sons of Israel had camped after first crossing the Jordan. Elijah told Elisha to wait for him because Jehovah was sending him to Bethel, which was about eighteen miles from Gilgal. However, Elisha would not leave him. When they got there the sons of the prophets asked Elisha if he knew that Jehovah was going to take away his master that day, and he said yes. Elijah told Elisha to remain there because Jehovah was sending him to Jericho. However, Elisha would not leave him. When they arrived the sons of the prophets there said the same thing to Elisha. Elijah told Elisha to remain there because Jehovah was sending him to the Jordan. However, Elisha would still not leave him. Fifty men of the sons of the prophets went with them as far as the Jordan, and they stood at a distance. Elijah took his mantle, wrapped it together, and struck the waters, which then separated so they could walk across on dry ground.

Then Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for him before he was taken. Elisha asked for a double portion of his spirit. Elijah said he asked a hard thing, but if he saw him taken, it would be to him. The book then says, “**And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which divided them both apart. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven**” (2Ki. 2:11). When Elisha saw it, he cried out, “**My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen of it!**” (2Ki. 2:12).

Then Elisha tore his clothes in two pieces. He also took Elijah’s mantle that fell from him, and he went back to the Jordan. He struck the waters with the mantle and said, “**Where is Jehovah, the God of Elijah?**” (2Ki. 2:14). Then the waters were divided, and he went over to the sons of the prophets who were at the Jordan. They said the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha, and they bowed down to him. Then they told him to send the fifty men to look for Elijah in case Jehovah had set him down somewhere. Elisha told them not to go. However, they urged him until he was ashamed. So he sent them while he remained in Jericho. After three days they returned without finding him, and Elisha reminded them he did not want them to go.

The book then begins to tell about many miracles that Elisha performed. The men of the city where Elisha dwelt told him the situation there was pleasant, but the water was bad and the ground was barren. Therefore, Elisha told them to bring him a cruse with salt in it. Then he went and cast the salt in the spring of waters, saying, “**Thus says Jehovah, I have healed these waters. There shall not be from there any more death or barren land**” (2Ki. 2:21). And the waters were healed.

On his way to Bethel some young lads came out of the city and mocked him, saying, “**Go up, thou baldhead; go up, thou baldhead**” (2Ki. 2:23). The book says Elisha cursed them in the name of Jehovah, and two she-bears came out of the woods, and tore forty-two of them.

Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel, and he reigned twelve years. He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, but not as bad as his father and mother. He removed the pillar of Baal his father made, but he clung to the sins of Jeroboam. After Ahab died the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. Then king Jehoram mustered all Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, to joined him in the battle. The king

of Edom also joined them. The army journeyed for seven days and could find no water. The king of Israel feared they were going to be delivered into the hand of Moab. However, Jehoshaphat asked if there was a prophet of Jehovah. When he heard Elisha was there, Jehoshaphat said the word of Jehovah was with him. Therefore the three kings went down to him.

However, Elisha told the king of Israel to go to the prophets of his father and mother. The king of Israel said no. He said it was Jehovah who was going to deliver the three kings into the hand of Moab. Elisha replied, “**As Jehovah of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee**” (2Ki. 3:14). Then he called for a minstrel. And when he played, the hand of Jehovah came upon Elisha. Jehovah told them to make the valley full of trenches. He said they would see neither wind nor rain, but the valley would be filled with water for them to drink. He also told them he would deliver the Moabites into their hand, and they were to smite every fortified and choice city, cut down every good tree, stop all the fountains of water, and mar every good plot of ground with stones. Apparently Jehovah was very angry toward Moab.

The next morning water came from Edom, a mountainous area, and filled the country. When the Moabites saw the redness of the water from the morning sun they thought it was blood from the kings armies having fought each other. Therefore, they went to gather the spoil, but the Israelites rose up and smote them. Then they wrought the destruction in the land of Moab as Jehovah had commanded them. Only their capital city remained secure. When the king of Moab saw the battle going against him, he took his eldest son, his heir, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall of the city. The book says there was great wrath against Israel, but what that means is not clear. Perhaps what their king did enraged the Moabites against Israel. Nevertheless, the sons of Israel departed for their own land.

Next the book tells about a widow of the sons of the prophets who pleaded with Elisha to save her two children from becoming bondmen to a creditor. Elisha asked her what she had in her house. She said nothing but a pot of oil. Then Elisha told her to borrow as many vessels as she could, shut the door upon herself and her sons, and fill all the vessels with the oil she had. So she did, and when the last

vessel was full the oil halted. Then Elisha told her to sell the oil, pay the debt, and live on the rest.

A time came when Elisha passed to Shunem, a city a few miles north of Jezreel. A prominent woman there constrained him to eat bread. And so whenever he passed by, he turned in there to eat. After a while she suggested to her husband that they build a small room onto their wall, and put some furniture in it for Elisha to have whenever he came. Then Elisha asked Gehazi his servant to call the Shunammite woman, and he asked her what could be done for her. She made no request, but Gehazi told Elisha that she had no son, and her husband was old. Then he called her again, and told her that at the same season next year she would embrace a son. She told him not to lie to her, but the woman bore a son as Elisha had said.

However, when the child grew, he fell sick while at the reapers with his father. They brought him to his mother, and she held him on her knees till noon, when he died. She laid him on the bed of the man of God, then asked her husband to give her one of the servants and a donkey so she could run to the man of God. When he asked why, she said it would be well. Therefore, she saddled a donkey, and told the servant to drive without restraint unless she told him. When the man of God saw her he told Gehazi his servant to run to meet her, and ask if all was well with herself, her husband, and her child. She said it was well. However, when she came to him she caught hold of his feet. Gehazi came to pull her away, but Elisha said to leave her alone. Her soul was vexed and Jehovah had not told him. Then the woman said, "**Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, do not deceive me?**" (2Ki. 4:28).

Then Elisha told Gehazi to take Elisha's staff, and go quickly to lay it on the face of the child. The woman refused to leave Elisha, and when Gehazi returned he said the child had not awakened. When Elisha came into the house he found the child dead upon his bed. So he shut the door and prayed to Jehovah. Then he went and lay upon the child, putting his mouth upon the child's mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands. And the book says the flesh of the child grew warm. Afterward the child sneezed seven times, and he opened his eyes. Then Elisha told Gehazi to call the Shunammite, and he told her to take her son. She went in, fell at his feet, and took her son out.

Elisha came again to Gilgal, and there was a famine in the land. So he told his servant to set on a great pot and boil pottage for the sons of the proph-

ets. One of them went out to gather herbs, and took gourds from a wild vine. He returned and shredded them into the pot. When the men were eating, they cried out to Elisha saying there was death in the pot, and they could not eat it. He told them to bring meal, which he cast into the pot. And then they could eat without harm.

On another occasion a man came and brought him bread of the first-fruits. He had twenty loaves of barley, and fresh ears of grain in his sack. They must have been small to fit in one sack. Elisha told him to give to the people so they could eat. Then the book says, "**And his servant said, What, should I set this before a hundred men? But he said, Give to the people that they may eat, for thus says Jehovah, They shall eat, and shall leave of it**" (2Ki. 4:43). And it happened as Jehovah said.

Next the book tells about Naaman. He was captain of the army of the king of Syria, a great man and honorable, because by him Jehovah had given victory to Syria. However, he was a leper. Now the Syrians had gone out in bands, and brought captive from Israel a little maiden, who then waited on Naaman's wife. And she said to her mistress, "**Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would heal him of his leprosy**" (2Ki. 5:3). A man told his lord what she said, so the king of Syria sent him with a letter to the king of Israel. Then Naaman departed with ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. And he gave the letter to the king of Israel, which told him to heal Naaman of his leprosy. When the king of Israel read it, he tore his clothes, and said, "**Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends to me to heal a man of his leprosy? But consider, I pray you, and see how he seeks a quarrel against me**" (2Ki. 5:7). When Elisha heard of it, he asked the king why he tore his clothes. He told him to send the man to him, and he would know there was a prophet in Israel.

Therefore, Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and stood at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha did not even come out. He sent a messenger to tell him to wash in the Jordan seven times to be healed. However, Naaman was angry. He complained it was not what he expected, and besides there were better rivers in Damascus. Nevertheless, his servants tactfully urged him to do what he was told. So he went and was made clean. Then he returned to the man of God. He said, "**Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, take a pres-**

ent from thy servant” (2Ki. 5:15). But Elisha refused anything. Naaman then asked for some dirt to take back with him, saying he would offer to no other god but Jehovah. He also asked to be pardoned when he went with his master to bow in the house of Rimmon (their god). And Elisha told him to go in peace.

I like to think when Naaman returned he offered to escort the little maiden back to her family in Israel, perhaps even with the treasures he had brought for Elisha. For if it had not been for her faith, he would never have been healed.

However, before Naaman had gone very far, Gehazi the servant of Elisha decided to get something from him. Hence, he invented a story about guests coming, and he needed a talent of silver and two changes of raiment. Naaman urged him to take two talents. When Gehazi came back, Elisha asked where he had gone. Gehazi said nowhere. But Elisha said his heart went with him when Naaman met him. Then he said to him, “**Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cling to thee, and to thy seed forever”** (2Ki. 5:26-27). And Gehazi went out a leper, white as snow.

A time came when the sons of the prophets told Elisha that their living space was too confined. They wanted to go to the Jordan and make a place to dwell there. At their request Elisha went with them. As they were cutting wood, the axe-head fell into the water. The man cried out that it was borrowed. Then Elisha cut a stick, which he cast in where the axe-head had fallen, and made the iron float.

Another time the king of Syria was warring against Israel. And whenever he went out, the man of God would warn the king of Israel about the location of the enemy camp. So he saved him several times. However, the king of Syria was troubled about it, and he asked his servants who was for the king of Israel. They told him it was Elisha the prophet who tells the king even what he speaks in his bedchamber. Therefore, he sent a great army with horses and chariots to get Elisha. He was in Dothan, which was about fifteen miles southwest of Jezreel. They came by night and surrounded the city.

When the servant of the man of God arose that morning, he was alarmed and told his master. Then the book says, “**And he answered, Fear not, for those who are with us are more than those who**

are with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2Ki. 6:16-17).

When the army came to him Elisha prayed that Jehovah would smite them with blindness. It was probably some kind of mental block and not total blindness. Elisha told them they were in the wrong place, and he would lead them to the man they sought. So he led them into Samaria to the king of Israel. Then he prayed that Jehovah would open their eyes, and they saw where they were. The king asked Elisha if he should smite them. Elisha said no, but give them food to eat, and sent them back to their master. Therefore, he did, and the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

Sometime after that, however, Benhadad king of Syria took his army and besieged Samaria, causing a great famine there. So much so that people even paid a very high price for a donkey’s head to eat. A time came when the king of Israel was walking on the wall, and a woman asked for his help. He said if Jehovah did not help her, how could he. She said she had agreed with another woman to eat their sons, but after they had eaten hers, the other woman hid her son. When the king heard it, he tore his clothes, and said he was going to take off the head of Elisha that day. Then he sent a man ahead of him to Elisha.

Elisha was sitting in his house with the elders, and he said to them, “**Do ye see how this son of a murderer has sent to take away my head?”** (2Ki. 6:32). The messenger came to Elisha with the words, “**Behold, this evil is of Jehovah. Why should I wait for Jehovah any longer?**” (2Ki. 6:33). Elisha then prophesied that the next day flour would sell for a very low price in the city. The captain on whose hand the king leaned asked how that could be even if Jehovah made windows in heaven. Elisha told him he would see it, but would not eat it.

Then the book tells about four lepers at the entrance of the gate. They told themselves if they entered the city they would die in the famine, and if they sat there they would die also. Therefore, they decided they had nothing to lose by going to the army of the Syrians. They departed at twilight and found no man in their camp. Jehovah had made the Syrian army hear a noise of a great army, which made them think the king of Israel had hired other kings to fight them. Therefore they fled for their

lives, leaving everything in the camp. So the lepers indulged themselves for a while, but then they began to feel guilty. They also feared being punished if they kept quiet. Therefore, they went to tell the king's household. The king sent servants to see if it was a trick, but they came back and verified the lepers report, also saying that they saw garments and vessels scattered along the way the Syrians had fled. Then the people rushed out and plundered the camp of the Syrians, so that Elisha's prophecy was fulfilled. Also the captain who scoffed about it was trampled in the gate and he died.

Elisha told the woman whose son he had restored to life to go with her household to live somewhere else, because Jehovah had called for a famine upon the land for seven years. Therefore, she sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years. After she returned she went to the king and asked for her house and land back. The king had just been talking with Gehazi the servant of the man of God. Gehazi had told him how Elisha restored life to him who was dead. And he said that was the very woman whose son he restored. Therefore, the king had everything restored to her.

When Elisha came to Damascus, Benhadad the king of Syria was sick. So the king commanded Hazael to take a present to the man of God, and inquire of Jehovah by him whether he would recover of his sickness. Hazael took forty camels' burden of good things, and asked him if Benhadad would recover. Elisha replied, "**Go, say to him, Thou shall surely recover. However Jehovah has shown me that he shall surely die**" (2Ki. 8:10). Then Elisha stared at Hazael and wept. When Hazael asked why, Elisha said it was because he knew the evil he was going do to the sons of Israel, burning their strongholds, killing their young men, dashing in pieces their little ones, and ripping up their women with child. Hazael wanted to know how he could do such a thing. And Elisha told him Jehovah had shown him Hazael was going to be king over Syria. When Hazael returned to the king he told him he would recover, but the next day he suffocated him to death with a wet cloth. Then he reigned in his place.

In Judah, Jehoram (also called Joram) son of Jehoshaphat began to reign. He was thirty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years. He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, doing evil in the sight of Jehovah, for he had married the daughter of Ahab. The book says Jehovah would not destroy Judah, however, because of his

promise to David. During Jehoram's reign Edom revolted from Judah. Therefore, Joram (Jehoram) took his army against them. The Edomites managed to surround them, but they broke through in the night, and the people escaped to their homes, defeated. After that Joram slept with his fathers, and Ahaziah his son took his place. He was twenty-two years old when he began, and he reigned one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and granddaughter of Omri, kings of Israel. Ahaziah also walked in the way of the house of Ahab, doing evil in the sight of Jehovah.

When King Joram of Israel was wounded fighting the Syrians, Ahaziah went to see him in Jezreel. Then Elisha told one of the sons of the prophets to take a vial of oil, and go to Jehu in Ramoth-gilead. He was to take him to an inner chamber in private, pour the oil on his head, and tell him that Jehovah had anointed him king over his people Israel. And so the man went and did as Elisha commanded him.

After he poured the oil on Jehu's head, he said to him, "**Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of Jehovah, even over Israel. And thou shall smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of Jehovah, at the hand of Jezebel**" (2Ki. 9:7). He said Jehovah would make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam, and the dogs would eat Jezebel. Then he opened the door and fled.

When Jehu came out the servants of his lord (the king of Israel) asked him why the man came to him. At first he would not say, but they pressed him. So he told them he had been anointed king. Then they quickly put on their garments and blew the trumpet, saying Jehu was king. Jehu said if that was what they wanted, then they should let nobody escape to tell it in Jezreel. Then he rode in his chariot to Jezreel where Joram lay. When the watchman who stood on the tower of Jezreel saw the company coming, Joram sent a horseman to ask if they were coming in peace. Jehu asked the horseman what he had to do with peace, and he told him to follow behind him. When the horseman did not return, Joram sent another one, but Jehu did the same with him.

Therefore, both kings, Joram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah, went out in their chariots to meet Jehu. And they found him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite (whose vineyard Jezebel had conspired to get for Ahab). When Joram asked Jehu if he came in peace, he replied, "**What peace, so long as the**

whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" (2Ki. 9:22). Hence, Joram turned back and told Ahaziah there was treachery. Then Jehu smote Joram with an arrow in his heart, and commanded him be cast in the portion of the field of Naboth, because that was what Jehovah said would happen to him. When Ahaziah saw it, he also fled. But Jehu followed, and commanded him be smitten. So he died, and his servants carried him to Jerusalem for burial.

When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel painted her eyes, attired her head, and looked out the window. As Jehu entered the gate, she asked if he came in peace, and accused him of being like Zimri who murdered his master. But Jehu looked up and asked who was on his side. When two or three eunuchs looked out, he told them to throw her down. So they did, and some of her blood splattered on the wall and the horses. Jehu trampled her under foot, then went in, and ate and drank. Afterward he commanded she be buried. However, they only found her skull, feet, and the palms of her hands, which was fulfillment of the word of Jehovah that she would be eaten by the dogs, and become as dung on the ground of Jezreel.

Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. Therefore, Jehu sent letters to Samaria, the elders of Jezreel, and to those who reared the sons of Ahab, telling them to prepare to fight for their master's house. However, they were exceedingly afraid, saying two kings could not stand before him, how could they. Consequently, they all agreed to submit to him. He wrote a second letter telling them if they were on his side then they were to take the heads of their masters sons, and come to him in Jezreel the next day. So they killed the seventy sons, and put their heads in baskets to sent to Jezreel. Jehu said to lay them out in two heaps at the entrance of the gate. Then when he met the people, he went out and said, yes, he had conspired against his master and killed him, but then he asked who smote all those. He said it was fulfillment of the word of Jehovah, which he spoke by his servant Elijah. Then the book says, "**So Jehu smote all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his familiar friends, and his priests, until he left to him none remaining**" (2Ki. 10:11). Later he also killed the brothers of Ahaziah king of Judah who came to Israel to salute the sons of their king and queen.

After that Jehu gathered all the people together, and told them he would serve Baal more than Ahab.

Hence, they were to call all of the prophets, worshippers, and priests of Baal. He said he had a great sacrifice for him. And he warned that whoever was lacking would not live. However, Jehu did that with the intent of destroying them. So they filled the house of Baal. Jehu also searched that it contained no servants of Jehovah. Then, after he had finished the burnt offering, he commanded the eighty men he had stationed outside to go in and kill them all. They also broke down the house of Baal, and made it a permanent out-house. And they destroyed the other things of Baal. The record says Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel, but he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam; he left the golden calves in Bethel and Dan.

Jehovah told Jehu that his sons would sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation, because he had done to the house of Ahab what was in Jehovah's heart. Yet Jehu did not walk in the law of Jehovah with all his heart; he continued in the sins of Jeroboam. The book says Jehovah began to cut off from Israel in those days. All their lands east of the Jordan were smote by Hazael. Then Jehu slept with his fathers, and Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead. Jehu had reigned twenty-eight years.

When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah king of Judah saw that her son was dead, she killed all the royal seed, which would have included all her grandsons. Remember, she was a daughter of the wicked king Ahab. However Ahaziah's sister, Jehosheba, took his son Joash and hid him and his nurse in the bedchamber during the slaughter. And he was hidden with her in the house of Jehovah six years while Athaliah reigned. In the seventh year Jehoiada the priest brought the captains over hundreds, and the guards, into the house of Jehovah. Then he made a covenant with them to bring the king's son to the throne. After organizing the men, and arranging for the security of the king, they brought him out. They put the crown on him, gave him the testimony (probably the scroll of the law), and anointed him king. Then they clapped their hands, blew trumpets, and said, "**Live, O king**" (2Ki. 11:12). When Athaliah saw what was happening, she tore her clothes and cried, "**Treason! treason!**" (2Ki. 11:14). Then Jehoiada the priest commanded her be taken out and slain.

Jehoiada the priest made a covenant that the king and all the people would be Jehovah's people. So all the people broke the altars, and images, and other things associated with Baal. And they killed his priest. Jehoiada also appointed officers over the

house of Jehovah. After they set the king on the throne, the people rejoiced, and the city was quiet.

Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. He did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah all the days of Jehoiada who instructed him. However, the high places where people sacrificed and burned incense were not taken away. A time came when Joash told the priests to take the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah, and repair its broken parts. The book says, however, that in his twenty-third year they had not repaired anything. Therefore, king Joash called for Jehoiada and the other priests, and criticized them about it. The priests agreed to no longer collect money or repair the house. Instead Jehoiada took a chest, bored a hole in its lid, and set it beside the altar. The priests were to put in it the money brought into the house of Jehovah. And whenever it was full, they paid the builders who worked on the house of Jehovah. The book also says they did not keep an accounting of the money with the builders because they dealt faithfully. However, the money for the trespass and sin offerings was for the priests.

Hazael king of Syria took the Philistine city of Gath, which is about thirty miles southwest of Jerusalem. Then he went for Jerusalem. So Joash king of Judah took all the hallowed things, and the gold in the treasures of the house of Jehovah and the king's house, and sent it to Hazael. Consequently, he went away from Jerusalem. The book says a time came when the servants of Joash made a conspiracy against him and killed him. Then Amaziah his son reigned in his place. The book of Second Chronicles tells how Joash became evil in his later years.

In Israel, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign. He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel. He continually delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria and Benhadad his son. However, Jehoahaz besought Jehovah, and the record says, "**Jehovah hearkened to him, for he saw the oppression of Israel, how that the king of Syria oppressed them**" (2Ki. 13:4). Jehovah gave Israel a savior from the oppression of the Syrians. Nevertheless, they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam.

Then Jehoahaz slept with his fathers, and his son, who was also called Joash and Jehoash, reigned in his stead. He reigned sixteen years, and also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam. During his

reign he fought with Amaziah king of Judah. Then the book says that Joash slept with his fathers, and Jeroboam (a later one) sat upon his throne. However, it goes on to describe several other events in his life. There are three things about Joash in this book that can be confusing: 1) Joash is also called Jehoash, 2) one of the kings of Judah who lived about the same time was also called Joash, and 3) events are described about him after it tells of his death.

When Elisha became ill of the disease that caused his death, Joash king of Israel went and wept over him. Elisha told him to take bow and arrows, and put his hand on the bow. Then Elisha laid his hands upon the king's hands, and told him to open the eastward window and shoot. Elisha said it was Jehovah's arrow of victory over Syria. Joash would smite the Syrians in Aphek (a city about twenty-five miles northeast of Jezreel) till he had consumed them. Then he told the king to take the arrows, and smite them on the ground. He smote three times and stopped. The man of God became angry with him. He said he should have smitten five or six times. Now he would only smite Syria three times. After that Elisha died and was buried.

Now bands of Moabites used to raid the land. And one time when a man was being buried, they spied a band. So they cast the man into the sepulcher of Elisha. The book says that as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet. Unbelievers scoff at such things, for they have no faith in the holy scriptures.

Although Hazael king of Syria had continually oppressed Israel during the time of Jehoahaz, Jehovah had compassion on them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The book says he did not destroy them or cast them from his presence as yet. Hazael eventually died, and Benhadad his son took his place. Then Jehoash (Joash) the son of Jehoahaz recovered the cities of Israel that Hazael had taken. He smote them three times, as Elisha had prophesied.

Amaziah began to reign in Judah. He was twenty-five years old when he began, and he reigned twenty-nine years. He did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, yet not like David. The high places were not taken away. As soon as his kingdom was established he killed the servants who had slain his father. However, he did not put to death the sons of the murderers, because the law of Moses said neither fathers nor sons were to be put to

death for the guilt of the other; each man was to die for his own sin.

After Amaziah fought victoriously against Edom he sent a challenge to Jehoash king of Israel. Jehoash sent back a parable to him about a thistle and a cedar. He told him to glory in his victory over Edom, but not to meddle and fall, and Judah with him. Nevertheless, Amaziah would not listen. Therefore, they fought and Judah lost. Jehoash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, and came to Jerusalem. He broke down a large portion of the wall of the city, and took treasures from the house of Jehovah and the king's house. He also took hostages and returned to Samaria. Then Jehoash slept with his fathers, and Jeroboam his son reigned in his stead.

Amaziah king of Judah lived fifteen years after the death of Jehoash king of Israel. However, a conspiracy was made against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish, a city twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. But they sent and killed him there, and brought him back to bury in Jerusalem. Then all the people of Judah took his son Azariah and made him king. He was sixteen years old.

In Israel Jeroboam began to reign, and he reigned forty-one years. He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. He did not depart from all the sins of the first Jeroboam. The book says that he restored some of the borders of Israel, which was according to the word of Jehovah by the prophet Jonah. The book says, "**For Jehovah saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter, for there was none shut up nor left at large, neither was there any helper for Israel**" (2Ki. 14:26). Jehovah did not want to blot them out, so he saved them by Jeroboam. Then Jeroboam slept with his fathers, and Zechariah his son reigned in his stead.

In Judah, Azariah (also called Uzziah) began to reign. He was sixteen years old when he began, and he reigned fifty-two years. He did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, but the high places were not taken away. Jehovah smote the king so that he was a leper dwelling in a separate house till he died. The book of Second Chronicles tells why. His son Jotham was over the household, judging the people of the land. Then Azariah slept with his fathers, and Jotham his son became king.

In Israel, Zechariah began to reign. He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam. Shallum conspired against him, killed him publicly, and reigned in his place. Shallum only reigned one month. For

Menahem came up from Tirzah (a city twenty miles south of Jezreel), killed Shallum, and reigned in his stead. The book says that Menahem smote a city near Tirzah, because they did not open to him. And he ripped open all their women who were with child. Menahem reigned ten years, and did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam. When Pul the king of Assyria came against the land, Menahem gave him a thousand talents of silver, which he got by taxing all the men of wealth fifty shekels of silver each. Consequently, the king of Assyria turned back.

Then Menahem slept with his fathers, and Pekahiah his son reigned in his stead. He reigned over Israel two years. He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam. Pekah his captain conspired against him with fifty Gileadites. He killed Pekahiah in the castle of the king's house, and reigned over Israel in his place. Pekah reigned twenty years, and also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. He did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam. In his days Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria conquered all the cities of Naphtali, and carried the people captive to Assyria. Then Hoshea made a conspiracy against Pekah, killed him, and reigned in his stead.

In Judah, Jotham the son of Uzziah began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he began, and he reigned sixteen years. He did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah. However the high places were not taken away. The record says that in those days Jehovah began to send Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah king of Israel, against Judah.

When Jotham slept with his fathers, Ahaz his son took his place. He was twenty years old when he began to reign over Judah, and he reigned sixteen years. The book says he did not do that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, as David had done. It says, "**But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel. Yes, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom Jehovah cast out from before the sons of Israel**" (2Ki. 16:3). Then Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah king of Israel, came and besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria asking for his help against them. He took the silver and gold from the house of Jehovah and the treasures of the king's house to give the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria took Damascus, carried the people captive, and killed Rezin.

When king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser, he saw the altar there. Therefore, he sent the pattern of it to Urijah the priest, and he built an altar according to what was sent. When the king returned from Damascus he commanded Urijah the priest to make the regular offerings on it. Ahaz told him he would use the old brazen altar for himself to inquire by. All of that was a violation of Moses' law. Ahaz also marred the water containers of the temple. He cut off the panels of the bases and removed their lavers. He also removed the brazen oxen from under the sea, and set it on a pavement of stone. Perhaps he wanted the bronze from those things. Then he slept with his fathers and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

In Israel, Hoshea began to reign, and he reigned nine years. He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, yet not like the kings before him. Nevertheless, Shalmaneser king of Assyria came and made Hoshea his servant. However, Hoshea attempted to conspire with the king of Egypt, so the king of Assyria bound him in prison. He besieged Samaria three years, and carried Israel away captive to Assyria.

Then the book says, “**And it was so, because the sons of Israel had sinned against Jehovah their God who brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the nations, whom Jehovah cast out from before the sons of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they made. And the sons of Israel did things secretly that were not right against Jehovah their God. And they built for them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city. And they set up for them pillars and Asherim upon every high hill, and under every green tree, and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as the nations did whom Jehovah carried away before them. And they wrought wicked things to provoke Jehovah to anger. And they served idols, of which Jehovah had said to them, Ye shall not do this thing.**

“**Yet Jehovah testified to Israel, and to Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but stiffened their neck, like the neck of their fathers who did**

not believed in Jehovah their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified to them. And they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the nations that were round about them, concerning whom Jehovah had charged them that they should not do like them. And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God, and made for them molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah to provoke him to anger.

“**Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight. There was none left but only the tribe of Judah. Also Judah did not keep the commandments of Jehovah their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. And Jehovah rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. For he tore Israel from the house of David. And they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. And Jeroboam drove Israel from following Jehovah, and made them sin a great sin. And the sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did. They did not depart from them until Jehovah removed Israel out of his sight, as he spoke by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria to this day**” (2Ki. 17:7-23).

The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon and other places to the cities of Samaria to replace the sons of Israel. The record says when they first dwelt there they did not fear Jehovah, so he sent lions that killed some of them. When they told the king of Assyria about it, he commanded one of the Israelite priests to go and teach them the law of the god of the land. However, every nation made gods of their own. Some even burnt their sons in the fire to their gods. The record says, “**So they feared Jehovah, and made for them priests of the high places from among themselves, who sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They feared Jehovah, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away**” (2Ki. 17:32-33). They were polytheists, who considered Jehovah to

be just another god to recognize and placate. That seems to be similar to the popular mentality of modern Americans about tolerating diversity in religion.

In Judah, Hezekiah the son of Ahaz began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he began, and he reigned twenty-nine years. He did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, as David had done. He removed the high places, and broke down the objects of worship. He also broke apart the bronze serpent that Moses had made (see Num. 21:8), because the people were burning incense to it. The book says, "**He trusted in Jehovah, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him**" (2Ki. 18:5). As a result Jehovah was with him and he prospered.

It was in the sixth year of Hezekiah that Shalmaneser king of Assyria carried Israel away because of their disobedience to Jehovah. And in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah Sennacherib king of Assyria came and took all the fortified cities of Judah. Hezekiah then gave him all the silver in the house of Jehovah and in the treasuries of the king's house. He also cut off the gold from the doors and the pillars of the temple of Jehovah, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

Nevertheless, the king of Assyria sent Tartan, Rab-saris, and Rabshakeh with a great army to Jerusalem, and they called to the king. Some of his officials came out, and Rabshakeh spoke to them in the name of the king of Assyria. He told them not to trust Pharaoh king of Egypt, or Jehovah their God. He even said Jehovah told him to go against the land and destroy it. Then Hezekiah's officials asked him to speak to them in the Syrian language, and not in the Jew's language for the people to hear. But Rabshakeh said, "**Has my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? Has he not sent me to the men who sit on the wall, to eat their own dung, and to drink their own urine with you?**" (2Ki. 18:27). Then Rabshakeh cried aloud in the Jews language, telling them not to trust Hezekiah, who said Jehovah would deliver them. He told them to surrender, and he would take them to a good land. He then asked where were the gods of the countries he had defeated. Therefore, Jehovah would not save them either. But the people were silent, for the king had commanded them not to answer.

Hezekiah's officials came to him with their clothes torn, and told him the words of Rabshakeh. Then he tore his clothes, covered himself with sack-

cloth, and went into the house of Jehovah. He also sent two of his officials with the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet. And he asked that he pray for them. Isaiah then told them the words of Jehovah. He said not to fear the blasphemous words of the servants of the king of Assyria. He was going to put a spirit in him, causing him to return to his own land, and be killed there.

Rabshakeh sent messengers to Hezekiah with a letter warning him not to trust his God, for none of the gods of the nations had delivered them. When Hezekiah read the letter, he went up to the house of Jehovah, spread it before Jehovah, and prayed. He said Jehovah was the only God; he made heaven and earth. He told Jehovah that the kings of Assyria truly had destroyed other nations and their gods. And he asked him to save them, so that the other nations would know he alone was God.

Then Isaiah sent Hezekiah the words of Jehovah. He said he had heard his prayer. Regarding Sennacherib king of Assyria, Jehovah said the virgin daughter of Zion had laughed him to scorn. Jehovah said Sennacherib had defied and exalted himself against the Holy One of Israel. He had defied Jehovah, trusting his multitude of chariots.

Jehovah also said about Sennacherib, "**Have thou not heard how I have done it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? Now I have brought it to pass, that thou should be to lay waste fortified cities into ruinous heaps. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded. They were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as grain blasted before it is grown up. But I know thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy raging against me. Because of thy raging against me, and because thine arrogance has come up into my ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou came**" (2Ki. 19:25-28).

Then Jehovah gave Hezekiah a sign. He said they would have plenty to eat in the coming years, and the remnant of Judah would again take root and bear fruit upward. Jehovah said the king of Assyria would not attack the city. He said, "**For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake**" (2Ki. 19:34). That very night the agent of Jehovah went and smote the camp of the Assyrians. In the morning there were

185,000 dead bodies. Consequently, Sennacherib returned to Nineveh. Then he was slain while he worshiped in the house of Nisroch his god.

Sometime later Hezekiah became mortally ill. Isaiah the prophet came and told him Jehovah said he should set his house in order, because he was going to die. After Isaiah left, Hezekiah turned to the wall and prayed. He told Jehovah how faithful he had been, and he wept greatly. Before Isaiah had gotten very far away, Jehovah sent him back to tell Hezekiah he would heal him and give him fifteen more years. Hezekiah asked for a sign that Jehovah would heal him. Isaiah asked him if the shadow of the sundial should go backward or forward ten steps. Hezekiah said backward, and when Isaiah cried to Jehovah it happened.

Then the son of the king of Babylon sent Hezekiah letters and a present, because he had heard he was sick. When they came, Hezekiah showed them all the precious things in his treasures. He hid nothing from them. Afterward Isaiah asked him about that. When Hezekiah answered, Isaiah told him that Jehovah said everything the Israelites had ever stored up would be carried to Babylon. Moreover, his sons would be taken and made eunuchs in the palace of their king. And the book says, "**Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, The word of Jehovah which thou have spoken is good. He said moreover, Is it not so, if peace and truth shall be in my days?"** (2Ki. 20:19). He thought only of himself.

After Hezekiah slept with his fathers, Manasseh his son reigned in his stead. He was twelve years old when he began, and he reigned fifty-five years. He did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. He rebuilt the high places and the altars of Baal. He even built altars for other gods in the house of Jehovah, and set up an idol there. The book says, "**And he made his son to pass through the fire, and practiced augury, and used enchantments, and dealt with psychics, and with sorcery. He wrought much evil in the sight of Jehovah to provoke him to anger**" (2Ki. 21:6). It says Manasseh seduced the people to do more evil than the nations had which Jehovah had destroyed before the sons of Israel.

Jehovah spoke by his servants the prophets telling them, among other things, that Jehovah was going to wipe Jerusalem like a man wipes a dish. And he would cast off the remnant of his inheritance, delivering them into the hand of their enemies because of their evil. The book also says, "**Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent**

blood till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin with which he made Judah to sin in doing that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah" (2Ki. 21:16).

Then Manasseh slept with his fathers, and Amon his son reigned in his place. He was twenty-two years old when he began, and he reigned two years. He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. His servants conspired against him, and killed him in his own house. However, the people killed all those in the conspiracy, and made Josiah his son king.

Josiah was eight years old when he began, and he reigned thirty-one years. He did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, walking in all the way of David. In his eighteenth year he commanded Hilkiah the high priest to take the money brought into the house of Jehovah, and give it to workmen to repair the broken parts of it. The book says there was no reckoning made with the workmen, because they dealt faithfully. Then Hilkiah the high priest told Shaphan the scribe that he had found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Shaphan read it.

Shaphan told the king they had given the money to the workman. Then he read the book Hilkiah had found. When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. And he commanded Hilkiah the priest, and some other men, to go inquire of Jehovah for him and the people about the words of the book. He said Jehovah's wrath was great against them because their fathers had not hearkened to what was written.

So they went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum who was keeper of the wardrobe. She told them the words of Jehovah. He said he was going to bring evil upon the place and its inhabitants, even all the words of the book, because they had forsaken him for other gods. However, the king of Judah would not see all that evil, because his heart was tender, and he humbled himself before Jehovah, tore his clothes, and wept before him when he heard Jehovah's words that the place and its inhabitants would become a desolation and a curse.

Josiah was unlike Hezekiah, who thought only of himself. Josiah worked to try to prevent the disaster. He gathered to him all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And he went up to the house of Jehovah with all the people, both great and small, and read to them all the words of the book of the covenant which was found. He also made a covenant to obey Jehovah and all his commandments with all his

heart and soul. And all the people consented. He also commanded the priests to remove all the vessels of Baal and the other gods, and burn them outside the city. He destroyed many other things to purge Judah of idolatry. When he was burning the bones of men on the altars of those gods to defile them, he asked about a certain monument. They told him it was the sepulcher of the man of God who prophesied what he was doing against the altar of Bethel (one that Jeroboam set up). So he told them not to disturb his bones. Josiah also removed the houses of the high places in the cities of Samaria, and he killed all the high priests there, burning men's bones upon their altars.

Josiah also commanded all the people to keep the Passover to Jehovah. The book says no such Passover had been kept from the time of the judges. It also says, "**And there was no king before him like him, who turned to Jehovah with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither arose any like him after him**" (2Ki. 23:25). Nevertheless, Jehovah did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath because of all the provocations of Manasseh. Jehovah said he was going to remove Judah from his sight as he had removed Israel. King Josiah was righteous, but the people were not. And Josiah could not convert their hearts. He believed in Jehovah, but they did not.

A time came when Pharaoh went up against the king of Assyria. Josiah went against him and was killed at Megiddo, which is about ten miles west of Jezreel. So they brought him to Jerusalem and buried him. And the people made Jehoahaz his son king in his stead. He was twenty-three years old when he began, and he reigned three months. He did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. Pharaoh put him in bonds in Hamath of upper Syria, and he made Eliakim the son of Josiah king, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. Then Pharaoh took Jehoahaz to Egypt, and he died there.

Jehoiakim taxed the land to give tribute to Pharaoh. He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years. He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made him his servant three years but he rebelled. Then Jehovah sent bands from several countries against Judah to destroy it, as he had spoken by his servants the prophets. The book says, "**Surely at the commandment of Jehovah this came upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of**

Manasseh, according to all that he did, and also for the innocent blood that he shed, for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and Jehovah would not pardon" (2Ki. 24:3-4).

Then Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. The king of Egypt came no more out of his land, because the king of Babylon had taken everything outside Egypt. Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months. He also did evil in the sight of Jehovah. Then the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar came to the city while it was being besieged. Jehoiachin king of Judah eventually went out to him with his family and his servants, and was carried captive to Babylon. Indeed, Nebuchadnezzar carried away all Jerusalem, leaving none but the poorest sort of people in the land. He took the best of them, eight thousand men, to Babylon. And he carried away all the treasures of the house of Jehovah and the king's house, as Jehovah had said.

The king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah. He was twenty-one years old when he began, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. So Nebuchadnezzar came with his army, built forts around the city, and besieged it. After about a year and a half the famine was severe in the city. Therefore, a breach was made in the city, and the king and all the men of war fled by night. However, the army of the Chaldeans overtook them. They brought Zedekiah to the king of Babylon to Riblah, which is a city in Syria. There they killed his sons in his presence, and put his eyes out. Then they bound him in fetters and took him to Babylon.

One month later, in the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, his servant Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard came to Jerusalem. He burnt all the great houses of Jerusalem, including the house of Jehovah and the king's house. The army of the Chaldeans also broke down the walls of Jerusalem. And the remnant of the people were carried away captive. Nebuzaradan left only the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen. All the objects of gold, silver, and bronze in the house of Jehovah were taken away, including the eighteen-cubit pillars and the sea which Solomon had made.

The captain of the guard also took the few priests and officials plus sixty men, who remained of the city, and brought them to the king of Babylon to

Riblah. And he put them to death. He also made Gedaliah governor over the remainder of the people in the land of Judah. When all the captains of the forces of Judah and their men heard about it, they came to Gedaliah. He encouraged them not to fear, but to dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon. However, about two months later Ishmael of the royal seed came with ten men, and killed Gedaliah as well as the Jews and Chaldeans who were with him. Then all the people and the captains of the

forces arose, and came to Egypt for fear of the Chaldeans.

In the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, which was the first year that Evil-merodach was king of Babylon he took Jehoiachin out of prison. The book says, "**And he spoke kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon**" (2Ki. 25:28). He changed his prison garments, and gave him an allowance of bread for the rest of his life.

A Description of First Chronicles

The first third of this book consists primarily of genealogical listings. Remember, when the Bible uses the word son, it can refer to any male descendant, whether immediate or of later generations. The first list is the genealogy of Noah and his three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth), and it begins with Adam. There were ten generations from Adam to Noah. Of the sons of Noah, it lists seven sons of Japheth, and sons of two of them; four sons of Ham, and sons of three of them; and nine sons of Shem. Next it lists the genealogy of Abraham beginning with Shem. There were ten generations from Shem to Abraham. Then it names the first two sons of Abraham—Isaac and Ishmael—followed by the names of the twelve sons of Ishmael. After that it names the six sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine, followed by the names of five sons of one of them.

Next it names the sons of Isaac: Esau and Jacob. After that it lists five sons of Esau, and sons of two of them. Then it names seven sons of Seir, and sons of four of them. Seir is a mountain in the land of Edom where Esau dwelt, and it seems to have been named after a Horite called Seir. Esau had driven out the Horites from Edom. After that the book lists eight kings that reigned in the land of Edom before Israel had a king. Then it lists the names of eleven chiefs of Edom.

After that the book gives the names of the twelve sons of Israel, and in considerable space (several pages of a typical Bible) it lists their generations. Names from the tribe of Judah are listed first, and there are more of them than for any of the other tribes. The second most numerous list of names is from the tribe of Levi. The shortest is for the tribe of Naphtali; it only gives the names of his four sons.

Judah had three sons by his wife. After her death he had two more sons by his widowed daughter-in-law Tamar. Remember, she tricked him into bedding with her, and she bore twins, who were named Zerah and Perez. Zerah had five sons, and Perez had two, one of which was Hezron.

The book then lists eight generations from Hezron to Jesse the father of David. And it names the seven sons and two daughters of Jesse. One of David's sisters was Zeruiah, and she bore Abishai, Joab, and Asahel. Those men were mighty, albeit troublesome, warriors for David.

More descendants of Hezron led to Hur, who was a leader with Moses and Aaron. The grandson of Hur was Bezalel whom Jehovah chose to build the tabernacle. Hezron had two other sons from a woman he married when he was sixty years old.

Jerahmeel was the firstborn of Hezron, and the book names several of his descendants. However, nothing else is known about him. One of the descendants of Jerahmeel was Sheshan, whose son was Ahlai. However, a few sentences later the book says that Sheshan had no sons, which may mean that Ahlai died as a child. Next the book lists thirteen generations of Sheshan through a daughter who married his Egyptian servant. Nothing else is known of Sheshan either. Caleb (not one of the men who spied Canaan) was another son of Hezron. The book names several of his descendants, one of which was Hur. Then it names three sons of Hur who were called fathers (founders) of cities, including Bethlehem.

Then the book names the sons of David. Six were born to him in Hebron, where he reigned seven years six months. Thirteen sons were born in Jerusalem, where he reigned thirty-three years. Four of

them were of Bathsheba, including Solomon. It names one daughter of David, Tamar. He also bore sons of concubines, which are not named. After that the book gives the descendants of Solomon, who reigned after him, being fourteen generations until the time of Josiah. Three of Josiah's sons reigned after him, one after the other during the time of the final destruction of Judah. One of which was Jehoiakim. His son was Jeconiah, who was among the captives of Babylon. The book names his seven sons, and the sons of five generations from one of them.

The book again names the sons of Judah, and lists three generations of one of them. Then it names three men, and lists their sons, one of which had two wives. After that it tells about a man named Jabez, which means sorrowful. His mother called him that because she bore him with sorrow. Jabez prayed that God would bless him, enlarge his border, and keep him from evil. The book says, "**And God granted him that which he requested**" (1Ch. 4:10). Then it names three other men and their sons, followed by Caleb the son of Jephunneh and his sons. That was the Caleb who spied Canaan with Joshua. Four more men and their sons are named. One of those had a son who married the daughter of Pharaoh. After that it goes back in time and names the sons of Shelah the son of Judah. It says his descendants worked fine linen, and were potters. All those were descendants of Judah.

Next are some generations of the sons of Simeon. It also names eighteen cities and villages where they dwelt. The book says the cities were theirs until the reign of David, which probably means that was the time when the tribe of Simeon was absorbed into the tribe of Judah. It also lists thirteen men, and some of their sons. It says, "... **these mentioned by name were rulers in their families, and their fathers' houses increased greatly**" (1Ch. 4:38). They sought good pasture in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and took it from sons of Ham (Noah's son who saw his nakedness), destroying them utterly. Also it says five hundred sons of Simeon went to mount Seir, smote the remnant of the Amalekites, and dwelt in their place.

Then it mentions the tribes on the eastern side of the Jordan: Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. About Reuben, the book says, "... **he was the firstborn, but, inasmuch as he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel, and so the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright.**

Now Judah prevailed above his brothers, and the ruler came from him, but the birthright was Joseph's" (1Ch. 5:1-2). The sons of Reuben are named and a few of their descendants. The sons of Gad dwelt adjacent to them. It mentions some of their chiefs and some of their descendants.

Then the book numbers the valiant warriors of the sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, which amounted to 44,760. They went to war against the Hagrites, who were Arabs. The book says, "**And they were helped against them, and the Hagrites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them, for they cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated by them because they put their trust in him**" (1Ch. 5:20). It says they took much livestock, and many of the Hagrites fell slain because the war was of God. It also names some of the famous men of the half-tribe of Manasseh. Regarding all three of those tribes, however, the book says they trespassed against the God of their fathers, and played the harlot with the gods of the nations that God had destroyed before them. Therefore, he stirred up the Assyrians, who carried them away captive to other lands.

Mentioned next are the descendants of Levi. The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. The book says that Amram was a son of Kohath, and he begot Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. However, Amram the father of Moses must have been a very distant son of Levi and not his direct grandson, because there were 22,000 male Levites by the time Moses was eighty years old. After naming the four sons of Aaron the book lists the twenty-two generations of high priests from Eleazar the son of Aaron to Jehozadak who was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar when Judah was destroyed. Then after again giving the names of the three sons of Levi the book lists some of their descendants. The list for the sons of Kohath ends with the two sons of Samuel.

Next the book names the three men that David set over the service of song in the house of Jehovah after the ark was brought there. The first man was Heman the singer of the Kohathites. He was the grandson of Samuel. It also lists his ancestry back to Israel. The second man was Asaph of the sons of Gershom. He stood on his right side. The book lists his ancestry back to Levi the son of Israel. The third man was Ethan, of the sons of Merari, on the left side of Heman. It also lists his ancestry back to Levi.

The record says the Levites were appointed for the service of the tabernacle of the house of God. Then it says, “**But Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of burnt offering, and upon the altar of incense, for all the work of the most holy place, and to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded**” (1Ch. 6:49). Remember, Aaron and his sons were chosen apart from the other Levites.

Next a list is given of the descendants of Aaron’s son Eleazar. Then the book tells the dwelling-places of the sons of Aaron. The Kohathites were given eight cities from the tribe of Judah, thirteen from the tribe of Benjamin, and ten from the half-tribe of Manasseh. The sons of Gershom received thirteen cities from the tribes of Issacher, Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh. The sons of Merari were given twelve cities from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun. The record says some of the families of the sons of Kohath also had cities out of the tribe of Ephraim. It also names six cities of refuge there. Next the book names by tribe each of the cities that were given to the sons of Gershom and Merari.

The book names four sons of Issacher. One of which was Tola, and it names his six sons, one of which was Uzzi. The numbers for the sons of Issacher are somewhat confusing. First the book says the sons of Issacher had 22,600 mighty men of valor during the days of David. Then it names the son of Uzzi, Izrahiah, and his four sons. Izrahiah and his sons were called chief men. Next it says that with them were 36,000 men in bands of the army for war. And it adds, “**for they had many wives and sons**” (1Ch. 7:4). Finally it says all their mighty men of valor were 87,000.

The book names three sons of Benjamin: Bela and Becher and Jediael. Then it names five sons of Bela, saying they were heads of father’s houses, mighty men of valor, reckoned by genealogy 22,034. It names nine sons of Becher, saying they were 22,200. Jediael had one son who had seven sons. Then it says the sons of Jediael who were able to go forth in the army for war were 17,200.

The book names four sons of Naphtali, saying they were the sons (grandsons) of Bilhah. Remember, she was the handmaid of Rachel, the wife of Israel. The book names two sons of Manasseh, and a few of their descendants. The lineage is not clear in the text.

Next the book names three sons of Ephraim, and one son from each of six generations of one of them. The book says those nine men were killed by the

men of Gath, because they came to plunder their cattle. The wording is ambiguous, but the men of Gath were probably the plunderers. Then it says, “**And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brothers came to comfort him**” (1Ch. 7:22). He must have been very old to have lived to see six generations of one of his sons. Nevertheless, his wife bore him another son, Beriah. Then it lists the descendants of Beriah who led to Joshua, the servant of Moses. After that it gives a rough description of where they dwelt.

Next the book names four sons and one daughter of Asher. Then it names sons of one of them, plus sons of one of his sons. After that it names five other men and their sons, and says, “**All these were the sons of Asher, heads of the fathers’ houses, choice and mighty men of valor, chief of the rulers. And the number of them reckoned by genealogy for service in war was twenty-six thousand men**” (1Ch. 7:40).

After that the book again names sons of Benjamin, plus nine sons of one of them. However, most of them do not agree with the names given earlier, nor do the two listings in this book agree with the one in the book of Genesis. Perhaps such things are why Paul warned Titus, “**But avoid foolish questionings, and genealogies, and contentions, and legalistic fightings, for they are useless and vain**” (Titus 3:9).

Next it mentions the sons of Ehud, a Benjamite who judged Israel just before Deborah. Then it names sons and wives of a man named Shaharaim, after which it adds a list of forty-nine more names of men and their sons, saying, “**These were heads of fathers throughout their generations, chief men; these dwelt in Jerusalem**” (1Ch. 8:28). They are otherwise unknown. Then it names Jeiel the father of the city of Gibeon, and his wife and sons, saying, “**And they also dwelt with their brothers in Jerusalem, opposite their brothers**” (1Ch. 8:32). Next it names Ner and his son Kish who begot king Saul. Then it lists some of the descendants of Saul through Jonathan. It ends the listing of sons of Benjamin by saying, “**And the sons of Ulam were mighty men of valor, archers, and had many sons, and sons’ sons, a hundred and fifty. All these were of the sons of Benjamin**” (1Ch. 8:40).

The book finishes the genealogies of the twelve sons of Israel, saying, “**So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies. And, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel. And Judah was**

carried away captive to Babylon for their transgression” (1Ch. 9:1).

After that the book names men who returned from Babylonian captivity. It begins those listings with the words, “**Now the first inhabitants who dwelt in their possessions in their cities were Israelites, the priests, the Levites, and the Nethinim [temple servants]. And in Jerusalem dwelt of the sons of Judah, and of the sons of Benjamin, and of the sons of Ephraim and Manasseh: ...” (1Ch. 9:2-3).**

Then it names one descendent of Perez the son of Judah; one Shilonite (a citizen of Shiloh); one descendent of Zerah son of Judah, saying there were 690 with him; and four sons (descendents) of Benjamin, saying there were 956 of them.

Then it names six priests (sons of Aaron) of which it says Azariah was “**the ruler of the house of God”** (1Ch. 9:11). It gives their names, and some of the ancestors of Azariah and two of the other priests. It adds, “**... and their brothers, heads of their fathers’ houses, a thousand and seven hundred and sixty, very able men for the work of the service of the house of God”** (1Ch. 9:13).

Next the book lists Levites. It names seven of them, and the lineage of some of their fathers. It says they dwelt in the villages of the Netophathites a few miles south of Jerusalem. Then it names four porters, of which Shallum was the chief, saying they and their brothers, the Korahites, “**were over the work of the service, keepers of the thresholds of the tent. And their fathers had been over the camp of Jehovah, keepers of the entry”** (1Ch. 9:19). There were 212 Levites chosen to be porters in the thresholds. The book says, “**So they and their sons had the oversight of the gates of the house of Jehovah, even the house of the tent, by wards”** (1Ch. 9:23). It says their brothers in the villages were to come in every seven days to be with them.

The four chief porters were over the treasures in the house of God. And they lodged around it because it was their duty to open it each morning. Some of them had charge of the vessels of service, and some were appointed over the furniture. Some were also over the fine flour, wine, oil, frankincense, and spices. Some of the Kohathites were over the showbread. The singers of the Levites were free from other service because they were thus occupied day and night. The book ends the material on the Levites, saying, “**These were heads of fathers of**

the Levites, throughout their generations, chief men; these dwelt at Jerusalem” (1Ch. 9:34).

Then the book repeats what it said about Jieel the father of the city of Gibeon, followed by a repeat of the genealogy of king Saul. Thus ends the material about various genealogies in the first third of this book. The rest of the book is about the reign of king David, although there are many other lists of names included.

David’s reign began after the death of king Saul. The Philistines had defeated Israel in a battle, and killed three of Saul’s sons, including Jonathan. Saul was severely wounded by the archers, and he commanded his armor bearer to kill him, saying, “**... lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me”** (1Ch. 10:4). His armor bearer was afraid, so Saul fell upon his own sword and died, and his armor bearer did the same. When the men of Israel in the valley saw all that happened, they forsook their cities, and the philistines occupied them. The Philistines found Saul the next day when they came to strip the slain. So they took his head and his armor, and spread the news to their people. They put his head and his armor in the house of their gods. However, valiant men from Jabesh-gilead took the bodies of Saul and his sons, buried them, and fasted seven days. The book says that Jehovah killed Saul because of his sins against him, and he gave the kingdom to David.

After that, all Israel came to David at Hebron, and they told him that even when Saul was king, it was he who led them. Also they said that Jehovah told him to be ruler over his people Israel. They must have learned about that from Samuel. Therefore, David made a covenant with them before Jehovah, and they anointed David king, as Jehovah had said to Samuel. Then David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which was inhabited by the Jebusites, and they conquered it. It was called the stronghold of Zion, and the city of David. David had told whoever smote the Jebusites first would be chief and captain. His nephew Joab went first, and so he was made chief. After they conquered it, they enlarged and strengthened the city. The record says, “**And David grew greater and greater, for Jehovah of hosts was with him”** (1Ch. 11:9).

Next the book gives the names of the chief of David’s mighty men. The list is very similar to the one near the end of Second Samuel. The first was Jashobeam, who was called chief of the thirty. It says he killed three hundred at one time with his spear. The man’s name, and the number he killed is

different from Second Samuel; that is the major difference in this listing compared with the one there. The second man mentioned was Eleazar, one of the three mighty men. This book tells how he and David defended a plot of ground full of grain from Philistines. The people fled, but they stood in the midst of the plot, and killed the Philistines. It says, “**And Jehovah saved them by a great victory**” (1Ch. 11:14).

After that it tells the story of three of the thirty chief men who went to David into the cave of Adullam. There was a garrison of the Philistines in Bethlehem, and David said, “**Oh that a man would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!**” (1Ch. 11:17). So the three broke through and drew water from the well there. They brought it to David, but he poured it out to Jehovah, saying he would not drink the blood of those men who went in jeopardy of their lives. The book says Abishai, the brother of Joab was chief of the three. He killed three hundred with his spear. He was more famous than the two, although he did not attain to the first three.

Then it says Benaiah did mighty deeds. He killed the two sons of Ariel of Moab (they must have been famous warriors). It says he went in a pit in the time of snow and killed a lion. He also killed an Egyptian giant who was five cubits high. He plucked the spear out of his hand, and killed him with his own spear. He was more famous than the thirty, but he did not attain to the first three. David set him over his guard.

Next the book lists forty-six men, saying they were also mighty men of the armies. The list is similar to the one in Second Samuel. Both begin with Asahel the brother of Joab, but the list in Second Samuel ends with Uriah the Hittite (husband of Bathsheba). To that point there are thirty names in the list of this book (plus the unnamed sons of Hashem), and thirty-one names in the list of Second Samuel. However, only twenty of the names are common to both lists. Several of the names are spelled a little differently in the two books. Also, unlike the list in Second Samuel, the list in this book adds sixteen more names after Uriah. The great majority of the men in both lists are otherwise unknown.

Then the book names some men from the tribe of Benjamin who came to David at Ziklag when he had gone over to the Philistines to escape Saul. The book says, “**And they were among the mighty men, his helpers in war. They were armed with**

bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in slinging stones and in shooting arrows from the bow” (1Ch. 12:1-2). It tells of some other men of Benjamin who came later. Then it gives the names of sons of Gad, captains of the army, who came to David to the stronghold in the wilderness. It says they were “**mighty men of valor, men trained for war, who could handle shield and spear, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and they were as swift as the roes upon the mountains**” (1Ch. 12:8). It also says of them, “**He who was least was equal to a hundred, and the greatest to a thousand**” (1Ch. 12:14). The book also names some captains of thousands from Manasseh who fell away to David when he went with the Philistines, and they also helped David. Indeed, it says, “**For from day to day men came to David to help him, until there was a great host, like the host of God**” (1Ch. 12:22).

Then the book gives the numbers of armed men from each of the tribes who came to David at Hebron, to turn the kingdom to him according to the word of Jehovah. The sons of Judah were 6,800 men who bore shield and spear. The sons of Simeon were 7,100 mighty men of valor. Of the sons of Levi there were 4,600. Then it says that Jehoiada was the leader of the house of Aaron (the priest), and there were 3,700 with him. The sons of Benjamin were 3,000; most had remained loyal to the house of Saul. The sons of Ephraim were 20,800 mighty men of valor. There were 18,000 of the half-tribe of Manasseh who came to make David king.

After them the book says, “**And of the sons of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do, the heads of them were two hundred. And all their brothers were at their commandment**” (1Ch. 12:32). Of Zebulun there were 50,000 reliable men, with all manner of instruments of war, able to go out in the army. Of Naphtali there were 1,000 captains, and 37,000 men with shield and spear. Of the Danites there were 28,600 men able to set the battle in array. Men of Asher able to go out in the army were 40,000. On the other side of the Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half-tribe of Manasseh there were 120,000 men with all manner of instruments of war for battle.

About them all, the book says, “**All these being men of war, who could order the battle array, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel. And all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king. And**

they were there with David three days, eating and drinking, for their brothers had made preparation for them. Moreover those who were near to them, even as far as Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought bread on donkeys, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, provisions of meal, cakes of figs, and clusters of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep in abundance, for there was joy in Israel” (1Ch. 12:38-40).

It was apparently during that time David consulted with all the leaders about bringing up the ark of God. And he spoke to all the assembly saying if it seemed good to them, and to Jehovah, that they invite all their brothers in the land of Israel to come and bring up the ark. The assembly approved the idea, and so David gathered them all together to bring up the ark of God out of the house of Abinadab. They carried it on a new cart, with Uzza and Ahio, Abinadab’s sons, driving the cart. The book says that David and all Israel played before God with all their might in a great parade with songs and musical instruments, which were harps, psalteries, timbrels, cymbals, and trumpets. However, when they came to the threshing-floor of Chidon (called Nacon in Second Samuel), Uzza reached out his hand to the ark because the oxen stumbled. The book says, “**And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him because he put forth his hand to the ark. And there he died before God”** (1Ch. 13:10). It says that David was displeased about it. It also says he was afraid of God that day. Therefore, they carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. It remained there three months, and Jehovah blessed his house and all that he had.

The book says that Hiram king of Tyre sent men and materials to build David a house. David also took more wives at Jerusalem. Then it lists thirteen names of those he begot there. When the Philistines heard that he was anointed king over all Israel, they went up to seek him. When they made a raid in a valley, David inquired of God if he should go up against them. Jehovah said go, he would deliver them into his hand. So he went and smote them, and praised God for his victory. The Philistines left their gods behind, and David commanded to burn them. However, the Philistines made another raid in the valley. David again inquired of Jehovah. This time Jehovah told him not to go after them, but to come up opposite the mulberry trees. And when he heard the sound of marching in the tops of the trees, then

to out to battle, for God was with him. David did, and he again smote the army of the Philistines.

The record says, “**And the fame of David went out into all lands. And Jehovah brought the fear of him upon all nations”** (1Ch. 14:17). David made houses for himself in the city of David, and he built a place for the ark of God and a tent for it. Then he said that none should carry the ark of God except the Levites. And he assembled all Israel at Jerusalem to bring the ark of Jehovah to the place he had prepared. He also gathered the sons of Aaron and the Levites. The book names the chiefs of the sons of Levi: Kohath, Merari, and Gershom. It also names the chiefs of the sons of two of the sons of Kohath, and one of his grandsons. And it gives the number of the brothers of each of those six chiefs, which ranged from eighty to two hundred. Then David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests (sons of Aaron), and the six chiefs of the sons of Levi. And he told them to sanctify themselves to bring up the ark of Jehovah. He reminded them that God had made a breach because they had not sought him according to the ordinance; they had used a cart to carry the ark of God instead of the Levites. So they did as David commanded.

Then David made preparation for the parade. He told the chief of the Levites to appoint their brothers, the singers and musicians, for the joyful sound. So the Levites appointed Heman, Asaph, and Ethan as singers. The book also names fourteen men who were porters. Then it names eight men with psalteries, and six men with harps. And it says, “**And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was over the song. He instructed about the song because he was skilful. And Berechiah and Elkanah were porters for the ark”** (1Ch. 15:22-23). It names seven priests who blew the trumpets before the ark of God. It also names two other men who were porters for the ark. Then it says David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, brought the ark of the covenant of Jehovah from the house of Obed-edom with joy: “**Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, sounding aloud with psalteries and harps”** (1Ch. 15:28).

They brought the ark of God, and set it in the tent that David had pitched for it. After offering burnt offerings and peace offerings before God, David blessed the people in the name of Jehovah. And he gave each one of them, both man and woman, a loaf of bread, a portion of flesh, and a

cake of raisins. The book also says, “**And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of Jehovah, and to celebrate and to thank and praise Jehovah, the God of Israel**” (1Ch. 16:4). It says Asaph was the chief, and it names eleven other men who were second to him. They used psalteries, harps, cymbals, and trumpets. The book says on that day David first ordained to give thanks to Jehovah by the hand of Asaph and his brothers.

Then a psalm is given. It begins, “**O give thanks to Jehovah. Call upon his name. Make known his doings among the peoples. Sing to him. Sing praises to him. Talk ye of all his marvelous works**” (1Ch. 16:8-9). It tells the sons of Jacob to seek Jehovah, and remember his marvelous works. For he is Jehovah their God. It tells them to remember his covenant forever, that which he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them the land of Canaan for an inheritance. It says they were few in number, going from nation to nation, but he would let no man harm them. It says the earth should sing to Jehovah, and declare his glory among all peoples. It says all the gods of the peoples are idols, but Jehovah made the heavens. It says to ascribe to Jehovah the glory due to his name, and worship him in holy array. It also tells all the earth to tremble before him, and rejoice, saying Jehovah reigns. It says the sea should roar, the field exult, and the trees sing for joy before him, for he comes to judge the earth. The last words are, “**Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from everlasting even to everlasting**” (1Ch. 16:36). At the end of the psalm the book says, “**And all the people said, Truly, and praised Jehovah.**”

David appointed Asaph and his brothers to minister daily before the ark in Jerusalem, although the tabernacle was at Gibeon. David may have kept the ark in Jerusalem to keep it safe, but no reason is stated. Zadok the priest and his brothers ministered before the tabernacle of Jehovah in the high place that was at Gibeon. They offered the morning and evening sacrifices upon the altar there according to the law of Jehovah. The book also names two men who were with them. And it says there were others with them “**to give thanks to Jehovah because his loving kindness is forever**” (1Ch. 16:41). They also had musical instruments for the songs of God. It was David who began using musical instruments in worship to God.

After those things all the people departed to their houses. Sometime later David told Nathan the

prophet that he lived in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of God was under curtains. Nathan told him to do all in his heart because God was with him. That night the word of God came to Nathan to speak to David. Jehovah told David not to build a house for him. He said he had never asked why the people had not built for him a house of cedar. He told David that he took him from following sheep to become the prince of his people Israel, and he had been with him wherever he had gone. He also told him he would make a name for him like the name of the great ones on the earth. He said he would make his people secure, and would subdue all of David’s enemies.

Then he told him he was going to build David a house (meaning a dynasty). He said David’s son would build a house for Jehovah, and he would establish his kingdom forever. He said, “**I will be his father, and he shall be my son. And I will not take my loving kindness away from him as I took it from him who was before thee. But I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever**” (1Ch. 17:13-14). Solomon the son of David built the earthly temple of Jehovah, but it was Jesus Christ, a legal descendant of David through his foster father Joseph, who established his eternal kingdom, and reigns in his eternal house.

When David heard those words, he went in and sat before Jehovah, saying, “**Who am I, O Jehovah God, and what is my house, that thou have brought me thus far?**” (1Ch. 17:16). David reiterated some of what Jehovah said about him, and he said he did not know what to say. He praised Jehovah, saying there was none like him. He mentioned how God had done mighty things in redeeming Israel for his own people. Then he asked Jehovah to fulfill his word about David and his house, to establish it forever. He also asked that Jehovah’s name be established and magnified forever. He concluded his prayer, saying, “**And now, O Jehovah, thou are God, and have promised this good thing to thy servant, and now it has pleased thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee; for thou, O Jehovah, have blessed, and it is blessed forever**” (1Ch. 17:26-27).

Next the book names some of the surrounding nations that David subdued: the Philistines, the Moabites, and the Syrians. When David conquered king Hadarezer of Zobah (a region of Syria) he brought his shields of gold to Jerusalem. He also

took much bronze from Hadarezer's cities, with which Solomon made the sea, the pillars, and the vessels of bronze for the temple. David also put garrisons in Syria. And the Syrians served him, and brought him tribute. The book says Jehovah gave David victory wherever he went.

When Tou king of Hamath heard of David's victory over the army of Hadarezer, he sent his son to salute him and bless him, because Tou had wars with Hadarezer. He also gave David many vessels of gold, silver, and bronze. David dedicated all of it to Jehovah, with the precious metals he had carried away from other nations. The book also says that Abishai defeated the Edomites. He put garrisons there, and they became his servants. The record says, "**And David reigned over all Israel, and he executed justice and righteousness to all his people**" (1Ch. 18:14). Then it names six of his chief officials. It also says his sons were chief men around him.

Then the book tells about the time when David sent messengers to console the son of king Nahash of Ammon when Nahash died, because Nahash had shown kindness to David. However, the rulers of the sons of Ammon told the son of Nahash that the messengers were spies. So he shaved the messengers, cut off their garments at their buttocks, and sent them away greatly ashamed. David told the men to remain at Jericho until their beards had grown. God gives all men hair on their heads. Yet now few allow it to grow on their faces.

When the sons of Ammon saw they had made themselves odious to David, they hired the Syrians, even 32,000 chariots, to join them for battle. When David heard of it, he sent out Joab and his mighty men. Joab and Abishai his brother both commanded armies. And Joab said to him, "**If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shall help me, but if the sons of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will help thee. Be of good courage, and let us act the man for our people, and for the cities of our God. And Jehovah do that which seems good to him**" (1Ch. 19:12-13). The Syrians fled in the battle, and the sons of Ammon escaped into their city. Then Joab returned to Jerusalem.

However, the Syrians mustered more forces. Shophach the captain of the army of Hadarezer was in command. Therefore, David gathered all Israel together, passed over the Jordan, and came upon them. The Syrians fought, but they were again defeated and fled. Shophach was also killed. The conquest of Hadarezer was mentioned earlier in the

text, and this description of the war with the sons of Ammon and the Syrians they hired may have come before that. For the book says, "**And when the servants of Hadarezer saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they made peace with David, and served him, neither would the Syrians help the sons of Ammon any more**" (1Ch. 19:19). Events described in the Bible do not always follow a strict linear time sequence.

Nevertheless, the text says that at the return of the year, when kings go out to battle, Joab led the army to waste the country of the sons of Ammon. They besieged their capital city Rabbah, but David remained at Jerusalem. When Joab overthrew Rabbah, David took their king's crown, and it was set on David's head. They took much plunder, and killed the people of their cities (see Deu. 20:13 for God's law about doing those things). After that they had several wars with the Philistines, but always defeated them. The book also mentions a couple of giant Philistines that were killed by the servants of David. One had twenty-four fingers and toes.

Next the record says, "**And Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel**" (1Ch. 21:1). That same story is told in Second Samuel, but there it says Jehovah moved David to number Israel because he was angry with them. However, there is no contradiction. The book of Revelation (12:10) says that Satan was a great accuser of men. Therefore, provoked by Satan's accusations, Jehovah moved David to number Israel as a means both to test the people, and to punish them if they failed. You see the law of Moses required each of them to pay a poll tax, otherwise a plague would follow (see Exo. 30:12). Therefore, David commanded Joab and the princes of the people to take a census of all Israel. Joab protested, saying, "**Why does my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of guilt to Israel?**" (1Ch. 21:3). Nevertheless, David insisted because Jehovah was behind it. When Joab returned he said there were 1,100,000 men of Israel who drew the sword (meaning able to go to war), and 470,000 in Judah. However, Joab did not count Levi and Benjamin because the command was abominable to him. The figures reported in Second Samuel are different, but why is controversial.

The people must have failed the test by not paying the required tax, because the book says that Jehovah was displeased, and he smote Israel. Jehovah sent word to David by Gad, his seer, giving him three choices: three years of famine, three months of

defeat by their enemies, or three days of pestilence by the agent of Jehovah. David answered Gad, saying, "**I am in a great strait. Let me fall, I pray, into the hand of Jehovah, for his mercies are very great, and let me not fall into the hand of man**" (1Ch. 21:13).

Hence, Jehovah sent a pestilence, and seventy thousand men of Israel perished. When the agent of Jehovah was ready to destroy Jerusalem, Jehovah told him to stop, it was enough. The agent was standing by the threshing-floor of Ornan (called Araunah in Second Samuel) the Jebusite. David saw him standing between earth and heaven with his drawn sword. So David prayed to God to spare the people. He blamed himself for having sinned, and asked Jehovah to punish him and his house instead. However, Jehovah was angry with the people, not David.

The agent of Jehovah commanded Gad to tell David to build an altar to Jehovah in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. So David went to Ornan and asked to buy it. Ornan wanted to give it to him, but David insisted on paying for it. Then he built the altar, offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on it, and prayed. The book says that Jehovah answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar. Then Jehovah commanded the agent to put his sword into its sheath, which is no doubt figurative language.

The record says David did not go to the tabernacle of Jehovah at Gibeon to inquire of God, because he was afraid of the sword of the agent of Jehovah. And when David saw that Jehovah had answered him at the threshing-floor of Ornan, he made his sacrifices there, saying, "**This is the house of Jehovah God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel**" (1Ch. 22:1). Then he commanded the conscription of all the foreigners in Israel to prepare to build a house of God of stones.

The book says David gathered many materials for the construction of the house of Jehovah. It also says, "**And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be built for Jehovah must be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries. I will therefore make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death**" (1Ch. 22:5).

David commanded Solomon his son to build a house for Jehovah, the God of Israel. He said it was in his heart to built one, however, the word of Jehovah came to him, telling him he could not build the house because he had shed much blood in great wars. Jehovah said a son would be born to him who

would be a man of peace, because God would give peace to Israel in his days; he would build the house.

Then David encouraged Solomon to build it as Jehovah had said. He also said to him, "**Only Jehovah give thee discretion and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, so that thou may keep the law of Jehovah thy God. Then thou shall prosper, if thou observe to do the statutes and the ordinances which Jehovah charged Moses with concerning Israel. Be strong, and of good courage. Fear not, neither be dismayed**" (1Ch. 22:12-13).

David said that in his affliction he had prepared quantities of gold, silver, bronze, and iron in great abundance, also timber and stone, and skillful men. David also commanded all the rulers of Israel to help Solomon. He reminded them how much Jehovah had blessed them, and he urged them to set their heart and soul to seek after Jehovah, and build his sanctuary, in which to bring the ark of the covenant of Jehovah and the holy vessels.

When David became old he made Solomon king over Israel. And he gathered together all the rulers, with the priests and Levites. He numbered the Levites from thirty years and older, and there were 38,000. Of them 24,000 were to oversee the work of the house of Jehovah. The remaining were 6000 officers and judges, 4,000 porters, and 4,000 praised Jehovah with musical instruments.

David divided them into divisions according to the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Two of the Gershonites and their ten sons are named. Four of the sons of Kohath are named and the chiefs of their sons. Moses and Aaron were both Levites. The two sons of Moses are named and the chiefs of their sons, but Aaron and his sons were separated to sanctify the most holy things and to minister to Jehovah. Then it names two sons of Merari and their sons.

David said there was no longer a need for the Levites to carry the tabernacle and its vessels. Among his last words were to number the sons of Levi, this time from twenty years old and upward. The book says, "**For their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of Jehovah, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, even the work of the service of the house of God**" (1Ch. 23:28).

The sons of Aaron were also grouped into divisions. Aaron had four sons, but of them only Eleazar

and Ithamar had sons. Therefore, they executed the priest's office. Zadok was of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech (also called Abiathar) was of the sons of Ithamar. David and those two men divided the sons of Aaron according to the ordering of their service. There were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of Ithamar, sixteen and eight respectively. Thus they were divided by lot, and recorded by Shemaiah the scribe, in the presence of the king, the princes, Zadok the priest, Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and the heads of the fathers of the priests (one each for Eleazar and Ithamar) and of the Levites.

Next the book names the men chosen from the first to the twenty-fourth lot, and says, "**This was the ordering of them in their service, to come into the house of Jehovah according to the ordinance given to them by Aaron their father, as Jehovah, the God of Israel, had commanded him**" (1Ch. 24:19). Then it names thirty-two other sons of Levi of various descent, and says, "**These likewise cast lots even as their brothers the sons of Aaron in the presence of David the king, and Zadok, and Ahimelech, and the heads of the fathers of the priests and of the Levites, the fathers of the chief even as those of his younger brother**" (1Ch. 24:31).

Also David and the captains of the army set apart Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun for the service. They were to "**prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals**" (1Ch. 25:1). Jeduthun may be another name for Ethan, the man who was earlier named with Asaph and Heman as singers for the service of Jehovah. Then the book names the four sons of Asaph, "**who prophesied after the order of the king,**" and the six sons of Jeduthun, "**who prophesied in giving thanks and praising Jehovah,**" and the fourteen sons of Heman, "**the king's seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn**" (1Ch. 25:2-5)

After that the record says, "**All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of Jehovah, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God**" (1Ch. 25:6). They and their brothers, all the men skilled in singing and making music, were 288. They also cast lots for their offices. And the book names the men chosen, from the first to the twenty-fourth lot. Each man with his sons and brothers comprised a group of twelve. Thus, 24 times 12 equals the 288.

Next the book tells about the divisions of the porters. It names three men and their sons.

Meshelemiah had seven sons, and with his brothers there were eighteen. His firstborn was Zechariah. Obed-edom had eight sons. It also names the sons of his firstborn, Shemaiah. All the sons and brothers of Obed-edom were sixty-two. Hosah had four sons; his sons and brothers totaled thirteen. The record says, "**Of these were the divisions of the porters, even of the chief men, having offices like their brothers to minister in the house of Jehovah**" (1Ch. 26:12).

They also cast lots for every gate. The lot for eastward fell to Shelemiah (Meshelemiah). The lot for northward came out for his son Zechariah. It came out to Obed-edom for southward, and to Shuppim and Hosah for westward. The book gives additional information about the gatekeepers, saying, "**Eastward were six Levites, four a day northward, four a day southward, and for the store-house two by two. For Parbar westward, four at the highway, and two at Parbar**" (1Ch. 26:17-18). Apparently there were more on the east side because that was the main entrance. Parbar must have been a building on the west side of the temple.

The book says Ahijah, a Levite, was over the treasures of the house of God and the treasures of the dedicated things. Another man was "**over the treasures of the house of Jehovah,**" and another was "**ruler over the treasures.**" Yet another man was over the treasures of the dedicated things that David and the military commanders had given out of the spoil won in battles. It also says he and his brothers were over "**all that Samuel the seer, and Saul the son of Kish, and Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah, had dedicated, whoever had dedicated anything**" (1Ch. 26:28). Ahijah must have been over all of the other men named.

Next the book names another man named Chenaniah, saying he and his sons were "**for the outer business over Israel, for officers and judges**" (1Ch. 26:29). That probably means work outside the cities. It then names a Hebronite, saying he and his brothers, 1,700 men of valor, "**had the oversight of Israel beyond the Jordan westward, for all the business of Jehovah, and for the service of the king**" (1Ch. 26:30). It also names the chief of the Hebronites. Then it says that in the fortieth year of the reign of David, he and his brothers, 2,700 men of valor, were found in Gilead across the Jordan. And king David made them "**overseers over the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of**

the Manassites, for every matter pertaining to God, and for the affairs of the king” (1Ch. 26:32).

After that the record says, “**Now the sons of Israel after their number, namely, the heads of fathers and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and their officers who served the king, in any matter of the divisions which came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year—of every division were twenty-four thousand”** (1Ch. 27:1).

It gives the names of each captain assigned for one of the twelve months of the year: twelve captains over 24,000 men each. Then it names the leaders over the tribes of Israel. Eleven of the tribes and their leaders are named, including Levi and both tribes of Joseph (Manasseh and Ephraim). However, the tribes of Gad and Asher were omitted for some reason. The book says that David did not number any from twenty years old and under, “**because Jehovah had said he would increase Israel like the stars of heaven”** (1Ch. 27:23). It also says again, that Joab did not finish the census, and wrath came upon Israel.

Next the book gives the names of the men who were over the following things of David:

- The king’s treasure.
- The treasures in the fields, in the cities, in the villages, and in the castles.
- Those who did the work of the field for tillage of the ground.
- The vineyards.
- The olive trees and the sycamore trees that were in the lowland.
- The cellars of oil.
- The herds that fed in Sharon.
- The herds that were in the valleys.
- The camels.
- The donkeys.
- The flocks.

There was a different ruler over each kind of possession. The book says Jonathan his uncle was a counselor, “**a man of understanding, and a scribe”** (1Ch. 27:32). And it names a man who was with David’s sons. It also says Ahithophel was the king’s counselor, and after him were the names of two other men. Joab was the captain of the army.

After that it says, “**And David assembled all the rulers of Israel, the rulers of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that served the king by division, and the captains of thousands, and the captains of hundreds, and the rulers over**

all the substance and possessions of the king and of his sons, with the officers, and the mighty men, even all the mighty men of valor, to Jerusalem” (1Ch. 28:1).

Then David stood up on his feet, and spoke to them. He said it was in his heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, and for a footstool of their God. But Jehovah said no, because he was a man of war, having shed much blood. However, Jehovah chose him to be king, and of his sons he chose Solomon to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of Jehovah over Israel. He said God told him that Solomon would built his house and his courts, and he would establish his kingdom if he was constant in obedience.

Then David said to them all, “**Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of Jehovah, and in the audience of our God, observe and seek out all the commandments of Jehovah your God, that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance to your sons after you forever”** (1Ch. 28:8).

And he said to Solomon, “**And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind, for Jehovah searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found by thee, but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever”** (1Ch. 28:9). Then he told Solomon to be strong and build a house for the sanctuary.

After that the record says, “**Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch of the temple, and of the houses of it, and of the treasures of it, and of the upper rooms of it, and of the inner chambers of it, and of the place of the mercy-seat, and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, for the courts of the house of Jehovah, and for all the chambers round about, for the treasures of the house of God, and for the treasuries of the dedicated things, also for the divisions of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of Jehovah, and for all the vessels of service in the house of Jehovah, of gold by weight for the vessels of gold, for all vessels of every kind of service; of silver for all the vessels of silver by weight, for all vessels of every kind of service, by weight also for the lampstands of gold, and for the lamps of it, of gold, by weight for every lampstand and for the lamps of it, and for the lampstands of silver, silver by weight for every lampstand and for the**

lamps of it, according to the use of every lamp-stand, and the gold by weight for the tables of showbread, for every table, and silver for the tables of silver, and the flesh-hooks, and the basins, and the cups, of pure gold, and for the golden bowls by weight for every bowl, and for the silver bowls by weight for every bowl, and for the altar of incense refined gold by weight, and gold for the pattern of the chariot, even the cherubim that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of Jehovah.

“All this, [David said], I have been made to understand in writing from the hand of Jehovah, even all the works of this pattern” (1Ch. 28:11-19). Therefore, both the tabernacle and the temple were designed by God himself. David was doubtless informed of the design from the writings given to him by the prophets of God. For there is no evidence God ever spoke to David directly.

David told Solomon to be strong and of good courage, and do it, for Jehovah was with him. He would not fail him or forsake him until it was finished. David told him the priests and the Levites were there for the service of the house of Jehovah, and he had many talented men under his command.

Then David told the assembly about the great store of materials he had accumulated for the project, and he asked who was willing to make their contribution. So the rulers and the captains offered willingly. The record says that David and the people rejoiced with great joy because they offered with a perfect heart willingly to Jehovah.

After that David praised Jehovah before the assembly. He began, **“Blessed be thou, O Jehovah, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Thine, O Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and on the**

earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Jehovah, and thou are exalted as head above all” (1Ch. 29:10-11).

He said riches and honor come from Jehovah, and he rules over all. He thanked him and praised him. Then he said even though they had offered willingly, yet all things come from Jehovah. He said they were sojourners, whose days on earth were as a shadow. He said he knew that Jehovah tries the hearts, and has pleasure in uprightness. David said he offered willingly, and now had seen his people offer willingly. And he asked Jehovah to keep it in the hearts of his people forever. Then he asked Jehovah to give Solomon a perfect heart to obey him, and to built the palace for Jehovah that he had made provision.

Then David told all the assembly to praise Jehovah their God. And so they did, bowing down their heads, and doing obeisance to Jehovah and the king. The next day they offered many sacrifices to Jehovah. And they ate and drank before Jehovah with great gladness. They also made Solomon king the second time, and Zadok to be priest.

After that the record says, **“Then Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah as king instead of David his father, and prospered, and all Israel obeyed him. And all the rulers, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves to Solomon the king. And Jehovah magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel”** (1Ch. 29:23-25).

David had reigned over all Israel forty years, seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. The book says he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor.

A Description of **Second Chronicles**

This book begins, “**And Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom. And Jehovah his God was with him, and magnified him exceedingly.**” Sometime after he began to reign, he and all the leaders of Israel went to the tent of meeting of God at Gibeon, which was about seven miles north of Jerusalem. The ark was in Jerusalem where David had brought it, but the altar was with the tabernacle at Gibeon. So they went there and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

That night God appeared to Solomon, and said, “**Ask what I shall give thee**” (2Ch. 1:7). Solomon spoke of God’s kindness, and he asked for wisdom and knowledge to judge Jehovah’s people. God said because he had asked for wisdom and knowledge to judge his people, instead of riches, wealth, honor, and the life of his enemies, God would give him both what he had asked and what he had not asked—wisdom and knowledge, plus riches, wealth, and honor—more than any king before him or after. After that, the book tells of Solomon’s chariots and horsemen. It also says he made silver and gold in Jerusalem to be as stones, and cedars as common as sycamore trees.

Then it tells about Solomon’s plans to build a house (a temple) for the name of Jehovah. He also wanted to build a house for his kingdom, which was probably a combination administration building and dwelling like our own White House. Solomon told Huram (called Hiram in First Kings) king of Tyre, of his desire to build a house for the name of Jehovah. He said, “**And the house which I build is great. For our God is great above all gods. But who is able to build for him a house, seeing heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him? Who am I then, that I should build for him a house, except only to burn incense before him?**” (2Ch. 2:5-6). And he asked Huram to send him a skilled craftsman to work with his men in Judah and Jerusalem. He also asked for timber, and he told Huram that he would give his servants wheat, barley, wine, and oil.

Huram wrote back saying he was pleased that Jehovah, the God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, had given David a wise son to build the houses. He told Solomon that he had sent a skilful man (also named Huram), whose father was a man of Tyre, and whose mother was a Hebrew. He would work with Solomon’s men of skill. The king of Tyre

told Solomon to send the produce, and they would cut the timber, as much as he needed. They would send the timber in floats by sea to a coastal city of Israel where it could be transported to Jerusalem.

Solomon numbered all the aliens in Israel, and found 153,600. He used 70,000 men to bear burdens, 80,000 men who were hewers in the mountains, and 3,600 to oversee them. Then he began to build the house of Jehovah. He built it on mount Moriah, where the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite had been. Remember, David bought it after he made the census. The book says he began in the second day of the second month of the fourth year of his reign.

The house of God was sixty cubits long and twenty cubits wide. Remember, a cubit is thought to be the distance from a man’s elbow to the tip of his middle finger, being about eighteen inches. The house of God had a porch on the front of it, which spanned the full width of the house, twenty cubits. The book says it was a hundred twenty cubits high. That means it was almost as tall as a twenty story building, which was surely the tallest in Israel. Such a tall tower or pylon at the entrance of the temple must have been a spectacular sight, visible for many miles. Some doubt it was so high. Indeed, the NIV even rejects the Hebrew manuscripts, and says it was only twenty cubits high. However, God himself spoke of how high it was. For when Jehovah later spoke to Solomon after his dedication prayer, among his words Jehovah said, “**And this house, which is so high ...**” (2Ch. 7:21). The inside of the porch was overlaid with pure gold. The temple had a fir ceiling, which was also overlaid with fine gold, and wrought thereon with palm trees and chains. The book also says Solomon garnished the house with precious stones for beauty. The entire interior was overlaid with gold, and engraved with cherubim on the walls and the doors.

The most holy house (the room for the ark of the covenant) was twenty cubits square. The book says it was overlaid with six hundred talents of fine gold. It also contained images of two cherubim overlaid with gold. They stood beside each other with their wings outstretched. And since each of their wings was five cubits long, together they spanned the entire twenty cubits of the room. Remember, cherubim are like awesome guards. The book says their faces were toward the house, meaning the most holy

place. The veil of it was “**of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubim there-on**” (2Ch. 3:14).

Solomon made two pillars thirty-five cubits high, with ornate capitals of five cubits. Both pillars were in front of the temple, one on the right side and the other on the left. He also made an altar twenty cubits square and ten cubits high. The molten sea was round, ten cubits from brim to brim. It was five cubits high, and it was supported by images of twelve oxen in four groups of three facing the north, west, south, and east. The sea was a handbreadth thick having the brim like a cup, like the flower of a lily. This book says it held three thousand baths, but First Kings says it held two thousand baths. Most likely the quantity of a bath was not standardized, and the two books applied the word for different volumes. Solomon also made ten basins, five on the right side, and five on the left, for washing. They washed things for the burnt offering in them. The water in the sea was for the priests to wash with. The house faced eastward, and the sea was located southeast of it. All of those things were of bronze.

Then the book says, “**And he made the ten lampstands of gold according to the ordinance concerning them. And he set them in the temple, five on the right hand, and five on the left**” (2Ch. 4:7). In like manner he made the ten tables. He also made a hundred basins of gold. He made the court for the priests, and the great court. The doors for the court were overlaid with bronze.

Huram was a worker of bronze, and the book lists the things he made: the two pillars with their ornate capitals, the lavers with their bases, the sea with its twelve oxen, plus the pots, shovels, flesh-hooks, and all the vessels of it. He may not have built the outside altar, because the book does not list it with the other things he made. The altar and the interior of the house of Jehovah were the most sacred things. The book says the external things were cast of bronze in the plain of the Jordan, and the weight of the bronze could not be found out.

The interior items were of gold. Regarding them, the book says, “**And Solomon made all the vessels that were in the house of God, also the golden altar, and the tables on which was the show-bread, and the lampstands with their lamps, to burn according to the ordinance before the oracle, of pure gold, and the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs, of gold, and that perfect gold, and the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and the fire pans, of pure gold. And as for the entry**

of the house, the inner doors of it for the most holy place, and the doors of the house, namely, of the temple, were of gold” (2Ch. 4:19-22). It is doubtful Huram made any of that.

Then Solomon brought all of the things that David had dedicated—the silver, gold, and all the vessels—and put them in the treasuries of the house of God. After that the text says, “**Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the rulers of the fathers of the sons of Israel, to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of the city of David, which is Zion**” (2Ch. 5:2). They came during the feast of the seventh month. The Levites brought the ark, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in it. And it says they sacrificed sheep and oxen that could not be numbered for multitude. The ark of the covenant of Jehovah was placed in the oracle of the house, the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim. The book says the cherubim spread forth their wings covering the ark and the staves of it. It says there was nothing in the ark except the two tablets which Moses put there at Horeb (Sinai).

After the priests came out of the holy place, they praised and thanked Jehovah with music. The musicians of the Levites sang and played their instruments with the hundred twenty priests who sounded their trumpets while standing at the east side of the altar. They said, “**For he is good. For his loving kindness is forever**” (2Ch. 5:13). Then the house was filled with a cloud so that the priests could not stand there to minister. It was the glory of Jehovah that filled the house.

Then Solomon said, “**Jehovah has said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. But I have built for thee a house of habitation, and a place for thee to dwell in forever**” (2Ch. 6:1-2). Solomon turned his face to bless the assembly of Israel, and they all stood. Then he blessed Jehovah who had chosen Jerusalem to put his name there, and David to be over his people. Solomon said that David wanted to build a house for the name of Jehovah, but Jehovah told him his son would build it. Solomon said that Jehovah had performed his word. So that now he sat on the throne of Israel, and built the house for the name of Jehovah, in which he placed the ark containing the covenant of Jehovah which he made with the sons of Israel.

Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, five cubits square and three cubits high, in the middle of the court. He knelt down on it, spread out his hands

toward heaven, and prayed. Solomon praised God for his loving kindness, and for keeping his promise to his father David, as he had that day. He also asked Jehovah to keep his promise about David's sons and the throne of Israel.

Then he said, "**But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee. How much less this house which I have built! Yet have thou respect to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Jehovah my God, to hearken to the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prays before thee, that thine eyes may be open toward this house day and night, even toward the place of which thou have said that thou would put thy name there, to hearken to the prayer which thy servant shall pray toward this place. And hearken thou to the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place. Yea, hear thou from thy dwelling-place, even from heaven, and when thou hear forgive**" (2Ch. 6:18-21).

Then he mentioned several kinds of things that men might pray for. He mentioned calls for justice when a man sins against his neighbor. He mentioned times when the people might suffer because of their sins, such as being defeated by their enemies, or suffer drought, or famine, or pestilence, or any such thing. He asked Jehovah to forgive them if they prayed toward that place. He asked him to render to each according to his ways, so that they would fear him and walk in his ways. He asked Jehovah to hear the foreigner who might pray there, so that all the peoples of the earth would know his name and fear him. He asked Jehovah to hear the prayer of his people who prayed toward the city which he chose, and the house he built, when they went out to battle their enemies.

Then he spoke of the possibility of the people being carried away captive to a distant land because of their sins. He asked Jehovah to hear them when they prayed toward the city which Jehovah chose and the house Solomon built. However, when their nation was eventually destroyed because of their sins, both the city and the temple were destroyed as well. So all they had to pray toward was the stone rubble that remained.

Solomon asked Jehovah to forgive the exiles if they confessed their sin, and returned to him with all their heart and soul. Then in his prayer Solomon said, "**Now therefore arise, O Jehovah God, into thy resting-place, thou, and the ark of thy**

strength. Let thy priests, O Jehovah God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy sanctified rejoice in goodness" (2Ch. 6:41). He concluded his prayer by asking that Jehovah not turn from him, but remember his loving kindness to David.

After his prayer the book says that fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offerings and sacrifices. And the glory of Jehovah filled the house so that the priests could not enter into it. Remember, those things also happened at the dedication of the tabernacle. When all the people saw those things, they bowed down and worshiped, giving thanks to Jehovah and saying, "**For he is good. For his loving kindness is forever**" (2Ch. 7:3). Then they sacrificed 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep.

Thus the house was dedicated. Solomon had to hallow the middle of the court for burnt offerings because the brazen altar was not sufficient for so many. The dedication of the altar lasted seven days. They also held the feast (of tabernacles) seven days, followed by a solemn assembly. On the twenty-third day of the seventh month Solomon sent the people away. And the book says they were "**joyful and glad of heart for the goodness that Jehovah had shown to David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people**" (2Ch. 7:10).

Then Jehovah appeared to Solomon by night, saying he had heard his prayer and had chosen that place and that house. Jehovah said if he caused drought, or sent locusts or pestilence, and his people humbled themselves and prayed, turning from their wicked ways, then he would hear, forgive, and heal their land. He said he would attend to prayers made in that place, because he had chosen and hallowed that house, that his name be there forever. He also told Solomon that if he would walk faithfully as David had, then he would establish his kingdom. However, if he forsook him, and turned to other gods, then he would pluck them out of the land, and he would cast the house out of his sight, making it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. Jehovah said, "**And this house, which is so high, everyone who passes by it shall be astonished, and shall say, Why has Jehovah done thus to this land, and to this house?**" (2Ch. 7:21). He said they would know it was because they forsook him for other gods.

It took Solomon twenty years to build the house of Jehovah and the king's house. He also built cities: fortified cities, and store-cities, and cities for his chariots and horsemen. He also raised a levy of

bondservants from all the peoples that the sons of Israel left in the land instead of driving them out as Jehovah commanded. Solomon had married the daughter of Pharaoh, but he would not let her live in the house of David, the book says, “**because the places are holy in which the ark of Jehovah has come**” (2Ch. 8:11).

The record says that Solomon had all of the required offerings made: those daily, on the sabbaths and the new moons, and the three annual feasts. He also appointed the divisions of the priests and Levites for their services. The book says, “**And they did not depart from the commandment of the king to the priests and Levites concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures**” (2Ch. 8:15). The text also says that Solomon went to a couple of cities on the Gulf of Aqaba. Huram had sent ships and seamen there to go with the servants of Solomon to Ophir where they brought back 450 talents of gold. Ophir was probably in Arabia, but some believe it could have been in India or Africa.

Next the book tells about the queen of Sheba. She had heard of Solomon’s fame, and she came to test him with hard questions. She came with a very great caravan carrying spices, gold, and precious stones. The record says that Solomon answered all her questions. And when she saw his wisdom, the house he had built, and all his grandeur, there was no more spirit in her. She told Solomon that she had not believed the report about him, but having seen, she said the half of his greatness was not told her. He exceeded the fame she had heard. She said his men and servants were privileged to enjoy being with him and hearing his wisdom.

She also said, “**Blessed be Jehovah thy God, who delighted in thee, to set thee on his throne to be king for Jehovah thy God. Because thy God loved Israel, to establish them forever, therefore he made thee king over them, to do justice and righteousness**” (2Ch. 9:8). Then, after they exchanged goods, she and her servants went to her own land.

The record says that Solomon’s annual revenue of gold was 666 talents, besides what the traders and merchants brought. It says he made two hundred bucklers and three hundred shields of gold. He also made a great throne of ivory overlaid with pure gold. It had six steps with twelve lions standing on each side. There were also two lions at the throne, one on each side. All of his drinking vessels were of gold. The book says silver was accounted of nothing in his days. It says, “**So king Solomon exceeded all**

the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart” (2Ch. 9:23). And they brought him tribute year by year. Solomon ruled all the kings from the River (Euphrates) to the border of Egypt. He ruled all Israel forty years. Then he slept with his fathers, and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

Rehoboam went to Shechem for Israel to make him king. When Jeroboam heard of it, he came back from Egypt where he had fled from Solomon, because they called for him. Remember, the book of First Kings tells more about him. Then Jeroboam and all Israel told Rehoboam that Solomon had made their yoke heavy, and they wanted him to make it lighter. Rehoboam told them to return in three days. Then he took counsel with the old men who stood before Solomon. They said, “**If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants forever**” (2Ch. 10:7). The word forever in the Bible does not always mean everlasting. It often simply means for life or for a long time.

Rehoboam forsook the advice of the old men, and took counsel with the young men he grew up with. They told him to make the yoke heavier. So Rehoboam said to the people, “**My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto. My father chastised you with whips, but I with scorpions**” (2Ch. 10:14). The record says it was brought about by God, so that he might establish his word spoken by Ahijah to Jeroboam. Consequently, the people of Israel forsook Rehoboam. However, he reigned over the sons of Israel in Judah. Benjamin also remained with him.

When Rehoboam sent the man who was in charge of the men of task work, the sons of Israel stoned him to death. And Rehoboam had to flee in his chariot to Jerusalem. Then he mustered the house of Judah and Benjamin—180,000 warriors—to fight against Israel. However the word of Jehovah came to Shemaiah the man of God, telling Rehoboam not to fight against their brothers, because the division was from Jehovah. So they obeyed Jehovah, and returned from going against Jeroboam.

Next the book names fifteen fortified cities that Rehoboam built for defense in Judah. They were in Judah and Benjamin both, because Benjamin belonged to him. Also the priests and Levites throughout Israel resorted to him because Jeroboam and his sons cast them off from being priests to Jehovah. Jeroboam appointed his own priests for the

high places and the he-goats and calves (idols) he had made. Afterward all who set their hearts to seek Jehovah came to Jerusalem out of all the tribes of Israel to sacrifice to Jehovah. The record says they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam strong three years, because they walked in the way of David and Solomon.

Rehoboam took eighteen wives and thirty concubines, and he begot twenty-eight sons and thirty daughters. He loved Maacha the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and concubines, and he appointed Abijah, one of her sons, to be ruler among his brothers. He intended to make him king. The record says Rehoboam dealt wisely, and dispersed all his sons throughout Judah and Benjamin, giving them much provisions and many wives. However, when he became strong, he forsook the law of Jehovah, and all Israel with him. So in the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came against Jerusalem with a great military force. He took the fortified cities of Judah and came to Jerusalem.

Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the rulers of Judah with the word of Jehovah. Jehovah told them he had put them in the hand of Shishak because they had forsaken him. The record then says that the rulers of Israel and the king humbled themselves, and said Jehovah was righteous. When Jehovah saw that, his word came again to Shemaiah, saying, "**They have humbled themselves. I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless they shall be his servants, that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries**" (2Ch. 12:8).

So Shishak took away the treasures of the house of Jehovah and the king's house. He also took away the shields of gold, and Rehoboam made shields of bronze instead. The record says when he humbled himself, the wrath of Jehovah turned from him, not to destroy him altogether. It also says, "**And moreover in Judah there were good things**" (2Ch. 12:12).

Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. And he did that which was evil; he did not set his heart to seek Jehovah. The record says there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. Then Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

Abijah began to reign over Judah in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam, and he reigned three years. There was also war between Abijah and Jeroboam. Abijah went to battle with an army of 400,000 valiant men of war, against 800,000 mighty men of valor with Jeroboam. Abijah stood upon mount Zemaraim (in Ephraim), and spoke to Jeroboam and all Israel. He told them that Jehovah had given the kingdom to David and his sons forever. He contrasted their golden calves with Jehovah, and their unauthorized priests with those that Jehovah had consecrated. And he told them not to fight against Jehovah, the God of their fathers. However, Jeroboam sent an ambushment to surround them. But Judah cried to Jehovah, and when they gave a great shout, the record says that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel. So Abijah and his people killed them with a great slaughter, 500,000 chosen men of Israel. The record says, "**Thus the sons of Israel were brought under at that time, and the sons of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon Jehovah, the God of their fathers**" (2Ch. 13:18).

Jeroboam never recovered his strength after his defeat by king Abijah of Judah, and Jehovah smote him so that he died. Abijah, however, grew mighty. He took to himself fourteen wives, and begot twenty-two sons, and sixteen daughters. Then he slept with his fathers, and Asa his son reigned in his stead. Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of Jehovah. He took away all the paraphernalia of idolatry, and he commanded Judah to seek Jehovah and do the law. So the land was quiet, without wars, because Jehovah had given him rest. He also built fortified cities in Judah, and had a large army.

However, Zerah the Ethiopian came against him with an army of a million men. Asa went out to meet him, and he cried to Jehovah for his help. The record says Jehovah smote the Ethiopians and they fled. Asa and the people pursued them, and carried away very much booty. Then the Spirit of God came upon Azariah, and he went out to meet Asa. He said, "**Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. Jehovah is with you while ye are with him. And if ye seek him, he will be found of you, but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you**" (2Ch. 15:2).

He reminded them of the times when Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. He said, however, that when distress came upon them, they turned to Jehovah. He said in those times (when they were without the true God) they had no rest, and were broken in pieces, because God vexed them with all adversity. So Aza-

riah encouraged Asa, saying, “**But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack. For your work shall be rewarded**” (2Ch. 15:7). When Asa heard those words, he took courage, and put away all the abominations out of the land of Judah and Benjamin. He also renewed the altar of Jehovah that was in front of the porch of Jehovah.

Asa gathered all Judah and Benjamin, as well as some men from other tribes who had deserted Israel, to Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of his reign. And they sacrificed to Jehovah of the spoil of the Ethiopians they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. They also entered into the covenant to seek Jehovah with all their heart and soul, and whoever would not seek Jehovah was to be put to death. The record says, “**And they swore to Jehovah with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets**” (2Ch. 15:14). And so Jehovah gave them rest round about. Asa also removed his mother Maacah from being queen, because she had made an abominable image of an Asherah. Asa cut it down and burnt it. He also brought the dedicated things—silver, gold, and vessels—into the house of God.

Asa had no more war until the thirty-sixth year of his reign, when Baasha king of Israel built Ramah as a blockade against him. Then Asa took out treasures of the house of Jehovah and the king’s house, and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria. He wanted him to break his league with Baasha. As a consequence Ben-hadad attacked some places in Israel, and Baasha quit building Ramah. After that Asa took all Judah with him to carry away the stones and timber of Ramah with which he used to build a couple of other cities.

However, Hanani the seer told Asa that because he relied on the king of Syria instead of Jehovah, the army of the king of Syria had escaped out of his hand. He reminded Asa of the huge army of the Ethiopians, which they had defeated because Jehovah gave them into his hand. Hanani said, “**For the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him. In this thou have done foolishly, for from henceforth thou shall have wars**” (2Ch. 16:9).

Asa became angry with the seer, and put him in the prison-house. The record says that Asa was in a rage because of it. He also oppressed some of the people at the same time. So in the thirty-ninth year of his reign he was severely diseased in his feet. Yet he did not seek Jehovah, but went to the physicians.

He died in the forty-first year of his reign, and the record says they buried him in his own sepulcher filled with sweet odors and various kinds of spices.

Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead. Jehoshaphat strengthened himself against Israel, placing forces in all the fortified cities of Judah, and setting garrisons in Judah and the cities of Ephraim that Asa had taken. The record says that Jehovah was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the former ways of his (ancestral) father David. All Judah brought him tribute so that he had riches and honor in abundance. His heart was lifted high in the ways of Jehovah. He even took away the high places, as well as the Asherim.

The book names five of his rulers that he sent to teach in the cities of Judah. He sent them in the third year of his reign. It also names the two priests and the nine Levites who went with them. The record says, “**And they taught in Judah, having the book of the law of Jehovah with them. And they went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught among the people**” (2Ch. 17:9). It says the fear of Jehovah came upon all the other kingdoms, and they made no war against Jehoshaphat. Some Philistines and Arabians even brought him presents and tribute. So Jehoshaphat grew exceedingly great.

The record says he had many works in the cities of Judah, and a strong army. Then it names three captains of Judah who commanded 300,000, 280,000, and 200,000 respectively. It says they were mighty men of valor. It also names two men of Benjamin who commanded 200,000 and 180,000 men. Those were besides the ones in the fortified cities throughout Judah.

Then Jehoshaphat joined affinity with Ahab, the evil king of Israel. After a few years he visited Ahab in Samaria, and Ahab made a great feast for him and the people with him. After which Ahab invited him to go with him in war to Ramoth-gilead. Jehoshaphat agreed, but he asked Ahab to inquire of the word of Jehovah first. Therefore, the king of Israel gathered the prophets together—four hundred men—and asked them if they should go. They said go, for God would deliver it into his hand. However, Jehoshaphat asked if there was a prophet of Jehovah besides to inquire of. The king of Israel said there was yet one man, Micaiah, but he hated him, because he never prophesied good about him. Nevertheless, Jehoshaphat encouraged him, so he sent an officer to get Micaiah.

While the two kings sat upon their thrones, arrayed in their robes, all the prophets prophesied

before them. One of them, Zedekiah, made horns of iron and used them to illustrate how they would push away the Syrians. And all the prophets said to go up, for Jehovah would deliver the city to the king. The messenger told Micaiah to speak good words to the king like the other prophets, but Micaiah said, “**As Jehovah lives, what my God says, that will I speak**” (2Ch. 18:13). After he came, the king asked him if he should go up. Micaiah told him to go up and prosper. However, the king demanded to know nothing but the truth in the name of Jehovah. Then Micaiah said he saw all Israel scattered as sheep without a shepherd. Jehovah said they had no master, so every man should return to his house in peace. The king of Israel reminded Jehoshaphat that Micaiah would not prophesy good about him but evil.

Then Micaiah told them to hear the word of Jehovah. He said he saw Jehovah sitting upon his throne with all the host of heaven standing on both sides of him. Jehovah asked them all who should entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead. Various ones suggested different things. Then a spirit stood and said he would entice him by being a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. So Jehovah told him to go and do so. Micaiah then said, “**Now therefore, behold, Jehovah has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets. And Jehovah has spoken evil concerning thee**” (2Ch. 18:22). Zedekiah (the one who used the iron horns) then struck him on his cheek, and they exchanged a few words. The king ordered Micaiah put in prison and fed with bread and water of affliction until he returned in peace. Micaiah told them all if that happened, then Jehovah had not spoken by him.

Then the two kings went up to Ramoth-gilead. The king of Israel disguised himself, but he told Jehoshaphat to keep his robes. The king of Syria had commanded the captains of his chariots to fight only with the king of Israel. Therefore, when the captains saw Jehoshaphat they thought he was the king of Israel, and they turned to fight against him. However, Jehoshaphat cried out and Jehovah helped him. When the captains saw it was not the king of Israel, they turned away from him. Then a certain man shot an arrow at random, and it struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor, severely wounding him. Ahab told the driver of the chariot to turn and take him out of the army. However, the battle continued, and he propped himself up against the Syrians for the rest of the day. At sundown he died.

When Jehoshaphat returned to Jerusalem, Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out and said to him, “**Should thou help the wicked, and love those who hate Jehovah? For this thing wrath is upon thee from before Jehovah. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou have put away the Asheroth out of the land, and have set thy heart to seek God**” (2Ch. 19:2-3).

After that, the record says that Jehoshaphat went out among the people in the realm of his influence, from Beersheba in the far south of Judah to the hill-country of Ephraim north of Benjamin, to bring them back to Jehovah. It also says, “**And he set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, Consider what ye do. For ye judge not for man, but for Jehovah, and he is with you in the judgment. Now therefore let the fear of Jehovah be upon you. Take heed and do it. For there is no iniquity with Jehovah our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes**” (2Ch. 19:5-7).

He also appointed men from the Levites, and the priests, and from the heads of the fathers of Israel to be judges of controversies. And he said to them, “**Thus ye shall do in the fear of Jehovah, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. And whenever any controversy shall come to you from your brothers who dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and ordinances, ye shall warn them, that they not be guilty towards Jehovah, and so wrath come upon you and upon your brothers. Do this, and ye shall not be guilty. And, behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of Jehovah, and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, in all the king's matters. The Levites shall also be officers before you. Deal courageously, and Jehovah be with the good**” (2Ch. 19:9-11).

Next the book says that the sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon (and some others, probably Edomites) came against Jehovah to battle. When he heard about it he was afraid, and he set himself to seek for Jehovah. He also proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. Also the people came out of all the cities of Judah to seek Jehovah. Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly in the house of Jehovah and prayed. He said, “**O Jehovah, the God of our fathers, are thou not God in heaven? And are thou not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? And in thy hand is power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee**” (2Ch. 20:6).

Jehoshaphat told how God had given the land to his people Israel, and they had built a sanctuary in it for his name. He reminded Jehovah that if sword, or judgment, or pestilence, or famine came upon them, and they cried out to him in their affliction, that he would hear and save. Jehoshaphat spoke to Jehovah about how the sons of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir had come against them. Then he said, "**O our God, will thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that comes against us. Neither do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon thee**" (2Ch. 20:12). The record says that all Judah stood before Jehovah, with their wives and children.

Then the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Jahaziel, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, and he spoke the words of Jehovah to them. Jehovah said to fear not, for the battle was his. He said to go down the next day against them, and he told where to find them. Jehovah said they would not need to fight, just stand and see the salvation of Jehovah. Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before Jehovah and worshiped. And the Levites stood up to praise Jehovah with an exceedingly loud voice.

Hence, they rose early in the morning and went forth. As they went, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "**O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem. Believe in Jehovah your God, so shall ye be established. Believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper**" (2Ch. 20:20). And after taking counsel with the people, he appointed singers to sing to Jehovah, and give praise in holy array as they went out in front of the army. The record says that when they began to sing and praise, then Jehovah set an ambushment against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, and they were smitten. They all began to slay each other. And when Judah came, they saw the multitude as dead bodies on the ground; none had escaped. It took Jehoshaphat and his people three days to gather the spoil, there was so much treasure. And on the fourth day they gathered together and blessed Jehovah. Then they returned to Jerusalem with a musical parade. And the fear of God was on the other kingdoms when they heard that Jehovah had fought against the enemies of Israel. So God gave Jehoshaphat peace.

Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-five years. He followed the ways of his father Asa, and did right in the eyes of Jehovah. But the record says, "**However the high places were not taken away. Neither as**

yet had the people set their hearts to the God of their fathers" (2Ch. 20:33). The high places were probably restored after Jehoshaphat had removed them earlier. Like bugs and weeds in a garden, combating sin is a continual necessity. Also Jehoshaphat joined himself with the wicked Ahaziah king of Israel. They joined to make ships, but a prophet came to Jehoshaphat, and told him that Jehovah was going to destroy them because of his alliance with Ahaziah.

Then Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and Jehoram his son reigned in his place. He had six brothers, and after he strengthened himself in the kingdom, he killed them and various other rulers of Israel. He was thirty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years. He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, doing evil in the sight of Jehovah, for he had married the daughter of Ahab. The record says that Jehoram "**made the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot, and led Judah astray**" (2Ch. 21:11). Therefore, Elijah the prophet sent him a letter telling him that because of all the evil he had done, even killing his brothers who were better than he, Jehovah was going to smite his family with a great plague. Elijah said, "**And thou shall have great sickness by disease of thy bowels until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness, day by day**" (2Ch. 21:15).

Jehovah also stirred up the spirit of the Philistines and Arabians to come against Judah. They broke in and carried away all that was in the kings house, including his sons and wives. Only Jehoram's youngest son Jehoahaz (also called Ahaziah and Azariah) remained. After that Jehovah smote Jehoram in his bowels with an incurable disease. The record says that after two years he died of severe diseases. He was thirty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years. The book says he departed without being wanted.

Then the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his son king. He was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned one year. His mother was Athaliah, the grand-daughter of Omri (remember, Omri was also the father of Ahab). He also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, walking in the ways of the house of Ahab. The record says they were his counselors to his destruction. It says, "**Now the destruction of Ahaziah was of God, in that he went to Joram [Jehoram], for when he came he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom Jehovah had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab**" (2Ch. 22:7). Jehu killed

both Jehoram king of Israel, and Ahaziah king of Judah.

Then the book says, “**Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal seed of the house of Judah**” (2Ch. 22:10). That means she killed all of her grandsons. However, Jehoshabeath, the sister of king Ahaziah, hid his son Joash. Jehoshabeath was also the wife of Jehoiada the priest. Joash was hid in the house of God six years while Athaliah reigned over the land.

Then in the seventh year, Jehoiada made an alliance with the captains of hundreds, and five other men. They gathered the Levites out of the cities, and the heads of fathers of Israel, to Jerusalem. And they all made a covenant in the house of God, saying the king’s son would reign, as Jehovah had said about the sons of David. Jehoiada then organized three groups, each of which was responsible for one of three locations in the temple area. The people would be in the courts of the house of Jehovah, but only the priests and the ministering Levites were allowed in the temple. He also commanded armed Levites to surround the king when he came in and when he went out. Remember, Joash was only seven years old at the time. Jehoiada armed the captains of hundreds with the weapons that were in the house of God, and he stationed them on both sides of the house. Then they brought out the king’s son, put the crown on him, and gave him the testimony (probably the book of the law). Jehoiada and his sons anointed him king, and they all said, “**Live, O king**” (2Ch. 23:11).

When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came and saw the king with the captains and the trumpets by him. The record also says, “**And all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew trumpets. The singers also played on instruments of music, and led the singing of praise**” (2Ch. 23:13). Then Athaliah tore her clothes, and said “Treason! treason!” Then Jehoiada commanded she be taken out and killed.

Jehoiada also made a covenant with all the people and the king, that they should be Jehovah’s people. Then they all went and destroyed the house of Baal, and all his altars and images, and killed his priest. And they all brought the king from the house of Jehovah where he had been hid, and set him upon the throne. Jehoiada also appointing the necessary functionaries to renew all the activities of the house of Jehovah.

The book says that Joash was seven years old when he began to reign. He reigned forty years, and did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah all the days of Jehoiada the priest. A time came when Joash wanted to restore the house of Jehovah. So he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and commanded them to collect money from the cities of Judah for annual repairs of the house of God. However, the record says the Levites were slow about it. The king wanted to know why. He said, “**For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God, and also all the dedicated things of the house of Jehovah they bestowed upon the Baalim**” (2Ch. 24:7). Then he commanded a chest be made for the gate of the house of Jehovah, and a proclamation be made throughout Judah to bring in the tax that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel. The book says all the rulers and the people rejoiced to do so. And from time to time the money was taken from the chest, and given to the masons and carpenters and other craftsmen to restore the house of Jehovah. When that was finished the money was used to make the various vessels and utensils for it. The burnt offerings were also made continually all the days of Jehoiada.

Jehoiada died at a hundred thirty years old. The book says, “**And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and his house**” (2Ch. 24:16). However, after his death the rulers of Judah persuaded the king to forsake the house of Jehovah and serve idols. Therefore, wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for their guilt. The record says that Jehovah sent prophets to them, to bring them back, but they would not listen. It also says that the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he rebuked the people because they forsook Jehovah. However, they conspired against him, and stoned him to death in the court of the house of Jehovah at the command of the king. Thus, Joash the king did not remember the kindness of Jehoiada, but he killed his son. The book says, “**And when he died, he said, Jehovah look upon it, and require it**” (2Ch. 24:22). Then the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and destroyed the rulers of the people. The book says the Syrians executed the judgment of Jehovah upon Joash. They left him very sick, and his servants killed him on his own bed. And he was not buried in the sepulchers of the kings.

Amaziah the son of Joash reigned in his stead. He was twenty-five years old when he began, and he reigned twenty-nine years. The record says, "**And he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, but not with a perfect heart**" (2Ch. 25:2). After his kingdom was established he killed the servants who had killed his father. Yet he did not put their sons to death, because of what was written in the book of Moses, that every man should die for his own sin.

Amaziah numbered the men of Judah and Benjamin, from twenty years old and upward, who could go forth to war. There were 300,000 chosen men. He also hired 100,000 mighty men of valor out of Israel for a hundred talents of silver. However, a man of God told him to let the army of Israel go, because Jehovah was not with Israel. Amaziah asked about the hundred talents. The book says, "**And the man of God answered, Jehovah is able to give thee much more than this**" (2Ch. 25:9). Then Amaziah sent the army of Israel home again. However, they went home in fierce anger. In those days going to war was often an opportunity to acquire many possessions by plunder. Amaziah led his army, and smote 10,000 of the sons of Seir (the Edomites). They also took 10,000 prisoners, which they killed by casting off a cliff. The army of Israel that Amaziah had sent back plundered cities of Judah, killing 3,000, and taking much spoil. That shows how evil they were.

The record says that Amaziah brought the gods of the sons of Seir back with him and worshiped them. Therefore, Jehovah was angry with him, and sent a prophet to rebuke him. Whereupon Amaziah said, "**Have we made thee of the king's counsel? Cease. Why should thou be smitten?**" (2Ch. 25:16). Then the prophet said, "**I know that God has determined to destroy thee, because thou have done this, and have not hearkened to my counsel**" (2Ch. 25:16).

After that Amaziah sent a challenge to Joash the king of Israel. Joash responded with a parable which compared Judah to a thistle and Israel to a cedar. He told Amaziah to glory in his victory over Edom, but not meddle and fall, bringing Judah down with him. However, Amaziah would not listen, because Jehovah wanted him delivered into the hand of his enemies for having gone after the gods of Edom. Hence, they fought and Judah was defeated. The king of Israel plundered the treasures of the house of God and the king's house, and broke down much of the wall of Jerusalem.

After Amaziah turned away from Jehovah they made a conspiracy against him. He fled to Lachish (a city twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem). However, they killed him there. Then all the people of Judah made Uzziah his son king. He was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years. The book says he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah. It says, "**And he set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the vision of God. And as long as he sought Jehovah, God made him to prosper**" (2Ch. 26:5). (That Zechariah was not the same as the prophet who wrote the book by his name.)

He fought successfully against the Philistines, the Arabians, and the Meunim (who they were is not clear). The Ammonites gave him tribute, and he grew very strong. He built things and grew things. The record says that he loved husbandry. He also had an army of 307,500 well equipped men. The record says, "**And his name spread far abroad. For he was marvelously helped, till he was strong**" (2Ch. 26:15).

However, it also says, "**But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Jehovah his God. For he went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense**" (2Ch. 26:16). The priests withheld him, but he became angry. And while he was angry, leprosy broke out in his forehead. So they thrust him out quickly. Indeed, he himself hastened to go out. The book says that he was a leper for the rest of his life, living in a separate house. Jotham his son judged the people in his place, and after Uzziah died, Jotham became king.

Jotham was twenty-five years old when he began to reign. He reigned sixteen years, and he did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah. The record says, however, that the people still did corruptly. Jotham also built things. He conquered the sons of Ammon, and they brought him much annual tribute. The book says he became mighty, because he ordered his ways before Jehovah. Then he slept with his fathers, and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years. However, he did not do that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, but walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even burnt his sons in the fire like the nations that Jehovah had cast out before the sons of Israel. Therefore, Jehovah delivered him into the hand of

the king of Syria, who carried away a great multitude of captives.

He was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who killed 120,000 valiant men of Judah because they had forsaken Jehovah. The sons of Israel also carried away captives—200,000 women and children—as well as much spoil. However, a prophet of Jehovah named Oded went out to their army, and rebuked them for taking captives of their brothers. Then certain heads of the sons of Ephraim told the men of war to send the captives back. They said it was a great trespass, and there was fierce wrath against them because of it. So they clothed those who were naked, fed them, carried the feeble on donkeys, and brought them to Jericho to their brothers.

Judah was also defeated by the Philistines and the Edomites. The book says, “**For Jehovah brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had dealt wantonly in Judah, and trespassed severely against Jehovah**” (2Ch. 28:19). It says in the time of his distress he trespassed even more against Jehovah, sacrificing to the gods of Damascus. Ahaz also plundered the house of God and shut up its doors.

Then Ahaz slept with his fathers, and Hezekiah his son took his place. He was twenty-five years old when he began, and he reigned twenty-nine years. He did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, as David had done. He immediately opened the doors of the house of Jehovah and repaired them. He also commanded the Levites to sanctify themselves and the house of Jehovah, carrying out the filthiness in it. Hezekiah said the wrath of Jehovah was upon Judah and Jerusalem because their fathers had forsaken Jehovah. He therefore, made a covenant with Jehovah, and he encouraged the Levites to do their ministry.

Next the book names several Levites who did as the king commanded, and cleansed the house of Jehovah. After which Hezekiah gathered the rulers of the city, and they went to the house of Jehovah and made a sin offering, to make atonement for all Israel. Hezekiah also set the musicians of the Levites in the house of Jehovah. Then the book says, “**And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of Jehovah began also, and the trumpets, together with the instruments of David king of Israel. And all the assembly worshiped, and the singers sang, and the trum-**

peters sounded. All this until the burnt offering was finished” (2Ch. 29:27-28).

Hezekiah encouraged the assembly to bring their sacrifices and thank offerings, and they did. However, the priests who had sanctified themselves were too few for the number of burnt offerings, so the Levites helped them. The record says, “**For the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests**” (2Ch. 29:34). Thus the service of Jehovah was established.

Then Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah to come to the house of Jehovah for the Passover feast. They kept it in the second month because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient numbers, and the people had not gathered to Jerusalem. Therefore, the posts went with the letters, and encouraged the sons of Israel to turn again to Jehovah. They told them, among other thing, “**And be ye not like your fathers, and like your brothers, who trespassed against Jehovah, the God of their fathers, so that he gave them up to desolation, as ye see**” (2Ch. 30:7). However, the record says, “**But they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them**” (2Ch. 30:10). Nevertheless, some men humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. Jehovah also caused Judah to be united to obey the king.

So they killed the Passover in the second month. The record says there were many in the assembly from tribes in Israel who had not cleansed themselves. Yet they ate, because Hezekiah had prayed that Jehovah would pardon them, and he did. The book says they kept the feast (of unleavened bread) seven days with such great gladness that they decided to keep it another seven days.

There had not been such a Passover since the time of Solomon. And when it was over, those who had been present went out to the cities of Judah and Benjamin, as well as some in Ephraim and Manasseh, and destroyed all the pillars and altars of the other gods. Mass gatherings often arouse enthusiasm to do things that would not ordinarily be done. That may be another reason why the law of Moses commanded the sons of Israel to gather for such feasts three times each year.

Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites to continue the regular offerings, as was written in the law of Jehovah. He also commanded the people to give their tithe, which they did in abundance. Therefore, Hezekiah commanded the chambers of the house of Jehovah be prepared to store the excess. The book names twelve men who were rulers and overseers of the stores. It also

names seven men who were over the freewill offerings, to distribute the oblations of Jehovah to their brothers who did the service, and for their wives and children. The record says that Hezekiah “**wrought that which was good and right and faithful before Jehovah his God**” (2Ch. 31:20). It says he did it with all his heart and prospered.

However, Sennacherib king of Assyria came against Judah. Therefore, Hezekiah with his rulers and mighty men stopped all the water fountains outside Jerusalem to keep the kings of Assyria from finding much water. He also built up the city defenses, accumulated weapons, and set captains of war over the people. He also encouraged the people not to fear the king of Assyria, saying, “**With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is Jehovah our God to help us, and to fight our battles**” (2Ch. 32:8).

Afterward, Sennacherib sent his servants to Jerusalem, telling them not to trust Hezekiah and Jehovah their God to deliver them. He said none of the gods of the other nations had saved them from him. And he said, “**How much less shall your God deliver you out of my hand?**” (2Ch. 32:15). The record says he spoke more things against Jehovah, and against his servant Hezekiah. He also wrote letters, railing on Jehovah, and speaking against him, that he would not save them. They even cried out in the Jew’s language to the people on the wall, to frighten them, so that they might take the city. Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet prayed because of that. And Jehovah sent an agent who destroyed the camp of the king of Assyria, so that he returned with shame to his homeland. And his own sons killed him in the house of his god. Thus Jehovah saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And Hezekiah was exalted in the sight of all nations.

Then the book says that Hezekiah became mortally ill, and he prayed to Jehovah. Jehovah responded and gave him a sign, but Hezekiah was ungrateful. It says his heart was lifted up, which brought wrath upon him and the people. However, it says he humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that Jehovah’s wrath did not come in his days. Hezekiah was very wealthy, for God had given him much substance. However, in the matter of the ambassadors from Babylon, the record says that God left him, to try him, to find out all that was in his heart. The book of Second Kings tells more about that.

When Hezekiah slept with his fathers, Manasseh his son reigned in his stead. Manasseh was twelve

years old when he began to reign. He reigned fifty-five years, and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. He rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah had broken down. And he raised up altars for other gods and served them. He even built their altars and set up an idol in the house of Jehovah. He made his sons to pass through the fire (human sacrifice), and he practiced augury and sorcery. The record says, “**Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did evil more than the nations did whom Jehovah destroyed before the sons of Israel**” (2Ch. 33:9). It says Jehovah spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen.

Therefore, Jehovah sent the army of the king of Assyria (allies of Babylon), who took Manasseh in chains to Babylon. However, in his distress he besought Jehovah, and humbled himself greatly. As a result Jehovah restored him to his kingdom in Jerusalem. The book says, “**Then Manasseh knew that Jehovah he was God**” (2Ch. 33:13). Afterward he built an outer wall to the city of David (Jerusalem) to a very great height. He also took away the foreign gods, and the idol from the house of Jehovah, and all the altars he had built. And he commanded Judah to serve Jehovah. Then he slept with his fathers, and Amon his son reigned in his place.

Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign. He reigned two years, and did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. And he did not humble himself before Jehovah, as Manasseh had done, but trespassed more and more. Then his servants made a conspiracy, and killed him in his own house. However, the people killed the conspirators, and made Josiah his son king in his stead.

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign. He reigned thirty-one years, and did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, walking in the ways of David. When he was about sixteen years of age, he began to seek the God of David. When he was about twenty years old he began to purge the land of foreign gods, breaking down their images and altars. He also burnt the bones of their priests on their altars. He did so in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, even to Naphtali in their ruins. The people of Israel had been carried away captive by that time. When he was about twenty-six years old he sent three officials to repair the house of Jehovah. They gave the money that was brought into the house of God to Hilkiah the high priest. Then it was given to the workmen. The

record says the men worked faithfully. And it names the Levites who oversaw them.

When they brought the money out of the house of Jehovah, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of Jehovah. He told Shaphan the scribe, who then carried it to the king when he reported the work of the temple. When Shaphan read it to him, the king tore his clothes. Then he commanded Hilkiah, Shaphan, and some other men to inquire of Jehovah for him. He said, “**For great is the wrath of Jehovah that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah, to do according to all that is written in this book**” (2Ch. 34:21). Therefore, they went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum keeper of the wardrobe. And she told them the words of Jehovah. Jehovah said he was going to bring evil upon the place and its inhabitants, even all the curses written in the book, because they had forsaken him for other gods. He said, however, that because the heart of the king was tender, and he humbled himself before God when he heard the words in the book, and wept before him, that he would not see all the evil that Jehovah was going to bring.

The men reported the words to the king, and he gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. Then he went up to the house of Jehovah, and read all the words of the book of the covenant to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites. Then he made a covenant to walk after Jehovah, and keep his commandments with all his heart, and with all his soul. He also caused all in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it, and the record says the inhabitants of Jerusalem did. The book says of Josiah, “**All his days they did not depart from following Jehovah, the God of their fathers**” (2Ch. 34:33).

Josiah also kept the Passover to Jehovah in Jerusalem. He set the priests in their offices, and encouraged them to the service of the house of Jehovah. He told the Levites to put the holy ark in the house which Solomon built. He also told them to prepare themselves, stand in the holy place, “**... kill the Passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare for your brothers, to do according to the word of Jehovah by Moses**” (2Ch. 35:6). Then the book gives the number of animals that Josiah and the rulers gave for a freewill offering to the people, the priests, and the Levites. It also names six of the rulers of the Levites, and tells what they gave for the Passover.

The book then says, “**So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites by their divisions, according to the king’s commandment**” (2Ch. 35:10). And they killed the Passover. The priests sprinkled the blood, and the Levites skinned them. They roasted the Passover with fire, boiled the holy offerings, and carried them quickly to all the sons of the people. Afterward the Levites prepared for themselves and the priests, who were busy with the burnt offerings and the fat until night. The record says, “**And there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet. Neither did any of the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem**” (2Ch. 35:18).

Afterward Neco king of Egypt went up to fight against Carchemish, a city of the Hittites by the Euphrates. Josiah went out against him, but Neco sent ambassadors to warn him against it. He even said that God had commanded him for the war. However, Josiah disguised himself to fight with him. The record says, “**And he did not hearken to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo**” (2Ch. 35:22). Consequently, he was killed in his chariot by archers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned him. The book even says that Jeremiah (the prophet) lamented for Josiah. It also says, “**And all the singing men and singing women spoke of Josiah in their lamentations to this day. And they made them an ordinance in Israel, and, behold, they are written in the lamentations**” (2Ch. 35:25). Is that not another good lesson for us all? No matter how righteous we may be, we need to use wisdom in all our affairs. The least that Josiah should have done was to inquire of Jehovah after he heard the king of Egypt say that Jehovah had sent him.

The people made Jehoahaz (also called Joahaz) the son of Josiah king in his father’s place. He was twenty-three years old when he began to reign. He only reigned three months, because Neco deposed him and carried him to Egypt. Neco then made Elia-kim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem. He also changed his name to Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign. He reigned eleven years, and did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. Then Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came and carried him bound to Babylon. He also carried the vessels of the house of Jehovah

to Babylon, and put them in his temple there. Jehoiachin reigned in place of his father Jehoiakim.

This book says that Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign, but the book of Second Kings says he was eighteen years old when he began. Many if not most Bible commentators say the number in this book is an error. However, it is possible that his father Jehoiakim made him a ruler (advised by tutors) over some place other than Jerusalem when he was eight years old, perhaps to prepare him to reign over all Judah as a form of apprenticeship. Remember, Joash was only seven years old when he began to reign. Both books say that Jehoiachin only reigned three months in Jerusalem (although this one adds “and ten days”). That may explain the discrepancy: he reigned about ten years somewhere else and three months in Jerusalem. I must add, however, that the expression “in Jerusalem” is commonly applied in this book to all the kings of Judah when describing the time of their reign. So the expression is not unique to Jehoiachin, although it is a convenient qualifier that might help explain this difficulty.

An important lesson in all of this, is that we should seek every possible explanation for scriptural difficulties, instead of dismissing them as errors. Another lesson is that Jehovah tests us in different ways. And perhaps by not always including explanations for such differences he tests our faith in him. If little problems like that cause you to doubt, then your faith is too weak. You need to build it up by studying more of what can be clearly understood. Giving up on the word of God is fatal to your soul.

Both books also say that Jehoiachin did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. And so Nebuchadnezzar brought him to Babylon, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem. Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign. He reigned eleven years, and also did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. He and the people kept sinning against God, and they polluted the house of Jehovah. God did not want to destroy them, but he did.

The record says about Zedekiah and the people, **“He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of Jehovah. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. But he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart against turning to Jehovah, the God of Israel. Moreover all the chiefs of the priests, and the**

people, trespassed very greatly after all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted the house of Jehovah which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah arose against his people, till there was no remedy” (2Ch. 36:12-16).

Notice that last expression: **“TILL THERE WAS NO REMEDY.”** Jehovah God did all he could to save his people. He tried everything until there was nothing left to try. Truly, God can do anything, but he cannot do that which is contradictory. In order to preserve our potential for sonship, by giving us the power of freewill, enabling creativity as he has, he must restrict his absolute power over us. Hence, he cannot save us against our will—not as long as we are made in his image. To claim otherwise is illogical. It is like wanting God to make us free, but not free. And foolish scoffers who blame God for not saving everyone will suffer just condemnation. God did not even spare his own Son Jesus Christ in an effort to save our souls. Do you think he would have subjected his Son to all that he suffered if there was an easier way? Yes, God can do anything, but not things like ridiculous contradictions.

Because the sons of Israel had become incurably rebellious against Jehovah he sent the king of the Chaldeans against them. The text says he **“had no compassion upon young man or virgin, old man or hoary-headed. He gave them all into his hand”** (2Ch. 36:17). The Chaldeans plundered the house of God, and the treasures of the king and his rulers. Then they burnt the house of God and all the palaces with fire. They also broke down the wall of Jerusalem. Those who escaped were carried away to Babylon to become servants to their king and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia.

That was to fulfill the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah. He said the land would be desolate for seventy years. After the seventy years Cyrus king of Persia made a proclamation, which said, **“All the kingdoms of the earth has Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me. And he has charged me to build a house for him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, Jehovah his God be with him, and let him go up”** (2Ch. 36:23).

A Description of **Ezra**

This book begins with the same words that end Second Chronicles. It tells of the proclamation made by Cyrus king of Persia, that Jehovah commanded him to build a house for God in Jerusalem. Cyrus said that whoever there was of God's people should go to Jerusalem and build it. The book gives additional words of the proclamation, saying that those who were left should help them with money, goods, and beasts. Next the book says, "**Then the heads of fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred, rose up to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem**" (Ezra 1:5).

It also says that those around them strengthened them with money, goods, and beasts, "**besides all that was willingly offered**" (Ezra 1:6). Apparently the money, goods, and beasts came from an involuntary tax collected from those who did not go. Cyrus also took all of the vessels of the house of Jehovah, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken for the house of his gods, and gave them to Sheshbazzar the ruler of Judah. The book says there were "**thirty platters of gold, a thousand platters of silver, twenty-nine knives, thirty bowls of gold, four hundred and ten silver bowls of a second sort, and a thousand other vessels. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred**" (Ezra 1:9-11).

The book names eleven men who returned. Then it names some of the sons who went, and gives the number of them. Remember, these are ancestral numbers. Here is a small sample of the listing: "**The sons of Parosh, two thousand a hundred seventy-two. The sons of Sheph-atiah, three hundred seventy-two. The sons of Arah, seven hundred seventy-five ...**" (Ezra 2:3-5).

In the list there are ninety-eight that begin "**The sons of**" and names certain men. There are four that begin "**The men of**" and names certain places. It also gives the number of certain sons of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the porters, the Nethinim (temple servants), and the sons of Solomon's servants. The singers, porters, and the Nethinim were also all Levites.

The book says there were 652 of the (ancestral) sons of three named men who could not verify they were of Israel. It also says of the sons of the priests there were the sons of three named men who sought registration, but their genealogy could not be found.

It says, "**Therefore were they deemed polluted and put away from the priesthood**" (Ezra 2:62). The book says the whole assembly together was 42,360 besides 7,337 of their servants. It also says they had 200 men and women singers. However, the sum in the preceding listing is 29,818. Obviously not all were mentioned in the listing for some reason. They also had 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys. It also says 61,000 gold coins, 5,000 pounds of silver, and 100 priests' garments were donated by some who came to Jerusalem for the work of building the house of Jehovah. Remember, the priests' garments were very ornate, and must have been very costly.

All those people dwelt in their cities because Jerusalem was in rubble. However, in the seventh month they all gathered together to Jerusalem for the feast of tabernacles. The book says that Jeshua and his brothers the priests, and Zerabbabel and his brothers built the altar for the burnt offerings as is written in the law of Moses. They offered the morning and evening burnt offerings on it, and kept the feast of tabernacles as was required. The book says they offered the continual burnt offerings, and those for the new moons, and for all the set feasts.

However, the foundation of the temple of Jehovah was not yet laid. Therefore, they paid the construction workers, and purchased timber from Tyre according to the grant received from Cyrus king of Persia. They began to build in the second month of the second year they were there. They appointed Levites, from twenty years and older, to have oversight of the work.

When the foundation was laid the priests with trumpets, and the Levites of the sons of Asaph with cymbals, praised Jehovah according to the order that David had arranged. The book says, "**And they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks to Jehovah, saying, For he is good, for his loving kindness is forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised Jehovah, because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers, the old men who had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, and many shouted aloud for joy. So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the**

weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off” (Ezra 3:11-13).

When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard they were building the temple to Jehovah, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers, and offered to build with them. They claimed they also had sacrificed to God from the time the Assyrian king brought them there. However, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers of Israel said they had nothing to do with them. They would build it themselves as king Cyrus had commanded. Then the people of the land weakened and troubled them in building. They also hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose. Moreover, at the beginning of the reign of Ahasuerus king of Persia they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

Also during the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia they wrote a letter against Jerusalem. The book then gives a copy of the letter. Among other things it said the Jews were “**building the rebellious and the evil city, and have finished the walls, and repaired the foundations**” (Ezra 4:12). They warned the king that if the city were built, and the walls finished, they would not pay tribute to the king. They said it was in their interest to see that the king was not dishonored. The letter then tells the king to search the records to see that the city was destroyed because it was so rebellious.

The king responded, saying that the records showed the city had been rebellious. And there were also mighty kings over Jerusalem who had received tribute. Therefore, he decreed they cease until further notice. He said, “**Why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?**” (Ezra 4:22). When the enemies of the Jews read the letter, they went quickly to Jerusalem and forced them to cease. Hence, the work of the house of God ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

The book says the prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem. It also says Zerubbabel and Jeshua began again to build the house of God, helped by the prophets of God. So the governor came and asked who gave them a decree to build the house and finish the wall. They gave them an answer, and the book says, “**But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, and they did not make them cease till the matter should come to Darius, and then answer should be returned by letter concerning it**” (Ezra 5:5).

Therefore, the governor sent a letter about the matter to Darius, which included the answer he had been given from the Jews. They said they were servants of the God of heaven and earth, and were rebuilding the house that a great king of Israel had built. They said their fathers had provoked the God of heaven to destroy the house and carry the people away to Babylon. They said, however, that Cyrus made a decree to build the house of God. They said Cyrus also returned all the gold and silver vessels of the temple that Nebuchadnezzar had taken. And he commanded the governor there to build the temple in Jerusalem and put the vessels in it. Then they asked the king to search the records to confirm that decree.

Darius made a search, and they found a record of the decree, which also gave the dimensions of the house. It confirmed the command to restore it, and put the gold and silver vessels in it. It also said the expenses were to come from the king’s house. Therefore, Darius commanded the governor, saying, “**Let the work of this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in its place**” (Ezra 6:7). He also commanded provisions be provided for them to make burnt offerings. And he said the decree should be done with diligence.

The governor did as the king commanded. Therefore, the book says, “**And the elders of the Jews built and prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia**” (Ezra 6:14).

Finally the house was finished and was dedicated with joy. The book gives the number of animals offered, which was far less than those offered at the dedication of the first temple: 712 versus 142,000. The book says they also kept the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread with joy.

Next the record lists the genealogy of Ezra the priest back to Aaron, and says he went up from Babylon after those things. He came during the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes of Persia. The book says Ezra was a skilled scholar in the law of Moses. It also says that some of the sons of Israel, and of the priests, Levites, singers, porters, and the Nethinim came to Jerusalem at the same time Ezra did. Ezra took four months to arrive. The book says, “... he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had set his

heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances” (Ezra 7:9-10).

Before he left for Jerusalem, however, the book tells how he worked with the people who went with him. It tells about the letter that king Artaxerxes gave to Ezra. The letter said the king had decreed that all of the people of Israel who were willing to go to Jerusalem should go with him. It said that Ezra had been sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire about Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of his God which was in his hand. By that it meant to investigate that the law of Moses was being obeyed there. It also said that Ezra was to carry the silver and gold which they had offered to the God of Israel, as well as the silver and gold offered willingly in the province of Babylon for the house of God. The letter said the money should be used to buy what was needed for the offerings on the altar there, as well as whatever else seemed good to him and his brothers. It also commanded the king’s treasure-house there to pay for whatever else was needed for the house of his God. In the letter Artaxerxes the king told his treasurers there to give Ezra silver, wheat, wine, and oil, up to a certain amount, plus any amount of salt.

The letter concluded, “**Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done exactly for the house of the God of heaven; for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons? Also we certify to you, that concerning any of the priests and Levites, the singers, porters, Nethinim, or servants of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll, upon them. And thou, Ezra, according to the wisdom of thy God, that is in thy hand, appoint magistrates and judges, who may judge all the people who are beyond the River, all such as know the laws of thy God, and teach ye him who does not know them. And whoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed upon him with all diligence, whether it be to death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment”** (Ezra 7:23-26).

For the next two pages (in a typical modern Bible) the text describes in the first person what Ezra did. For example, after praising Jehovah for all his help with the king and his ruler, Ezra said “**And I was strengthened according to the hand of Jehovah my God upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with**

me” (Ezra 7:28). And it continues to read that way until just before the last page in the book.

After that Ezra gave a listing (similar to the one at the beginning of this book), which names the sons of certain men, and how many males there were with each of them. The sum was 1754. He gathered them to Ahava, a river in Babylon, and camped there three days. After viewing the people and the priests, he found none of the sons of Levi. Therefore, Ezra named nine chief men and two teachers, and sent them to Iddo. Iddo was the chief of a place along Ahava where Levites were. He told those men to ask Iddo to send ministers for the house of God. So Iddo sent thirty-eight Levites and a hundred twenty Nethinim.

Next Ezra said, “**Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken to the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all those who seek him, for good, but his power and his wrath is against all those who forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this, and he was entreated by us**” (Ezra 8:21-23).

Then Ezra chose twelve of the chiefs of the priests, and he named two of them. Ezra said he weighed out to them the silver, gold, and vessels of the offering made for the house of God. He also said he numbered how many of those things there were. Then he told the men to guard those things until they were given over to the chiefs of the priests, Levites, and rulers of the father’s of Israel, in Jerusalem.

After that he said they departed from the river to go to Jerusalem. After arriving they weighed out the silver, gold, and vessels to the priests. Ezra named three of the priests and one Levite. He said they also offered 197 animals for burnt offerings to Jehovah. They delivered the king’s commissions to his satraps and governors there. And Ezra said they advanced the people and the house of God.

Next Ezra said, “**Now when these things were done, the rulers drew near to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the**

Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the peoples of the lands. Yea, the hand of the heads and rulers has been chief in this trespass” (Ezra 9:1-2).

Ezra said when he heard that, he tore his garment, plucked off hair from his head and beard, and sat down confounded. He said then all who trembled at the words of God assembled with him. He said he sat that way until the evening oblation. After which he arose, fell upon his knees, spread out his hands to Jehovah, and prayed.

Among the words of his prayer Ezra said he was ashamed to lift up his face to God, because their iniquities had increased over their head, and grown to the heavens. He spoke of how their guilt had caused them to be delivered into captivity and destruction. He spoke of how Jehovah had for the moment given them grace to return from their bondage to set up the house of God, and give them a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. Then he said, “**And now, O our God, what shall we say after this?**” (Ezra 9:10). He told how they had forsaken his commandments not to intermarry with the unclean peoples of the land who had filled it throughout with filthiness. He spoke of how God had punished them because of their evil deeds, yet he had given them a remnant. And he wondered if they again disobeyed Jehovah would he consume them so there would not even be a remnant. He ended his prayer saying Jehovah was righteous but they were guilty. This is where the first person wording ends.

While Ezra prayed, “**weeping and casting himself down before the house of God**” (Ezra 10:1), a very great assembly of men, women, and children

gathered with him, weeping also. Then one of the men spoke to Ezra. He confessed they had married foreign women, but said there was yet hope about the matter. He suggested making a covenant with God to put away all those wives and their children, and that it be done according to the law. He told Ezra, “**Arise, for the matter belongs to thee, and we are with thee. Be of good courage, and do it**” (Ezra 10:4).

The book says that Ezra arose and made the chiefs of the priests, Levites, and all Israel swear to do so, and they did. Then a proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem that all the sons of the captivity should gather to Jerusalem. And whoever did not come within three days would lose all his substance, and be separated from the assembly of the captivity. So all the men of Judah and Benjamin came, and sat in the broad place before the house of God, trembling because of the matter and the great rain at that time. Then Ezra the priest stood up and spoke of their guilt with the foreign women. He told them to confess to Jehovah and separate themselves from them. However, because of the circumstances, all the assembly requested time for the matter to be properly conducted with the elders and judges in their cities. The record says that only four men were against it. Therefore, the sons of the captivity did so. It took about three months to finish.

The book ends with a list of a hundred thirteen names of the men who were found with foreign wives. They included sons of priests, Levites, singers, and porters, as well as ordinary sons of Israel. After the names, it says, “**All these had taken foreign wives, and some of them had wives by whom they had sons**” (Ezra 10:44).

A Description of **Nehemiah**

Most of this book is written in the first person by Nehemiah. He was made governor of Judah for a while during the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia. Nehemiah said he was in the palace of the king, and some men of Judah came to him. When he inquired of them about the condition of the exiles who had returned there, he was told they were in great affliction and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem was in rubble. Upon hearing that, the book says he sat down and wept, and mourned certain days. He also fasted and prayed to God about the situation. Among his words he praised God for his loving kindness, and he asked God to hear his prayer about the sons of Israel. He confessed they had sinned. He reminded God of the words of Moses, which warned if they trespassed they would be scattered, but if they returned to him and were obedient he would bring them back. Nehemiah then asked God to give him mercy in the sight of "this man," meaning the king, for he was his cupbearer.

When Nehemiah brought wine to the king, the king asked him why his heart was sorrowful. Nehemiah said he became very afraid, and he told him of the ruined condition of the city of his forefathers. When the king asked for his request, Nehemiah prayed to God (no doubt silently), and then he asked the king to send him to Judah to build the city. And the king approved his request. Nehemiah also asked for letters to give to the governors beyond the River (Euphrates) for passage and for timber. Nehemiah said, "**And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me**" (Neh. 2:8).

Nehemiah then said he came to those governors and gave them the king's letters. The king had also sent with him captains of the army and horsemen. However, adversaries were there as well, for Nehemiah said, "**And when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there came a man to seek the welfare of the sons of Israel**" (Neh. 2:10).

Nehemiah said he had not told any man what his God had put into his heart to do there. He said he was there three days, then he and a few men with him arose in the night secretly, and examined the broken down walls and the burnt gates. He said none of the others knew where he had gone or what he had done. After that he spoke to them about the bad condition of the city, and he encouraged them to

rise up and build. He said, "**So they strengthened their hands for the good work**" (Neh. 2:18). Nehemiah said that when Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed them to scorn and despised them. But Nehemiah said to them, "**The God of heaven, he will prosper us. Therefore we his servants will arise and build, but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem**" (Neh. 2:20).

After that Nehemiah named the men who repaired the different parts. That information begins as follows: "**Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests, and they built the sheep gate. They sanctified it, and set up the doors of it, even to the tower of Hammehah they sanctified it, to the tower of Hananel. And next to him the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built. And the sons of Hassenaah built the fish gate. They laid the beams of it, and set up the doors of it, the bolts of it, and the bars of it. And next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz repaired. And next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel repaired. And next to them Zadok the son of Baana repaired ...**" (Neh. 3:1-4).

Nehemiah gave the names of many individual men who did the work, but clearly not all of them. In some cases he simply said that the men from a certain place built or repaired this or that. The listing ends with these words: "**After him Malchijah one of the goldsmiths to the house of the Nethinim, and of the merchants, repaired opposite the gate of Hammiphkad, and to the ascent of the corner. And between the ascent of the corner and the sheep gate the goldsmiths and the merchants repaired**" (Neh. 3:31-32).

Nehemiah then said that Sanballat was angry because they were building the wall. Sanballat said to his brothers and the army of Samaria, "**What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, seeing they are burnt?**" (Neh. 4:2). Tobiah joined in mocking them. He said if a fox went up on the wall it would fall down.

In response, Nehemiah prayed, saying "**O our God, for we are despised, and so turn back their reproach upon their own head, and give them up**

for a spoil in a land of captivity, and do not cover their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee, for they have provoked *thee* to anger before the builders” (Neh. 4:4-5).

Nehemiah said they joined the wall to half its height, because the people had a mind to work. However, when Sanballat, Tobiah, and others heard of their progress, they were very angry. And they conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and cause confusion there. In response, Nehemiah said they prayed to God, and set a watch day and night. However, he said the strength of the workers became too weak. Perhaps because too many of them had to work by day and watch by night.

Their enemies thought they could come by stealth and kill them, but the Jews who dwelt by them came, and often warned the people about it. Therefore, Nehemiah said he set people in certain places armed with weapons, and he encouraged them to fight for their people. So the men returned to the work on the wall. Nehemiah also said the laborers kept their weapons with them while they worked, and the man who sounded the trumpet for alarm was by him. He also told them to lodge in the city as guards for the people, apparently like a military force in a garrison, since most of the people were living outside Jerusalem. Nehemiah also said that neither he, nor his servants, nor the guards who followed him, put off their clothes. They remained in constant readiness.

Then Nehemiah tells of another crisis: an economic one among the people. Some told him they had to return to their fields for sustenance. Others said they had to mortgage their property. Still others said they had to contract out their sons and daughters, bringing them into bondage, because other men had their fields and vineyards. Nehemiah said he was very angry when he heard their cry. Therefore, he contended with the ranking men and the rulers, saying, “**Ye exact usury, everyone of his brother**” (Neh. 5:7). Nehemiah held a great assembly against them, and rebuked them for putting their brothers in bondage. He said they did not answer him a word. Nehemiah also told them, “**Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their fields, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the grain, the new wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them**” (Neh. 5:11). They agreed, took an oath to it, and then did as they promised.

Nehemiah said that during the twelve years he had been appointed their governor in Judah he and his brothers never ate the bread of the governor, meaning he never took his sustenance from the people. He said the former governors had, but he had not, because of the fear of God. He also said he and those with him did not buy any land, but put themselves to the work. He also said he fed 250 men of the Jews and the rulers, besides visitors. Then he told how much it took each day to feed them all. He said he did not demand the bread of the governor because of the heavy bondage on the people. Then Nehemiah said, “**Remember to me, O my God, for good, all that I have done for this people**” (Neh. 5:19). He was a true leader in the spirit of Christ.

When the enemies of the Jews learned that the wall had been built (although not yet with doors for the gates) Sanballat and Geshem sent word telling Nehemiah to meet with them in a village outside Jerusalem. However, they sought mischief. Therefore, Nehemiah sent a messenger saying he was doing a great work, and saw no reason to come to them. Nehemiah said they sent to him four times that way, and he responded the same each time. The fifth time Sanballat sent a letter saying it was reported to him that Nehemiah and the Jews planned to rebel, and that Nehemiah would be their king, therefore he should meet with him. Nehemiah sent word back saying it was all his imagination.

Nehemiah next tells of going to the house of a certain man who said they should both stay in the temple with the doors shut for protection, otherwise Nehemiah would be killed in the night. Nehemiah told him, “**Should such a man as I flee? And who is there, that, being such as I, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in**” (Neh. 6:11). Then Nehemiah said he discerned that God had not sent the man, but that he had been hired by Tobiah and Sanballat to pronounce the prophecy against him. He said they wanted to frighten him into sinning so they could reproach him. Then Nehemiah said, “**Remember, O my God, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and also the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, who would have put me in fear**” (Neh. 6:14).

Then Nehemiah said the wall was finished in fifty-two days. He said that caused much dismay among their enemies, who perceived the work was wrought of God. However, Nehemiah said that the ranking men of Judah corresponded with Tobiah.

He said many in Judah were sworn to him because of some intermarriages, and they spoke well of him.

After the wall was built, the doors were set, and the porters, singers, and Levites were appointed, Nehemiah said he gave his brother and another man charge over Jerusalem. He told them not to open the gates until the sun was hot, and to have guards standing by when they were shut. He also told them to appoint watchmen in the city. He said the city was widespread, but there were few people in it and houses were not built.

Then Nehemiah said God put into his heart to gather the ranking men, the rulers, and the people to be reckoned by genealogy. He said he found the book of the genealogy of those who first came back from the captivity. Then in this book he gave a list very similar to the one in the first part of the book of Ezra, but not exactly the same. Some of the names are different, and some of the numbers are different, but this is not the place to comment on all of that.

As in the book of Ezra, Nehemiah first named a few of the men who returned. He named the same eleven men as in Ezra (a few had names spelled somewhat differently), but he included one more. Then, as in the book of Ezra, Nehemiah named some of the sons who went, and gave their number. Remember, these are ancestral numbers. Here is a small sample of his listing, which is the same as in the book of Ezra: **“The sons of Parosh, two thousand a hundred seventy-two. The sons of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy-two. The sons of Arah, seven hundred seventy-five ...”** (Neh. 7:8-10).

In Nehemiah’s list there are eighty-one that begin **“The sons of”** and names certain men. There are eight that begin **“The men of”** and names certain places. It also gives the number of certain sons of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the porters, the Nethinim, and the sons of Solomon’s servants. At the end of that list the book begins to speak in the second and third person for part of it.

The book says there were 642 of the (ancestral) sons of three named men who could not verify they were of Israel. It also says of the sons of the priests, there were the sons of three named men, who sought registration, but their genealogy could not be found. It says, **“Therefore were they deemed polluted and put away from the priesthood”** (Neh. 7:64). The book says the whole assembly together was 42,360, besides 7,337 of their servants. It also says they had 245 men and women singers. The sum in the preceding listing is 31,089, hence (as in Ezra)

not all were mentioned. They also had 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys. The book also states how much gold and silver they were given, as well as the number of priest’s garments.

The sons of Israel were in their other cities. However, in the seventh month they all gathered together in a broad place in Jerusalem, and asked Ezra the priest to bring the book of the law of Moses. The book says, **“And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all who could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month”** (Neh. 8:2). It says he read from early morning until midday, and all the people were attentive. He stood on a wooden pulpit.

Then the book names thirteen men, the six who were at his right, and the seven at his left. When Ezra opened the book of the law, all the people stood. He then blessed Jehovah, and all the people answered, “Truly, Truly,” raising their hands. They also bowed their heads to the ground and worshiped Jehovah. The book then names another thirteen men (one name is the same), saying they and the Levites caused the people to understand the law. It says, **“And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading”** (Neh. 8:8). Since the sons of Israel had been exiled for so long, the majority may not have understood the Hebrew language very well. Then the record says, **“And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites who taught the people, said to all the people, This day is holy to Jehovah your God; do not mourn nor weep. For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law”** (Neh. 8:9). The people were told to feast joyfully and not be grieved. So they did.

On the second day the heads of fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, came to Ezra to study the words of the law, and they found the command to dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month (the feast of tabernacles). Hence, the people made booths in various places for themselves, and they did so with great gladness. The book says, **“Also day by day, from the first day to the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly according to the ordinance”** (Neh. 8:18).

On the twenty-fourth day of the month the sons of Israel assembled with fasting, sackcloth, and

earth upon them. They separated themselves from all foreigners, and they confessed their sins and those of their fathers. The book of the law was read a fourth part of the day, and another fourth part they confessed and worshiped Jehovah their God. Then it names eight men who stood up on “the stairs of the Levites,” and cried with a loud voice to Jehovah. Next it names eight of the Levites (including five of the first eight men) who told the people to stand up and bless Jehovah their God from everlasting to everlasting.

After that the book records a rather lengthy prayer that was uttered (about a page and a half in a typical modern Bible). Among other things, the prayer told how Jehovah made everything. It told how he chose Abram, changed his name, and made a covenant to give him the land. It said Jehovah had performed his words because he is righteous. It told how Jehovah saw the affliction of their fathers in Egypt, and showed them signs and wonders. It told how he guided them by a pillar of cloud and fire. It told how he gave them **“right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments”** (Neh. 9:13) by Moses.

The prayer then told how their fathers were stiff-necked and disobedient. It told of the molten calf they made, yet Jehovah did not forsake them, but he fed them with manna, and gave them water to drink. It said that God dispossessed other peoples to give them the good land. The prayer said, **“So they ate, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness”** (Neh. 9:25). Then it told how they rebelled, and rejected his law, and killed his prophets who testified against them. It said in time of trouble they would cry out to God, and many times he delivered them because of his mercy. It said after many years Jehovah delivered them into the hand of the peoples of the lands, yet not so as to make a full end of them. Next the prayer asked God to notice all the travail that had come upon them, although they deserved it because of their wickedness.

The prayer ends, **“Behold, we are servants this day, and as for the land that thou gave to our fathers to eat the fruit of it and the good of it, behold, we are servants in it. And it yields much increase to the kings whom thou have set over us because of our sins. Also they have power over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress. And yet for all this we make a sure covenant, and write it, and our**

rulers, our Levites, and our priests, seal to it” (Neh. 9:36-38).

Then the book names eighty-four men who sealed the covenant. It begins with Nehemiah the governor, and it includes priests, Levites, and the chiefs of the people. It also says that the rest of the people entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s law and obey his commandments. Among other things, they said they would not intermarry with the peoples of the land. They also mentioned a few other things they would do and not do to keep the law of Moses. The book says they also made ordinances to tax themselves for the support of the service of the house of God. They said they would bring the first-fruits and give the tithes. They said they would not forsake the house of their God. The record later shows how quickly most of them forsook that covenant, just as their forefathers had done to all the other covenants.

Next the book says the rulers of the people dwelt in Jerusalem, but it did not have enough inhabitants. Therefore, the rest of the people cast lots to bring in one of ten to dwell in the holy city. And they blessed all the men who offered willingly to live in it. Then the book says, **“Now these are the chiefs of the province who dwelt in Jerusalem. But in the cities of Judah everyone dwells in his possession in their cities, namely, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinim, and the sons of Solomon’s servants”** (Neh. 11:3).

It says certain sons of Judah and Benjamin dwelt in Jerusalem, and then proceeds to describe its inhabitants. Of the sons of Judah it names one descendent of Perez the son of Judah, and one other man whom it says was a descendent of the Shilohite. It says all the sons of Perez who dwelt in Jerusalem were 468 valiant men. Then it names three sons of Benjamin, saying there were 928. After that it names the first and second of their overseers in the city.

Next the book describes the priests. It names three men, and says they and their brothers, who did the work of the house of Jehovah, were 822 (they rotated their service). The book names another man, and says he and his brothers, “chiefs of fathers,” were 242. It names two other men (one of which was overseer), and says they and their brothers were 128 “mighty men of valor.”

Next the book describes the Levites. It names three men **“of the chiefs of the Levites who had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God”** (Neh. 11:16). And it names three

other men, saying one of them was “**the chief to begin the thanksgiving in prayer**” (Neh. 11:17). All the Levites in the holy city were 184.

Finally the book names two porters, saying they and their brothers, who guarded the gates, were 172. Then it says the rest of Israel, including the priests and Levites, were in all the cities of Judah. Next, however, it names the overseer of the Levites at Jerusalem, of the sons of Asaph the singers, saying they had a commandment from the king, and a fixed provision for the singers which was provided daily as needed.

After that the book names towns and villages where some of the sons of Judah dwelt. It also named places where the sons of Benjamin dwelt. Next it says, “**Now these are the priests and the Levites who went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: ...**” (Neh. 12:1). Then it names twenty-two men, and says they were “**the chiefs of the priests and of their brothers in the days of Jeshua**” (Neh. 12:7). It also names several Levites.

Next the book mentions the priests, “heads of fathers,” who were in the days of Joiakim son of Jeshua. The list consists of the names of twenty men, each man paired with the son who succeeded him. It also names some chiefs of the Levites, and some porters who guarded the store-houses of the gates, during the time of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, Nehemiah the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe.

After that the book tells about the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem. It says the Levites were summoned to come to Jerusalem “**to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps**” (Neh. 12:27). And so the sons of the singers gathered themselves together. The book also says the priests and the Levites purified themselves, the people, the gates, and the wall.

Next Nehemiah described the dedication ceremony. He said he brought the rulers of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies that gave thanks and went in procession. The wall encompassed the city. One company went on the wall to the right, and the other went to the left. He said half the rulers of Judah went behind them. And he named several men, including some priests’ sons with trumpets and musical instruments of David. Nehemiah described the route they took, mentioning things like gates and towers, and he said Ezra the scribe was ahead of them.

He said the other company of those who gave thanks went around the other way to meet the first company. Nehemiah said he followed them with half of the people upon the wall, and he described their route. They marched around in a musical parade of thanksgiving to God. The two groups circled the wall in opposite directions, and met together on the other side.

Then Nehemiah said, “**And they stood still in the gate of the guard. So stood the two companies of those who gave thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me, and the priests [seven men are named] with trumpets, and [eight more men are named]. And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer. And they offered great sacrifices that day, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy. And the women also and the children rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off**” (Neh. 12:39-43).

Then Nehemiah said that on that day men were appointed to manage the chambers of the treasures for the heave offerings, the first-fruits, and the tithes for the priests and the Levites. So distribution was arranged for the priests and Levites, and they all did their work.

He said they also read in the book of Moses to the people where it forbade an Ammonite and a Moabite from entering into the assembly of God, because of how they had treated Israel after they came out of Egypt. Therefore, they separated from Israel the mixed multitude. Acceptance into the assembly of God probably meant full citizenship.

Before that, however, Nehemiah discovered that Eliashib the priest had prepared a great chamber in the house of God for Tobiah, having been allied with him. The place was where they had stored the tithes which were given for those who ministered in the temple. Nehemiah said that he was not in Jerusalem at that time, for he had returned to Artaxerxes king of Babylon. However, he asked leave to return to Jerusalem, and then discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah by preparing a chamber for him in the house of God. Nehemiah said he was greatly grieved, and he cast out all of the household stuff of Tobiah. Then he commanded the chambers be cleaned, and the vessels of the house of God be returned with the meal offerings and the frankincense.

He also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them, so they and the singers fled each one to his field. Nehemiah said he

contended with the rulers, wanting to know why the house of God was forsaken. Then he said all Judah brought the tithe to the treasuries. Nehemiah said he also made treasurers over the treasuries, and he named the four men whom he chose. He said, “**For they were counted faithful, and their business was to distribute to their brothers. Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the observances of it**” (Neh. 13:14).

After that he said he saw some merchantmen working on the sabbath, and bringing their wares into Jerusalem to sell on the sabbath day. Therefore, he contended again with the ranking men of Judah. And he commanded the gates of Jerusalem be closed throughout the sabbath day. He also set some of his own servants over the gates to prevent cargo from entering. When the merchants lodged outside the walls, Nehemiah said he threatened them, and therefore they came no more on the sabbath. Nehemiah also said, “**I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember to me, O my God, this**

also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy loving kindness” (Neh. 13:22).

Nehemiah also discovered Jews who had married Philistine, Ammonite, and Moabite women. He said their sons could not speak in the Jew’s language. He said, “**I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons, or for yourselves**” (Neh. 13:25).

He used Solomon as an example to them of the corrupting effect of pagan wives. He said that even a grandson of Eliashib the high priest was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite (a blatant violation of Moses law). Nehemiah said, “**Therefore I chased him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites. Thus I cleansed them from all foreigners, and appointed charges for the priests and for the Levites, each one in his work, and for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the first-fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good**” (Neh. 13:28-31).

A Description of Esther

The book begins by saying that Ahasuerus was king of Persia and Media, which was an empire of 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. And in the third year of his reign he made a feast to all his rulers and servants in Shushan the palace. He showed them all the glory of his kingdom for 180 days, after which he made a seven-day feast for all in the palace, both great and small. The book also describes some of the luxurious furnishings there. They were given wine to drink from golden vessels, but no more than they wanted, which was by command of the king.

Vashti was the queen, and she also made a feast for the women in the royal house. On the seventh day, the book says, “... when the heart of the king was merry with wine” (Est. 1:10), he commanded seven chamberlains “**to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the royal crown to show the peoples and the rulers her beauty, for she was fair to look on**” (Est. 1:11). However, she refused to come, which angered the king. Nowhere in the book is the king condemned and Vashti exonerated.

Yet every commentary I know about does so. They claim the king was drunk, and wanted her to be seen naked. However, the record says none of that. Beware of unsupported commentary.

The book then names the seven rulers of Persia and Media who were next to the king. When he asked the wise men what they should do with queen Vashti according to law, one of the rulers answered him, “**Vashti the queen has not done wrong only to the king, but also to all the rulers, and to all the peoples that are in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen will come abroad to all women, to make their husbands contemptible in their eyes when it shall be reported, King Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she did not come. And this day the ladies of Persia and Media who have heard of the deed of the queen will say the like to all the king’s rulers. So there will arise much contempt and wrath.**

“If it please the king, let there go forth a royal commandment from him, and let it be written

among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal estate to another who is better than she. And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his kingdom (for it is great), all the wives will give to their husbands honor, both to great and small" (Est. 1:16-20).

The saying pleased the king and the rulers, and so he sent the appropriate letters to every province **"that every man should bear rule in his own house, and should speak according to the language of his people"** (Est. 1:22). After that the king's servants recommended he appoint officers to seek fair young virgins to bring to the palace to be purified so that he could choose a new queen. He liked the idea and so he did.

Next the book tells about Mordecai, a Jew who was the great-grandson of a man who had been taken captive from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. He had adopted and brought up Hadassah (another name for Esther), who was his uncle's daughter, because she was orphaned. The book says she was a fair and beautiful maiden. Therefore, she was taken into the king's house to the custody of a man who was the keeper of women. It says, **"And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness from him"** (Est. 2:9). However, Esther had not revealed her race, because Mordecai ordered her not to. The book says that Mordecai checked daily at the court of the women's house to see how she was.

The law required every maiden to spend twelve months of purification. When the maiden was to come to the king, she was given whatever she wanted to take with her. She went to the king's house in the evening, and returned the next day to the second house of the women, to the custody of another man who kept the concubines. She came no more unless personally summoned by the king. That no physical intimacy was involved in their meeting with the king is apparent, because after the final selection the other maidens were still called virgins (see Est. 2:19).

When it was the turn of Esther, she requested nothing except what the keeper of the women appointed. The book says that Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her. Then it says, **"And the king loved Esther above all the women. And she obtained favor and kindness in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown**

upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti" (Est. 2:17). Afterward he made a great feast of celebration.

Next the book says that Mordecai was sitting in the king's gate. That may mean he had been appointed among the judges, because court cases were commonly held at gates. While there he learned of a conspiracy by two of the king's chamberlains to attack the king. He reported it to Esther, who then told it to the king. After an inquiry confirmed it, both men were hanged, and a record of it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

Later king Ahasuerus promoted a man named Haman, and set him above all the rulers that were with him. The book says, **"And all the king's servants, who were in the king's gate, bowed down, and did reverence to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down, nor did he reverence"** (Est. 3:2). The king's servants asked Mordecai why he transgressed the king's commandment, but there is no record of a response. Perhaps Mordecai knew Haman was an evil man, but for some reason could not make it public. Nevertheless, Haman was full of wrath about Mordecai's refusal. Haman learned that Mordecai was a Jew, so instead of attacking him, Haman decided to destroy all the Jews in the empire, which was proof enough how evil the man was. Perhaps Mordecai knew something about Haman that made Haman reluctant to attack Mordecai personally.

The book says, **"... they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, which is the month Adar"** (Est. 3:7), which means he chose by lot the month Adar to exterminate the Jews. Then Haman went to king Ahasuerus and slandered them, but not by name; he called them "a certain people." And he persuaded the king to have them destroyed, even promising to add ten thousand talents of silver to his treasury. The king trusted Haman enough to give him his ring which had his official seal.

Haman then used it to issue a decree **"to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little sons and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey"** (Est. 3:13). Letters announcing the decree were sent out in all the king's provinces. Then the book says, **"And the king and**

Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed” (Est. 3:15).

When Mordecai learned of it, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth with ashes, and went about the city crying with a loud and bitter cry. And in every province there was great mourning and fasting among the Jews. When Esther heard what Mordecai was doing, she sent the king’s chamberlain, who had been appointed to attend upon her, to Mordecai. Mordecai gave him a copy of the decree to show to Esther, and ordered her to go and make supplication to the king for her people. Esther sent back a message telling him about the penalty of death for anyone who comes to the king in the inner court uninvited, unless the king holds out the golden scepter.

Mordecai sent back, warning her that she would not escape. And he said, “**For if thou altogether keep quiet at this time, then relief and deliverance will arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father’s house will perish. And who knows whether thou have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”** (Est. 4:14).

Esther sent back to Mordecai telling him to gather together all the Jews in Shushan to fast three days, neither eating nor drinking. She said she and her maidens would fast in like manner. Then she would risk her life by going to the king uninvited. And Mordecai did as she had commanded him.

On the third day Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king’s house. When the king saw her, he held out the golden scepter. She came near and touched the top of the scepter. Then he asked her request. He said he would give to the half of the kingdom. She requested he and Haman come to the banquet she prepared for him. So they came. The king again asked her petition. Esther asked for him and Haman to come to her banquet tomorrow, and she would tell him then.

Haman went forth that day joyfully, but when he saw the unresponsiveness of Mordecai, he was filled with wrath against him. When he went home he sent for his friends and his wife, and he boasted of his wealth, glory, and power. He also told of his invitation with the king to the queen’s banquet. He said none of it meant anything as long as he saw Mordecai the Jew at the king’s gate. So his wife and all his friends told him to build a gallows fifty cubits high, and ask the king to hang Mordecai on it. Then he could go merrily to the banquet. Therefore, he caused the gallows be made.

That night the king could not sleep, perhaps because he sensed Esther was troubled. So he commanded the book of records be brought and read to him. When he heard about the conspiracy against him, he asked what honor and dignity had been bestowed on Mordecai for what he had done. The king’s servants said nothing had been done. Then he asked who was in the court. Haman was on his way to ask the king to hang Mordecai, so he called for him. The king asked him what should be done to the man whom he delighted to honor. Haman thought that meant him, so he suggested dressing the man in kingly apparel, having him led through the city on the king’s horse, and proclaiming before him, “**Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor**” (Est. 6:9). Therefore, the king commanded Haman to do that with Mordecai. Afterward Haman rushed home with his head covered, and told everything to his wife and friends. They warned he was about to fall before Mordecai. While they were speaking, the king’s chamberlains came to take him to Esther’s banquet.

When the king asked Esther of her petition, she said, “**O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish**” (Est. 7:3-4). She said if they were only sold into bond service she would have kept silent. Then the king wanted to know who presumed to do so. Esther said it was an enemy, “this wicked Haman.” The king was angry, and stepped out into the garden, perhaps to settle his thoughts. For until then he had great confidence in Haman. When he returned he was told of the gallows Haman made for Mordecai, so the king ordered him hanged upon it. Then his wrath was pacified. He also gave the house of Haman (meaning all his wealth) to Esther. When Esther told the king of her relation to Mordecai, he took the ring he had given to Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. Esther also set him over the house of Haman.

Esther then fell at the feet of the king, and besought him to put away Haman’s evil device against the Jews. Remember, their laws could not be altered (see Est. 1:19). She asked him to write letters reversing what Haman wrote. Therefore, the king’s scribes were called, and it was written into law and distributed the same way, that the Jews were granted in every city “**to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province who would assault them, their little ones**

and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey” (Est. 8:11). It was for one day in the month of Adar.

The book says that Mordecai went forth from the king in royal apparel and a great crown of gold. It also says the city of Shushan was glad, and the Jews were joyful. In every city where the king’s decree came they had gladness. And the fear of the Jews fell upon the peoples of the land.

On the thirteenth day in the month Adar, the appointed day, the Jews gathered themselves together to combat those who sought their harm. Indeed, the book says all the rulers of the provinces helped the Jews because of the fear of Mordecai, who had become great in the king’s house. Then the book says, **“And the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and with slaughter and destruction, and did what they would to those who hated them”** (Est. 9:5). It says they killed five hundred men in Shushan. It also says they killed the ten sons of Haman, and it gives their names. And it says, **“... but they did not lay their hand on the spoil”** (Est. 9:10).

The king told Esther what had been done, and he asked her what she wanted done further. She asked that the next day, the fourteenth, be according to the same decree. She also asked for Haman’s sons to be hanged upon the gallows, which may have meant their dead bodies. Therefore, the king commanded it be done. The book says the Jews killed three hundred more men in Shushan, but again they did not lay their hand on the spoil.

The book says that on the thirteenth day in the other provinces they gathered together to defend

themselves, and they killed 75,000 of those who hated them, but they did not lay their hand on the spoil. On the fourteenth day of the month Adar, they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

Then Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in all the provinces enjoining them to keep the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month Adar as a yearly celebration. The book says, **“And the month which was turned to them from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning into a good day, that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor”** (Est. 9:22).

The days were called Purim, after the name Pur, which comes from the Persian word for lot, because that is how Haman chose that month. Therefore, the Jews ordained to keep those two days in remembrance throughout their generations. Both Esther the queen and Mordecai enjoined all the Jews to ordain those days.

The book says that the full account of the greatness of Mordecai was written in the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia. And it ends by describing how great Mordecai became: **“For Mordecai the Jew was next to king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brothers, seeking the good of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.”**

This is the only book of the Old Testament of which no part has been found among the Dead Sea scrolls. Also it is one of the two books of the Bible that do not mention God; the other one is Song of Solomon.

A Description of Job

The book begins, “**T**here was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright, and one who feared God, and turned away from evil. And there were born to him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-donkeys, and a very great household, so that this man was the greatest of all the sons of the east.” Job loved his children, and so he continually offered burnt offerings for them after each of their birthday celebrations, in case they had sinned.

Then the book says that on the day when the sons of God presented themselves before Jehovah, Satan came among them. When Jehovah asked Satan where he came from, Satan said “**F**rom going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it” (Job 1:7). Jehovah said to him, “**H**ave thou considered my servant Job? For there is none like him on the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one who fears God, and turns away from evil” (Job 1:8). Satan claimed it was because God was protecting and blessing him. He said if that were taken away, Job would renounce him to his face. Therefore, Jehovah put everything Job had in the power of Satan, all but Job himself. Then Satan left.

Afterward messengers began coming to Job with news of disaster. First bandits came and stole the oxen and the donkeys. Then the fire of God (probably lightning) killed all the sheep. Then other bandits stole all the camels. Finally, a great wind (probably a tornado) destroyed the house where his sons and daughters were, and killed them all. Each time Job’s servants were also killed, all except one from each place who escaped to tell Job. Then Job tore his robe, shaved his head, fell on the ground, and worshiped, saying, “**N**aked I came out of my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. **J**ehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away, blessed be the name of Jehovah” (Job 1:21). The book says that Job did not sin nor accuse God foolishly.

Again on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah, Satan also came among them to present himself. Jehovah asked where he came from, and Satan gave the same answer. Jehovah again asked if he considered how

righteous Job was. He also said, “**A**nd he still holds fast his integrity, although thou moved me against him, to destroy him without cause” (Job 2:3). Satan now said, “**S**kin for skin, yea, all that a man has he will give for his life” (Job 2:4). He claimed if Job’s body were afflicted, he would curse him to his face. Therefore, Jehovah put Job in the hand of Satan, only he had to spare his life.

Then Satan left and smote Job with severe boils from the bottom of his foot to the top of his head. The book says Job took a potsherd to scrape himself with, and he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, “**D**o thou still hold fast thine integrity? **R**enounce God, and die” (Job 2:9). Job told her she spoke as the foolish women speak. He said, “**W**hat? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10). The book says he did not sin with his lips. In the New Testament James said, “**I**f any man does not stumble in word, this is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body” (Jam. 3:2). Remember, God said that Job was a perfect and upright man. Job proved that God was true, and Satan was a liar.

Now a time came when Job’s three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—came to bemoan and comfort him. The book says that when they looked from a distance they did not recognize him, probably because of his terrible skin disease. So they wept, tore their robes, and sprinkled dust upon their heads. They sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights without saying a word, because his grief was very great.

Then Job spoke, and with many words he cursed the day of his birth. He wondered why he had been born. He said if he had died at birth then he would have been at rest. He wondered why life was given to the bitter in soul, who long for death. He said, “**I** am not at ease, nor am I quiet, neither have I rest, but trouble comes” (Job 3:26).

Then Eliphaz responded, “**I**f a man tries to converse with thee, will thou be grieved? But who can withhold himself from speaking?” (Job 4:2). He said Job had instructed many, and strengthened weak hands, but now it comes to him, and he faints and is troubled. He asked Job if his fear of God was not his confidence. He asked if anyone had ever perished who was innocent. He said those who sow trouble reap it. Then he said he heard a voice from a spirit in the visions of the night. The voice asked if

mortal man is more just and pure than God. It said God has no trust in men. They are mere dust, who continually die without wisdom, not regarded and unheeded.

Eliphaz spoke disparagingly of the foolish man and his troubles. He implied that such men deserve it, because he said, “**For affliction does not come forth from the dust, nor does trouble spring out of the ground, but man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward**” (Job 5:6-7). Eliphaz said, however, that he himself sought to God, and committed his cause to him. He also spoke of the greatness of God, saying he gives the rain, and raises up the lowly and mournful. He said God frustrates the devices of the crafty, and he saves the needy from the hand of the mighty.

He said to Job, “**Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects. Therefore do not despise thou the chastening of the Almighty**” (Job 5:17). He said God injures but makes whole. He told Job that God would deliver him from all trouble and evil, and he would live a life full of blessings. Eliphaz ended those words, saying, “**Lo this, we have searched it, so it is. Hear it, and know thou it for thy good**” (Job 5:27). In other words, he said Job needed to learn that if he lived right he would have a happy life.

Job answered, “**O that my grief were but weighed, and all my calamity laid in the balances! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the seas. Therefore my words have been rash. For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison of which my spirit drinks up. The terrors of God set themselves in array against me**” (Job 6:2-4). Cursing the day of his birth may have been what Job meant by his rash words. Job said he wanted God to take his life from him, because he had neither strength nor hope any more. Yet he said it was his consolation that he had not denied the words of the Holy One.

Job said a friend should show kindness to a man who was about to faint, even if he had forsaken the fear of the Almighty. Yet his brothers had dealt deceitfully, like brooks that vanish in the heat, disappointing those who hoped in them. Job said he made no demands from them. Job then asked his friends to cause him to understand how he had erred. He said, “**How forcible are words of uprightness! But your reproof, what does it reprove?**” (Job 6:25). He said they made light of the speeches of a man who was desperate. He accused them of callousness, saying they would cast

lots upon the fatherless, and make merchandise of their friend.

He asked them to return to him (as friends), and not do injustice. He said he would not lie to them, for his cause was righteous. He asked if life was not a warfare to man on earth, whose days were like those of a hireling who sought relief and looked for his wages. Job said, “**... so I am made to possess months of misery, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? And I am full of tossing to and fro to the dawning of the day. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust. My skin closes up, and breaks out afresh. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope**” (Job 7:3-6). Notice Job said he had been suffering for months. He said his life was a breath, and he would no more see good. Therefore, he said he would speak in the anguish of his spirit.

Then he appears to speak to God. Job said if he sought relief in sleep, then God terrified him with dreams, so that his soul chose death instead of his bones. Job said he loathed his life, and did not want to live always. He asked what was man that God should magnify him, visiting him every morning, and trying him every moment. Job ended those words, saying, “**If I have sinned, what do I do to thee, O thou watcher of men? Why have thou set me as a mark for thee, so that I am a burden to myself? And why do thou not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity? For now I shall lie down in the dust, and thou will seek me diligently, but I shall not be**” (Job 7:20-21).

Then Bildad responded and asked Job how long he was going to speak those things, like a mighty wind. He asked, “**Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert righteousness?**” (Job 8:3). He said if Job’s sons had been punished because they sinned, and if Job sought diligently for God, and he was pure and upright, then God would listen, and would make him happy and prosperous. He asked Job to inquire of what had been learned from the past. He said the hope of the profane man would perish. And he said, “**Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, nor will he uphold the evil-doers**” (Job 8:20).

Job answered and said, “**Of a truth I know that it is so. But how can man be just with God?**” (Job 9:2). He said that God was wise in heart and mighty in strength. And he asked who had ever hardened himself against God and prospered. He said God

shakes the earth, commands the sun, stretches out the heavens, and does great things beyond finding out. Job asked who could hinder God. Then he said, “**How much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him?**” (Job 9:14).

Job said if God had answered his call he would not believe he had hearkened to him, because he had multiplied his wounds without cause, filling him with bitterness. He said, “**Though I be righteous, my own mouth shall condemn me. Though I be perfect, it shall prove me perverse**” (Job 9:20). Job seems to have said that even though he was righteous, there was no way he could dispute with God successfully. It all seemed hopeless to Job; God seemed to have made no distinction between the good and the evil. He said, “**Though I were perfect, I do not regard myself. I despise my life. It is all one thing. Therefore I say, He destroys the perfect and the wicked.**” (Job 9:21-22). He said God had given over the earth to the wicked and blinded its judges. He said, “**If not he, who then is it?**” (Job 9:24).

Job said his days fled away and saw no good. He said if he tried to forget his complaint, he would still be condemned. He said if he washed himself clean, God would plunge him in the ditch. Job could not escape God. He said, “**For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, that we should come together in judgment. There is no umpire between us who might lay his hand upon us both**” (Job 9:32-33). Ah, but now Jesus is our mediator (see 1Ti. 2:5). Job said if God would not let his terror make him afraid, then he would speak and not be afraid of him.

Job said again that his soul was weary of his life, therefore he would give free reign to his complaint. He said, “**I will say to God, Do not condemn me. Show me why thou contend with me. Is it good to thee that thou should oppress, that thou should despise the work of thy hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked?**” (Job 10:2-3). He asked God if he saw as man sees, or had days as the days of man, that he searched for his sin. We can now say yes to that, because God lived and suffered as a man in the person of Jesus Christ. Job said to God, “... although thou know that I am not wicked. And there is none that can deliver out of thy hand?” (Job 10:7).

Job said he knew that God had created him, had granted him life and loving kindness, and had preserved his spirit. Yet he seemed to think his life was now hopeless. For he said, “**If I be wicked, woe to**

me. And if I be righteous, yet I shall not lift up my head, being filled with shame, and looking upon my affliction” (Job 10:15). So he asked God why he had been born. He asked God to let him alone so he could have a little comfort before he entered into the darkness of death.

Job and his three friends were totally unaware that Satan was the cause of his affliction. Therefore, they considered God to be completely responsible. That led his friends to think Job must have done things to deserve his suffering, and it led Job to question God’s justice. Those are two of the most important lessons of this book. It is unfair for men to think that because God is just, then individuals deserve all their suffering. And it is foolish for men to question the goodness and justice of God. It is wrong to do those things because we cannot know all that he knows. Nevertheless, we do have the light of God’s Bible to help us understand such things, but Job did not have it. Therefore, remember those things when you experience sorrow unjustly.

After Job spoke then Zophar asked if such words should not be answered. He said, “**And when thou mock, shall no man make thee ashamed?**” (Job 11:3). He said that Job claimed to be pure and clean, but Zophar wished that God would show him otherwise. He said to Job, “**Know therefore that God exacts of thee less than thine iniquity deserves**” (Job 11:6). He said that the ways of God are beyond our understanding. However, if Job set his heart aright, reached out to God, and put away iniquity, then his misery would pass, and he would rest secure. He said the wicked are the ones who fail.

Job answered and said, “**No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you**” (Job 12:2). He said he was not inferior to them in understanding. He defended himself, saying, “**I am as a man who is a laughing-stock to his neighbor. I who called upon God, and he answered. The just, the perfect man is a laughing-stock**” (Job 12:4). Job was not being arrogant when he said he was a perfect man (in the loose sense). Remember, God himself said in heaven that Job was perfect and upright.

Then Job spoke a profound truth that we should all remember. He said, “**In the thought of him who is at ease there is contempt for misfortune. It is ready for those whose foot slips**” (Job 12:5). Therefore, never belittle anyone else’s suffering.

He also disputed with his friends about sinners. He said robbers prosper, and those who provoke God get away with it. I personally saw a video of a

well-known psychologist blaspheming God before his students. Among other things he said something like, "God, if you exist, then kill me now." And I know he lived many prosperous years after that. Yet hell awaits such men in the future, unless they repent. God does things in his own time and way. Job asked them to inquire of the beasts, and they would teach them. Perhaps he was thinking of the predators who dominate in the wilds.

Job agreed that God has wisdom and might, and he controls whatever happens on the earth. He gives and he takes away. Job said, for example, "**He increases the nations, and he destroys them. He enlarges the nations, and he leads them captive**" (Job 12:23). Job said he had seen and understood all that. He said to his friends, what they knew, he also knew.

What Job wanted was to speak to the Almighty and reason with him. But he called his friends forgers of lies and physicians of no value. He wished they would be silent, which would be their wisdom. He asked them, "**Will ye speak unrighteously for God, and talk deceitfully for him? Will ye show partiality to him? Will ye contend for God?**" (Job 13:7-8). He said God would reprove them for their partiality. Job rebuked them further, telling them their memorable sayings were proverbs of ashes, and their defenses were defenses of clay. He said to them, "**Be quiet. Let me alone that I may speak, and let come on me what will**" (Job 13:13).

Job asked why he should put his life at risk. He seems to have said that if he challenged God he would kill him without hope. Nevertheless, Job said he would maintain his ways before him. Job said his salvation was that a profane man would not come before him. Perhaps he meant, since he was not profane, then he could present his case before God.

Then Job asked God to hear him, for he had set his case in order. Job said he knew that he was righteous. He said if anyone proved otherwise he would keep silent and give up the spirit. Job first asked God for two things: to withdraw his hand far from him (meaning take away his affliction), and not let him be afraid of him. Job said, "**Then call thou, and I will answer, or let me speak, and answer thou me**" (Job 13:22).

Job asked how many were his sins. He asked God to make him know his transgression. He asked God, "**Why do thou hide thy face, and reckon me for thine enemy?**" (Job 13:24). He said God had recorded bitter things against him, making him inherit the iniquities of his youth. And which of us

can say our youth was free of foolish sins? He said God had put his feet in the stocks. Job said, "**Man, who is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down. He too flees as a shadow, and does not continue**" (Job 14:1-2).

He asked God if he had brought him into judgment with him. Job asked who could bring a clean thing out of an unclean. He seems to have said that man was by nature unclean and full of trouble, having a limited existence. Therefore, he asked God to look away, so that he could rest until his days were accomplished. He said a tree cut down had hope to sprout again, but not man.

Job wished that God would hide him in Sheol (metaphorically perhaps) until his wrath was passed. And that he would appoint a set time for him and remember him. Apparently Job wanted God to do something to change his situation. Job spoke of his affliction (or perhaps his life) as a warfare. He said, "**All the days of my warfare I would wait till my release should come. Thou would call, and I would answer thee. Thou would have a desire to the work of thy hands**" (Job 14:14-15). Job said that now God numbered his steps, but kept his transgression concealed. Job seems to have wanted God to release him from the bondage of his affliction, and call him to give account of his transgressions. He could not understand why God waited.

Job also spoke of the sorrowful nature of this world. He said that as the things of the world wear away, so God destroys the hope of man. He said God prevails continually against man and he passes away. While a man is in his flesh his soul within him mourns, but after he passes away he knows nothing of what comes after him. The theme of the book of Ecclesiastes is the vanity of this life.

Then Eliphaz spoke a second time. He asked if a wise man should answer with vain knowledge, fill himself with the east wind, and reason with unprofitable talk. He rebuked Job for doing away with fear, and hindering devotion before God. He said Job's own mouth condemned him. He asked Job if he was the first man born. He asked him if he was brought forth before the hills, and had heard the secret counsel of God. He asked Job if he limited wisdom to himself. He said Job knew nothing they did not. He said with them were men much older than his father. And he asked why Job turned his spirit against God.

Then Eliphaz said, “**What is man, that he should be clean? And he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he puts no trust in his holy ones. Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight: How much less one who is abominable and corrupt, a man who drinks iniquity like water!**” (Job 15:14-16). He told Job he would declare what wise men had learned from their fathers. Then with many words he described the troubles and sorrows of the wicked man.

Job answered and said, “**I have heard many such things. Miserable comforters are ye all. ... I also could speak as ye do, if your soul were in my soul's stead. I could join words together against you, and shake my head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips would assuage your grief**” (Job 16:2, 4-5).

Job said whether he spoke or kept quiet, his grief was not assuaged. Job said that God had made him both weary and desolate of company. He said that God had torn him in his wrath and persecuted him. Job said, “**He has gnashed upon me with his teeth**” (Job 16:9). In his ignorance Job accused God of what Satan had done to him. And countless other men in their ignorance have likewise accused God wrongfully. I have no doubt that this book was given to us by God so that we could know better. Job said, “**God delivers me to the perverse, and casts me into the hands of the wicked**” (Job 16:11). And he said they had abused him. He said he was at ease, but God broke him apart like an animal killed and butchered in hunting.

Job said, “**My face is red with weeping, and the shadow of death is on my eyelids, although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure**” (Job 16:16-17). Yet Job maintained his faith and hope in God, saying, “**Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and he who vouches for me is on high. My friends scoff at me. My eye pours out tears to God that he would maintain the right of a man with God, and of a son of man with his neighbor!**” (Job 16:19-21).

Job said that in a few years he would die, but that his life was already spent. He spoke of how contemptible he was in the sight of men. He said upright men would be astonished about all of it, but his three friends were not wise. He asked that if he chose death for his abode, where would be his hope? Yet there, he said, was where his hope was going.

Then Bildad spoke a second time, and he said to Job, “**How long will ye hunt for words? Consider,**

and afterwards we will speak. Why are we counted as beasts, and have become unclean in your sight? Thou who tear thyself in thine anger, shall the earth be forsaken for thee?” (Job 18:2-4). Then, like Eliphaz before him, with many words he described the miseries of the wicked.

Since they believed that misery was caused only by wickedness, it was obvious to them that Job was a wicked man. They believed his suffering proved he was guilty. Their reasoning was simplistic and shallow, and their conclusion was false. Yet countless men still believe as they did.

Job answered and said, “**How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words? These ten times ye have reproached me. Ye are not ashamed that ye deal hardly with me**” (Job 19:2-3). He said if he had erred they did not know about it. He said it was God who had subverted him. Job said he cried for help but there was no justice. He said God had oppressed him in wrath, treating him like his adversaries, even turning everyone against him. Job said, “**Even young children despise me. If I arise, they speak against me. All my familiar friends abhor me, and those whom I loved are turned against me**” (Job 19:18-19). Job pleaded with his three friends, saying, “**Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God has touched me. Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?**” (Job 19:21-22).

Then Job said, “**O that my words were now written! O that they were inscribed in a book, that they were engraved in the rock forever with an iron pen and lead!**” (Job 19:23-24). God hearkened to Job, for indeed they have been written and inscribed in the greatest book of all. They have been engraved in something far more enduring than rock. For they are now a part of the Holy Bible, the word of God, which endures forever. Although Job suffered enormously, God also loved him enormously. And he will love us too, if we will love him above all else.

Then Job spoke some beautiful words of faith in God. He said, “**But as for me I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand up upon the earth. And after my skin, this body, is destroyed, then outside my flesh I shall see God, whom I, even I, shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger**” (Job 19:25-27). Job also warned his friends against persecuting him, lest they be punished and learn there is a judg-

ment. And that is exactly what happened to them, as the end of the book tells.

Then Zophar spoke a second time. He said he wanted to respond to Job's reproof which put him to shame. Then, like the two other men, he spoke at length about wicked men. He used many words to say in essence that although wicked men may prosper for a while, they are eventually punished and destroyed.

Job answered again. He said his complaint was not to man. And he asked why he should not be impatient. He said even when he reminisced he was troubled. Then he too spoke of the wicked. He asked, "**Why do the wicked live, become old, yea, grow mighty in power?**" (Job 21:7). He said they had prosperous lives. He asked how often it was that calamity actually came upon them. He said if it came to a wicked man's sons after he died, what would he care about that?

Job said God was the judge, and who could teach him knowledge? He said one man dies having been happy and prosperous, while another man dies in bitterness of soul, never having tasted of good. Yet they both end in the dust, covered with worms (read Luke 16:19-31 to see what God does about that). Job told his friends he knew their thinking. He said they wanted to know where wicked men lived. Job asked if they had not inquired of men who traveled. Job said yes the evil man was reserved to the day of calamity, but who ever confronts him and repays what he has done? Job said the wicked man is carried to the grave, and men keep watch over the tomb. In other words, Job said that the evil man is rarely challenged, and is even given a nice funeral and respect for his tomb. And indeed in my own lifetime I have seen far more evil men unchallenged and honored than otherwise. Job said, therefore, "**How then ye comfort me in vain, seeing in your answers there remains falsehood?**" (Job 21:34).

Then Eliphaz responded a third time. He questioned Job's relationship with God. Then he slandered him with many false accusations, which no doubt grew rampant after all his disasters. Eliphaz said to Job, "**Is not thy wickedness great? Neither is there any end to thine iniquities. For thou have taken pledges from thy brother for nothing, and stripped the naked of their clothing. Thou have not given water to the weary to drink, and thou have withheld bread from the hungry. But as for the mighty man, he had the land. And the honorable man, he dwelt in it. Thou have sent widows**

away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken" (Job 22:5-9).

He said that was why Job was afflicted. He also accused Job of saying that God cannot see what is happening on earth. He asked Job if he was going to go the old way of wicked men who wanted nothing to do with God, and were snatched away prematurely. Eliphaz said the counsel of the wicked was far from himself. He told Job that if he returned to God then he would be blessed.

Job responded, saying that now even his complaint was rebellious. Which probably meant that since they thought he deserved to suffer, then his complaint was rebellious. Then Job said, "**O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! I would set my case in order before him, and fill my mouth with arguments**" (Job 23:3-4). Job said God would be reasonable with him and he would be delivered, but he could not find him. Job said God had hid himself so that he could not see him. Nevertheless, Job said, "**But he knows the way that I take. When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold**" (Job 23:10).

Job said he had kept the way of God and not turned aside. He said he had treasured up the words of God's mouth more than his necessary food, but God does what he wants. Job said when he considered it he was afraid of God. For the Almighty had terrified him. Job had seen how vulnerable man is. And he seemed to wonder what God was waiting for.

Then he spoke of men who were unjust and ruthless, preying upon the weak. He told how the poor of the earth had to live in want, existing like livestock while they labored in the fields and vineyards of the wicked. He said men also groan and cry out in the populous city. He said, "**Yet God does not regard the folly**" (Job 24:12), meaning he lets it happen.

Job told of lawless men of the underworld—murderers, thieves, adulterers—creatures of the darkness who hate light. He said they were accused men who did no honest labor. He said death consumes them as heat does the snow. Yet, he said, God preserves strong men by his power, and he gives them security for a while, until they are brought low and cut off. Job said, "**And if it be not so now, who will prove me a liar, and make my speech worth nothing?**" (Job 24:25). In my lifetime I too have seen numerous examples of those who commit evil becoming strong, and God did not prevent it. Yet after a while, no matter how mighty they became,

they perished like all flesh. Such is the way of this evil world, but there will be a time of justice (see Rev. 20:13).

Then Bildad spoke for a third and last time. He mentioned briefly God's power and dominion. Then he said, "**How then can man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of a woman? Behold, even the moon has no brightness. And the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, who is a worm! And the son of man, who is a worm!"** (Job 25:4-6).

After those words, the book records no further remarks by Job's three friends. Nevertheless, Job answered, and he responded with sarcasm. He said, "**How thou have helped him who is without power! How thou have saved the arm that has no strength! How thou have counseled him who has no wisdom, and plentifully declared sound knowledge!**" (Job 26:2-3). Job then described some of God's power and majesty, after which he said, "**Lo, these are but the periphery of his ways. And how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?**" (Job 26:14).

Job told his three friends he would never forsake his integrity. He said, "**As God lives, who has taken away my right, and the Almighty, who has vexed my soul. (For my life is yet whole in me. And the spirit of God is in my nostrils.) Surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness, nor shall my tongue utter deceit. Far be it from me that I should justify you. Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. I hold fast my righteousness, and will not let it go. My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live**" (Job 27:2-6).

Job said to let his enemy be as the wicked, for a profane man has no hope when God takes away his soul. He said the wicked have no relationship with God. Job told his friends he would teach them about the hand of God. He said they had actually seen it, and he asked, "**Why then have ye become altogether vain?**" (Job 27:12). Then with many words he told about the portion of the wicked man with God. He described the wicked man's many failures and his miserable heritage.

Then he spoke about the many things that men search for: gold, iron, copper, precious stones. He said they dig deeply in the earth, where no beast had ever gone. He said they overturn mountains and cut channels in the rock. Then he asked, "**But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?**" (Job 28:12). He said it could not

be gotten with gold or any such thing. He said God knows, indeed he established it. And he said to man, "**Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding**" (Job 28:28).

Then Job spoke of the glory of his former days, when he was prosperous, when God watched over him, when his sons were about him, and when he went forth to the gate and prepared his seat in the street. He said, "**The young men saw me and hid themselves, and the aged rose up and stood. The rulers refrained from talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The voice of the ranking men was hushed, and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth. For when the ear heard me, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the poor who cried, also the fatherless who had none to help him. The blessing of him who was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me. My justice was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and I was feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I searched out the case of him whom I did not know. And I broke the jaws of the unrighteous, and plucked the prey out of his teeth**" (Job 29:8-17).

Job said he had thought he was going to live a long life and die in his security, prosperity, and glory. He told about his reputation as a counselor and a leader: "**To me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence for my counsel. After my words they spoke not again, and my speech distilled upon them. And they waited for me as for the rain. And they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain. I smiled on them when they had no confidence, and they did not cast down the light of my countenance. I chose out their way, and sat as chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as a man who comforts the mourners**" (Job 29:21-25).

Then he described how even the lowest element of society—men who live like brute beasts on the fringe of civilization, the worthless rabble—looked upon him afterward. "**But now those who are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I disdained to set with the dogs of my flock. Yea, the strength of their hands, to what should it profit me? Men in whom ripe age is perished. They are gaunt with want and famine. They gnaw the dry ground in the gloom of waste and desolation. They pluck mallows by the**

bushes, and the roots of the juniper are their food. They are driven forth from the midst of men. They cry out after them as after a thief, so that they dwell in frightful valleys, in holes of the earth and of the rocks. Among the bushes they bray, under the nettles they are gathered together. They are sons of fools, yea, sons of base men. They were scourged out of the land” (Job 30:1-8).

Job told of their persecution and contempt of him: “**And now I have become their song, Yea, I am a byword to them. They abhor me. They stand aloof from me, and do not spare to spit in my face. For he has loosed his cord, and afflicted me. And they have cast off the bridle before me. Upon my right hand rise the rabble. They thrust aside my feet, and they cast up against me their ways of destruction. They mar my path. They set forward my calamity, even men who have no helper. As through a wide breach they come. In the midst of the ruin they roll themselves upon me. Terrors are turned upon me. They chase my honor as the wind, and my welfare is passed away as a cloud” (Job 30:9-15).**

Job said his soul was now poured out within him, and days of affliction had taken hold upon him. He said God had cast him into the mire. He spoke to God, saying, among other things, “**I cry to thee, and thou do not answer me. I stand up, and thou gaze at me. Thou have turned to be cruel to me. With the might of thy hand thou persecute me” (Job 30:21).** Job did not know that Satan was his adversary and not God, who loved him and praised him in heaven. Satan had challenged God, and for our benefit he allowed Satan to afflict Job for a while. God knew Satan was a liar, but he had to prove it to all whom Satan tempts. And that includes all of us. Ignorance of Satan’s deceit makes us vulnerable to him. Which is an important reason why he hates the Holy Bible and tries every way to destroy it. Wherever his spirit dominates, the Bible and its teachings are scorned and oppressed.

Job said he knew that he would come to death, but he asked if a man did not cry for help in his calamity. He said, “**Did I not weep for him who was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the needy?” (Job 30:25).** He said his heart was troubled and did not rest. And he spoke of his miserable condition.

He said he had made a covenant with his eyes, so how could he look (lustfully) upon a virgin? He said (in question form) that God brings calamity to the

unrighteous, and knows all that Job does. Then he spoke of several kinds of sins that he had shunned. And each time he pronounced appropriate punishment if he had committed them. First he said, “**If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hastened to deceit ... then let me sow, and let another eat, yea, let the produce of my field be rooted out” (Job 31:5, 8). Then he said that if he had been enticed to a woman, then to let his wife belong to another. Regarding adultery, Job said, “**For that is a heinous crime, yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges. For it is a fire that consumes to destruction, and would root out all my increase” (Job 31:11-12).** And it is equally destructive in every generation.**

In like manner he spoke of the treatment of his servants, and the poor, and widows, and the fatherless. He said that if he had made gold his hope, rejoiced in his wealth, and kissed his hand, or had rejoiced over the destruction of an enemy; that if he had not fed others and lodged travelers; that if he had covered his transgressions; that if his land cried out against him because he took it by oppression, then “**let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley” (Job 31:40).**

After that the book says, “**The words of Job are ended. So these three men ceased to answer Job because he was righteous in his own eyes**” (Job 31:40-32:1). Then it speaks about another man named Elihu. He had been present listening. And his anger was kindled against Job because he justified himself rather than God. He was also angry with his three friends because they found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. So he wanted to speak.

Elihu introduced his argument with many words. In brief, he began by saying that he had waited to express his opinion because they were older than he, that Job’s three friends had failed to convince Job, and that he was full of words and his spirit compelled him. Therefore, he asked Job to listen to him and respond if he could. Elihu said he too was made of clay and he would be gentle with him.

Elihu repeated Job’s claim that he was innocent but God dealt with him as an enemy. Then he said, “**In this thou are not just, for God is greater than man” (Job 33:12).** He asked Job why he strove with God because he did not give account of any of his matters. Elihu said God speaks once, yea twice, but man does not regard it. Elihu said God spares a man’s life, but he also chastens him with pain. He said that if God delivers a man, then the man confesses his sin and gives thanks to him. He told Job

that God does those things with a man more than once, to save his life and enlighten him.

Elihu told Job to listen to him. He said, “**If thou have anything to say, answer me. Speak, for I desire to justify thee**” (Job 33:32). And he spoke to the group, saying, “**Let us choose for us that which is right. Let us know among ourselves what is good. For Job has said, I am righteous, and God has taken away my right. Notwithstanding my right I am accounted a liar. My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression**” (Job 34:4-6).

Elihu then accused Job of being scornful, because he said there was no visitation to a man. Elihu said that God does render to a man according to his ways. He said God would do no wrong nor would he pervert justice. Elihu also knew nothing about Satan’s involvement in Job’s affliction. Satan did pervert justice and did Job wrong, as God himself said (see Job 2:3), and God allowed it.

Then Elihu spoke of how God interacts with the world, giving life and taking it, seeing everything, opposing the wicked. Elihu said that wise men would say that Job’s words were without wisdom. However, he disagreed, saying, “**But surely not. Learn thou Job not to still give an answer like the foolish, so that we may not add to our sins, and lawlessness will be reckoned against us, speaking many words before the Lord**” (Job 34:36-37). (That passage was translated from the Septuagint.) Remember, Elihu had earlier told Job that he wanted to justify him (see Job 33:32).

However, Elihu criticized Job for saying he was righteous before the Lord, and asking what profit he had more than if he had sinned. Elihu said whether he had sinned or was righteous had no effect on God. He said men cry for help because of oppressions, but God will not hear an empty cry. He said that because God had not responded, Job opened his mouth in vanity.

Elihu continued, “**Allow me a little, and I will show thee. For I have yet somewhat to say on God’s behalf**” (Job 36:2). He said he would ascribe righteousness to his maker. He said God was mighty. He said God did not preserve the life of the wicked, nor did he withdraw his eyes from the righteous. He said if they were afflicted, God would show them their work, and teach them so they would return from iniquity. And if they hearkened, they would spend their days in prosperity. Otherwise they would perish. He said God delivers the

afflicted but punishes the impious. He warned Job not to turn to iniquity because of his affliction.

Then with many words he described things about the world that show the power and majesty of God. He said God does great things that we cannot comprehend. He said, for example, God rules the snow and rain and clouds. And they do what he commands, “**whether it be for correction, or for his land, or for loving kindness**” (Job 37:13). He told Job to hearken and consider the wondrous works of God. And he asked him if he knew how God did some of them. Elihu praised the awesome majesty of God, and he ended his words by saying, “**Men therefore fear him. He does not regard any who are wise of heart**” (Job 37:24).

Then the book says that Jehovah himself answered Job out of the whirlwind. He said, “**Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee, and declare thou to me**” (Job 38:2-3). God asked Job where he was when he laid the foundations of the earth. Among other things, he asked him who set the bounds of the sea. He asked if he had commanded the morning since his days began. He asked him if he had entered into the springs of the sea. He asked if the gates of death had been revealed to him. God asked many such questions of Job. He asked about light and darkness, snow and hail, lightning and rain, dew and frost.

He asked about the constellations in the heavens. Among other things, he asked if Job could send forth lightnings. He asked who could number the clouds by wisdom. He asked Job if he could provide for the beasts of the earth. He spoke about the wild donkey, the wild ox, and the ostrich. He asked Job if he had given the horse his might. He asked if he had made the hawk soar by his wisdom.

Jehovah said, “**Shall he who quibbles contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it**” (Job 40:2). Job answered and said, “**Behold, I am of small account. What shall I answer thee? I lay my hand upon my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer, yes, twice, but I will proceed no further**” (Job 40:4-5).

Jehovah spoke again to Job out of the whirlwind, saying, “**Gird up thy loins now like a man. I will demand of thee, and declare thou to me. Will thou even annul my judgment? Will thou condemn me, that thou may be justified? Or have thou an arm like God? And can thou thunder with a voice like him?**” (Job 40:8-9). He told Job to

array himself with excellency and dignity, honor and majesty. He told him to bring down everyone who was proud and tread down the wicked. God said if Job could do that, then he would confess that his own right hand could save him.

Then with several words God described behemoth, a beast who eats grass like an ox. He told of behemoth's great strength, and asked if anyone could take him or pierce his nose with a snare. However, nobody knows exactly what that animal was. Maybe it was a giant dinosaur. Last of all, with many words, God described leviathan. He asked Job if he could capture him and make him a pet. He said any attempt to lay a hand on him would produce a battle a man would never forget nor try again. God said, "**None is so fierce that he dare stir him up. Who then is he who can stand before me?**" (Job 41:10).

Moreover, God said, "**Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Under the whole heaven is mine**" (Job 41:11). Then he spoke further about leviathan, saying, "**I will not keep silence concerning his limbs, nor his mighty strength, nor his goodly frame**" (Job 41:12). And he went on with many words to describe that beast. He mentioned his teeth, his scales, his mouth, his neck, and his heart, which he said was as firm as stone, like a nether millstone (which probably means he was very cruel). He also said that smoke and fire comes forth from his mouth, and he laughs at the weapons of men.

God ended those words, saying, "**Upon earth there is not his like who is made without fear. He beholds everything that is high. He is king over all the sons of pride**" (Job 41:33-34). In my judgment, leviathan is not a creature of flesh that we can see, but is rather Satan himself, the great red dragon described in Revelation 12, a spiritual creature who is invisible to us. He is the great spiritual adversary of God who roams the earth, and was the cause of Job's suffering. For is not Satan the king of all the sons of pride?

Job answered Jehovah, and said, "**I know that thou can do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained. Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak, I will ask of thee, and declare thou to me. I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes**" (Job 42:2-6).

Then Jehovah said to Eliphaz, "**My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends. For ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job has**" (Job 42:7). He said for them to take seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to Job for a burnt offering. God said Job would pray for them, and he would accept his prayer. He said that otherwise he would deal with them after their folly. He told them again that they had not spoken to him what was right, as his servant Job had. Therefore, Job's friends did as Jehovah commanded, and the book says that Jehovah accepted Job.

After that Jehovah gave Job twice what he had before. Also all his brothers and sisters and acquaintances came, and ate with him, and comforted him. They also each gave him a piece of money and a ring of gold. The book ends with these words: "**So Jehovah blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. And he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-donkeys. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemimah, and the name of the second, Keziah, and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job. And their father gave them inheritance among their brothers. And after this Job lived a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days.**"

A Description of **Psalms**

This book is a collection of 150 psalms. The longest is psalm 119 with 2427 words. The shortest is psalm 117 with only 29 words. The average length is 280 words, which is about a half page in a modern Bible. Most of the psalms are praises and/or prayers to God. They were written by different men at different times. However, none of the authors identify themselves. The names you see in some translations are later (although ancient) additions, and were not in the original documents. David wrote some of them, perhaps even half as tradition says, for the Bible calls him "**the sweet psalmist of Israel**" (2Sa. 23:1). However, we can only verify a few he wrote; namely, psalms 2, 16, 18, 32, 69, 95, 109, and 110. Psalms 72 and 101 were probably his.

Dear reader, what I say about each psalm is only a sample of what is in them. They are all written so concisely with such richness of content they are impossible to summarize completely.

Psalm 1 (126 words): This psalm says the righteous man does not fraternize with the wicked, instead he meditates on the law of Jehovah continually. The author said the righteous man prospers like a tree planted by streams of waters, but the wicked are like chaff blown away by the wind. He said the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. Their way will perish.

Psalm 2 (199 words): Peter said David wrote this psalm. In it David asked why the world rebels against Jehovah and his anointed. He said Jehovah easily defeats them. He quoted Jehovah saying that he set his king on his holy hill Zion. Then he (the king) said, "**Jehovah said to me, Thou are my Son, this day I have begotten thee**" (2:7). Jehovah told him to ask, and he would give him the nations for his inheritance. Jehovah said he would break them in pieces with a rod of iron. David then told the kings and judges of the earth to be wise, serve Jehovah with fear, and kiss the Son lest they perish. He ended, "**Blessed are all those who take refuge in him.**"

Psalm 3 (134 words): This psalm is mostly a prayer for deliverance from adversaries. The author said there were many, and they claimed he had no hope in God. But he said he cried to Jehovah and he answered him. And he said that he would not be afraid. After asking God to save him, he said,

"Salvation belongs to Jehovah. Thy blessing be upon thy people" (3:8).

Psalm 4 (154 words): This psalm begins, "**Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness. Thou have enlarged me in distress. Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.**" Then the author asked the sons of men why they dishonored him, loving vanity and seeking falsehood. He said he trusted Jehovah and urged others to do the same. He said many sought good from Jehovah, but he had more gladness in his heart than when their grain and new wine increased. He also said Jehovah made him dwell in peace.

Psalm 5 (242 words): This is a prayer. The author asked Jehovah to hear him. He said Jehovah was not a God who had pleasure in wickedness. He said, "**Thou hate all workers of iniquity. Thou will destroy those who speak lies. Jehovah abhors the blood-thirsty and deceitful man**" (5:5-6). It is commonly taught nowadays that God always loves everybody. This psalm says otherwise. The author said he would worship Jehovah in his holy temple. He asked Jehovah to lead him in his righteousness, because of his enemies, who were faithless and ruthless. He asked God to hold them guilty because they were rebels. He said those who took refuge in him should rejoice, because he would bless the righteous man.

Psalm 6 (161 words): The first half of this psalm is a prayer. The author asked Jehovah not to rebuke him in his anger. He asked for mercy and healing. He said his soul was greatly troubled, and he asked him to deliver it. He asked Jehovah who could give him thanks in Sheol. The author said he was weary with groaning. He said his couch was watered with tears because of grief. Then he told workers of iniquity to depart from him, because Jehovah had heard his plea. He said all his enemies would be shamed and greatly troubled.

Psalm 7 (327 words): The first half of this psalm is a prayer. The author asked God to save him from vicious men. He said if he had done evil, then let his enemy tread down his life. He asked Jehovah to arise in anger against his adversaries, and be over the peoples who come around him. He said, "**Jehovah shall judge the peoples. Judge me,**

O Jehovah, according to my righteousness, and to my integrity that is in me” (7:8). He asked that the wickedness of the wicked man come to an end, but that the righteous man be established. He said God was a righteous judge, who has indignation every day. Then he told of how God destroys the unrepentant sinner. About the wicked man, he said, “**His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violence shall come down upon his own scalp**” (7:16). Then he said he would thank Jehovah and sing praises to his name.

Psalm 8 (161 words): This is a psalm of praise to God. It begins and ends with the words, “**O Jehovah, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth.**” The author said that when he considered the heavens, he wondered what was man and the son of man that he thought about him. He said he made him only a little lower than the angels, had crowned him with glory and honor, and had put all things under his feet.

Psalm 9 (362 words): This psalm is a prayer in three parts, with comments in between. The author first tells Jehovah that he will thank him, exult in him, and sing praise to his name. He contrasted God’s treatment of him with his enemies, and said, “**Thou sit in the throne judging righteously. Thou have rebuked the nations. Thou have destroyed the wicked**” (9:4-5). He said the enemy had come to an end, but Jehovah would endure forever. He said Jehovah would judge the world in righteousness. He told how Jehovah protects the poor and the oppressed. Then he asked Jehovah to have mercy upon him so that he could show forth his praise. He said the nations had sunk in the pit they themselves had made, and the wicked man was snared in his own work. He said the hope of the poor would not perish forever. Then he said, “**Arise, O Jehovah, let not man prevail. Let the nations be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O Jehovah. Let the nations know themselves to be but men**” (9:19-20).

Psalm 10 (364 words): The author asked why Jehovah stood aloof in times of trouble. Then he gave a vivid description of the mind and behavior of the wicked man. He said he was proud, greedy, and ruthless. He said, “**All his thoughts are, There is no God**” (10:4). Among other things, he said his mouth was full of cursing, deceit, and oppression. He said he lurks like a lion to prey upon the poor, and tells himself that God does

not see it. Then the author asked Jehovah to arise and not forget the poor. He said that God does see mischief and will repay. He said Jehovah had heard the desire of the humble, and he would “**Judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that man who is of the earth may no more be terrible**” (10:18).

Psalm 11 (127 words): The author said he took refuge in Jehovah. He said the wicked seek to slay the upright. And he asked what could the righteous man do if the foundations were destroyed (did he mean truth and justice?). He said, however, that Jehovah’s throne was in heaven, and “**Jehovah tries the righteous man, but his soul hates the wicked man and him who loves violence**” (11:5). And he said, “**For Jehovah is righteous. He loves righteousness. The upright man shall behold his face**” (11:7).

Psalm 12 (144 words): The author began, “**Help, Jehovah, for the holy man ceases . . . They speak falsehood everyone with his neighbor. With flattering lip, and with a double heart, they speak.**” He said Jehovah would cut off evil talk, but would give safety to the oppressed poor. He said the words of Jehovah were pure words, and Jehovah would preserve them forever. Then he said, “**The wicked walk on every side when vileness is exalted among the sons of men**” (12:8). And so it is coming to be more and more in my country.

Psalm 13 (104 words): The author began, “**How long, O Jehovah? Will thou forget me forever?**” He asked God for deliverance from his enemies. He said he trusted his loving kindness, and would sing to him for his bountifulness.

Psalm 14 (145 words): This psalm begins, “**The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.**” The author said Jehovah looked down from heaven to see if any sought after God. He said they had all become filthy. Which probably means no man is pure of sin. Then he spoke of the workers of iniquity. He ended by asking Jehovah to save Israel, and bring back their captives so they could rejoice.

Psalm 15 (98 words): The author asked Jehovah who would dwell in his holy hill. Then he gave examples of how a righteous man lived, and he concluded, “**He who does these things shall never be moved.**”

Psalm 16 (193 words): Peter said David wrote this psalm. David began, saying, “**Preserve me, O**

God, for in thee do I take refuge." He said he delighted in the sanctified of the earth, but sorrows were multiplied for those who served another god. He said Jehovah was the portion of his inheritance, and he would bless him. He said he always beheld Jehovah before him, therefore his heart was glad. He said, "**For thou will not leave my soul to Sheol, nor will thou allow thy holy man to see corruption. Thou made known to me the path of life. Thou will fill me of joy with thy countenance**" (16:10-11). Peter said Jesus was God's holy man whose body never saw corruption.

Psalm 17 (301 words): This is a prayer for deliverance. The author asked Jehovah to hear his cry, and send forth justice, for he had been proved and vindicated. He said he kept from the ways of a violent man and held to Jehovah's paths. He asked Jehovah to listen, show his loving kindness, and keep him secure from the wicked who surrounded him and oppressed him. He said they speak proudly, close their hearts to pity, and set their eyes to cast down. He asked Jehovah to deliver his soul from men of the world whose portion was in this life. He said, "**As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy form**" (17:15). That seems to say that he would see God when he awoke from death in the afterlife.

Psalm 18 (899 words): This psalm is the same as the one by David (with minor differences), which is recorded in Second Samuel 22. It begins, "**I love thee, O Jehovah, my strength.**" David said Jehovah was his rock, his deliverer, his shield, his horn of salvation, and his high tower. He said he would call upon Jehovah, who is worthy to be praised, and he would be saved from his enemies. Then he said the cords of death surrounded him, and the floods of lawlessness made him afraid. So he cried to his God, who heard his voice. Then he said that God used awesome power, like shaking the earth, and sending hail and lightning, to rescue him from his strong enemy. He said, "**He delivered me because he delighted in me. Jehovah has rewarded me according to my righteousness**" (18:19-20). He said Jehovah would show himself merciful to the merciful, and to the pure he would show himself pure. He said Jehovah would save the afflicted, but bring down haughty eyes.

Among many other things he said Jehovah would lighten his darkness, that he had girded

him with strength, set him upon high places, and given him the shield of his salvation. David told how he defeated his enemies because Jehovah was with him. He concluded, "**Therefore I will give thanks to thee, O Jehovah, among the Gentiles, and will sing praises to thy name. He gives great deliverance to his king, and shows loving kindness to his anointed, to David and to his seed, for evermore.**"

Psalm 19 (268 words): This is a psalm of praise. It begins, "**The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork.**" The author said their voice is heard everywhere. He said the law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul and making a simple man wise. He said the ordinances of Jehovah are true, more desirable than gold, and sweeter than honey. He said that in keeping them is great reward. And the author asked to be kept from presumptuous sins. He ended, "**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Jehovah, my rock, and my redeemer.**"

Psalm 20 (142 words): This psalm begins by asking Jehovah to bless the reader in several ways, the last being, "**... grant thee thy heart's desire, and fulfill all thy counsel**" (20:4). The author said we will triumph in his salvation, and Jehovah will save his anointed. He said that some trust in military might, but we make mention of the name of Jehovah. He said they were fallen but we stand upright. Then he said, "**Save, Jehovah! Let the King answer us when we call**" (20:9).

Psalm 21 (234 words): The first half of this psalm describes several ways that Jehovah blessed the king. That part begins, "**The king shall joy in thy strength, O Jehovah. And in thy salvation how greatly he shall rejoice!**" That part ends, "**For the king trusts in Jehovah. And through the loving kindness of the Most High he shall not be moved**" (21:7). The second half tells how Jehovah finds out all his enemies and destroys them. It concludes with praise to Jehovah.

Psalm 22 (571 words): This psalm prophesied many things that happened to Jesus when he was crucified. It begins with the words Jesus quoted on the cross: "**My God, my God, why have thou forsaken me?**" The author said, "**Our fathers trusted in thee. They trusted, and thou delivered them**" (22:4), but he was a worm, despised by the people. He said that all who saw laughed him to scorn, and said, "**He trusted on Jehovah.**"

Let him deliver him. Let him rescue him, since he delights in him” (22:8). That was uttered by Jesus’ enemies. The author said Jehovah made him, and he asked him to save him. He said strong bulls and dogs, a company of evil-doers, had surrounded him, and his strength was gone. He said, “**They pierced my hands and my feet. I may count all my bones. They look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and upon my vesture do they cast a lot**” (22:16-18). All of those things happened while Jesus was on the cross.

He asked Jehovah to hasten and save him. He said he would declare his name, and praise him publicly. And he asked those who fear Jehovah to praise Jehovah, including the seed of Israel. He said Jehovah was with the afflicted and would satisfy the meek, who would praise him. He said all the kinfolk of the nations would worship Jehovah because he was ruler over all the nations.

Psalm 23 (116 words): This is the most famous of the psalms. It says: “**Jehovah is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, tho I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou are with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. Thou have anointed my head with oil. My cup runs over. Surely goodness and loving kindness shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah forever.”**

Psalm 24 (174 words): This psalm begins by saying that the earth and those who dwell in it were Jehovah’s, because he made it. It asks who will ascend into the hill of Jehovah. It answers, saying he who lives right and does no wrong; he will be blessed. It ends, “**Lift up your heads, O ye gates. Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory will come in. Who is this King of glory? Jehovah of hosts, He is the King of glory.”**

Psalm 25 (349 words): The author began, “**To thee, O Jehovah, do I lift up my soul. O my God, in thee I have trusted. Let me not be put to shame. Let not my enemies triumph over me.**” This psalm is full of praises and petitions to Jehovah. Among other things he told who would

be shamed. He asked for Jehovah’s guidance and mercy. He said Jehovah was good and does good. He asked Jehovah to pardon his iniquity. He said, “**The friendship of Jehovah is with those who fear him, and he will show them his covenant**” (25:14). Then he spoke of his affliction and his enemies. And he asked Jehovah to save him. He ended, “**Redeem Israel, O God, out of all of his troubles.**”

Psalm 26 (180 words): This is a prayer. The author asked Jehovah to examine him and judge him, for he had been faithful to him. He said he had not assembled with evil-doers. He said he would wash his hands in innocence, and tell of all his wondrous works, because he loved the habitation of his house. He asked that his soul not be gathered with sinners. He said he would walk in his integrity, and bless Jehovah in the congregations.

Psalm 27 (323 words): The author began by saying that Jehovah was his strength, therefore, he had no fear even of fierce adversaries. Then he said, “**One thing I have asked of Jehovah, that I will seek after, that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire in his temple**” (27:4). He said Jehovah would protect him, and he would sing praises to him. He asked Jehovah to hear him and not forsake him. He asked Jehovah to teach him his way, and not deliver him to his adversaries. He ended, “**I believe that I shall see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living. Wait for Jehovah. Be strong, and let thy heart take courage. Yea, wait thou for Jehovah.**”

Psalm 28 (201 words): The author asked Jehovah to hear when he cried out to him. And he said, “**Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, who speak peace with their neighbors, but mischief is in their hearts. Give them according to their work ... because they regard not the works of Jehovah**” (28:3-5). He praised Jehovah, and said he was his strength, because he trusted in him. He ended the psalm, “**Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance. Be their shepherd also, and bear them up forever.**”

Psalm 29 (163 words): This psalm tells the sons of the mighty to ascribe to Jehovah glory and strength, and worship him. It uses the expression “**The voice of Jehovah**” seven times when giving examples of his power in the world. It ends, “**Yea, Jehovah sits as King forever. Jehovah**

will give strength to his people. Jehovah will bless his people with peace.”

Psalm 30 (226 words): The author began, “**I will extol thee, O Jehovah, for thou have raised me up, and have not made my foes to rejoice over me.**” He told the sanctified to sing praise to Jehovah and give thanks. He said, “**For his anger is but for a moment. His favor is for a lifetime**” (30:5). He said Jehovah made him secure in his prosperity, but when Jehovah hid his face he was troubled. He cried to Jehovah for mercy, and asked him if the dust would praise him. Then he said to Jehovah, “**Thou have turned for me my mourning into dancing**” (30:11). He ended, “**O Jehovah my God, I will give thanks to thee forever**” (30:12).

Psalm 31 (502 words): This is a prayer for deliverance. The author began, “**In thee, O Jehovah, do I take refuge. Let me never be put to shame. Deliver me in thy righteousness.**” He said he commended his spirit into the hand of Jehovah, for he had redeemed him. He said he hated those who regarded lying vanities, but he trusted Jehovah. He said he rejoiced in his loving kindness, because he had seen his affliction, and saved him from the hand of the enemy. Then he said, “**Have mercy upon me, O Jehovah, for I am in distress**” (31:9). He said he had become a reproach because of his adversaries. He said those who saw him fled from him. He said he heard the slander of many, and they plotted to take away his life.

Then he said, “**But I trusted in thee, O Jehovah. I said, Thou are my God**” (31:14), and he asked him to save him in his loving kindness. He asked Jehovah not to let him be put to shame, but let the wicked be put to shame and lying lips be muted. Then he spoke of Jehovah’s great goodness and protection toward those who fear him. He said that Jehovah heard the voice of his cry to him. He ended, saying, “**O love Jehovah, all ye his sanctified. Jehovah preserves the faithful, and plentifully repays him who deals proudly. Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all ye who hope in Jehovah.**”

Psalm 32 (241 words): Paul said that David wrote this psalm. It begins, “**Blessed are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.**” David spoke of his suffering, and he said he confessed his transgressions to Jehovah and he forgave him. Then he said, “**For this let everyone who is devout pray to thee in a time**

when thou may be found” (32:6). He said he would teach the reader in the way he should go. And he warned not to be like the dumb horse or mule who needs bit and bridle. He ended, “**Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he who trusts in Jehovah, loving kindness shall encompass him about. Be glad in Jehovah, and rejoice, ye righteous. And shout for joy, all ye who are upright in heart.**”

Psalm 33 (348 words): This psalm begins, “**Rejoice in Jehovah, O ye righteous. Praise is comely for the upright.**” The author said to sing a new song and give thanks to Jehovah with musical instruments. He said, “**He loves righteousness and justice. The earth is full of the loving kindness of Jehovah**” (33:5). He said that Jehovah made the heavens by the breath of his mouth, and all the earth should fear him. He said Jehovah brings the counsel of the nations to nothing, but “**Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah, the people whom he has chosen for his own inheritance**” (33:12). That nation is now the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Then he said that Jehovah looks from heaven upon the sons of men. He said he fashions their hearts and considers all their works. He said earthly strength is vain; Jehovah delivers the soul of those who hope in his loving kindness. He ended, “**Let thy loving kindness, O Jehovah, be upon us, according as we have hoped in thee.**”

Psalm 34 (334 words): The author said he would praise Jehovah continually and boast in him. He said, “**O magnify Jehovah with me, and let us exalt his name together**” (34:3). He told about calling for Jehovah, and being heard and saved. He said, “**The agent of Jehovah encamps round about those who fear him, and delivers them**” (34:7). He urged Jehovah’s sanctified to fear him, because he is good. He said the man who wants to see good should depart from evil and do good. He said the eyes of Jehovah were toward the righteous, and he hears their prayer, but he is against those who do evil. He said Jehovah was near the contrite in spirit. He said, “**Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but Jehovah delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones. Not one of them is broken**” (34:19-20). He said those who hate the righteous would be condemned, but none who take refuge in Jehovah would be.

Psalm 35 (556 words): This is a prayer asking for Jehovah’s help against the author’s enemies. He

began, “**Strive thou, O Jehovah, with those who strive with me.**” He stated several ways he wanted them defeated, because they had set traps for him without cause. He said his soul would rejoice in Jehovah’s salvation. He said his enemies rewarded evil for good. He said he mourned, fasted, and prayed, when they were sick, but they rejoiced at his adversity. He said they gnashed upon him with their teeth. He asked Jehovah to rescue his soul, and wanted to know how long he would look on. He said he would thank and praise him among the people. He asked that his enemies not rejoice wrongfully over him. He said, “**For they speak not peace, but they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land**” (35:20). He asked Jehovah to stir himself up and bring justice to his cause. He asked that his enemies be shamed, confounded, and dishonored.

He ended, “**Let them shout for joy, and be glad, who favor my righteous cause. Yea, let them say continually, Jehovah be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. And my tongue shall talk of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.**”

Psalm 36 (227 words): This psalm begins by describing the evil mind and behavior of the wicked man. Among other things it says he flatters himself that his iniquity will not be found out; the words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit; he devises iniquity upon his bed. Then the author speaks to Jehovah. Among other things he told of Jehovah’s goodness. And he said that the sons of men who take refuge in him would drink of the river of his pleasures. He said, “**For with thee is the fountain of life. In thy light we shall see light**” (36:9). He asked to be protected from sinners. He said they would be thrust down and be unable to rise.

Psalm 37 (699 words): This psalm contrasts the righteous with the wicked. It begins, “**Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, nor be thou envious against those who work unrighteousness. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.**” The author urged the reader to trust in Jehovah and do good. Among other things he said the wicked man plots against the righteous man, but “**The Lord will laugh at him, for he sees that his day is coming**” (37:13). He said the wicked were treacherous and bloodthirsty, but they will be defeated. He said, “**Better is a little that the**

righteous man has than the abundance of many wicked men. ... Jehovah knows the days of the perfect, and their inheritance shall be forever” (37:16, 18). He said a man’s goings were established by Jehovah and he blesses him. He said, “**I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen a righteous man forsaken, nor his seed begging bread**” (37:25). He said to depart from evil and do good, because Jehovah loves justice. He said Jehovah would not forsake his sanctified. He said they were preserved forever, but the seed of the wicked would be cut off. He said the mouth of the righteous man speaks of wisdom and justice, and the law of God is in his heart. The author said he had seen a wicked man in great power, but later he was gone. He said transgressors would be destroyed, but Jehovah helps the righteous, and saves them from sinners.

Psalm 38 (354 words): This is a prayer by the author expressing sorrow for his sin. He began, “**O Jehovah, rebuke me not in thy wrath . . . For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presses me severely**” In many ways he told of his sorrow and suffering. He said he was faint and severely bruised. He said he went about all day mourning. He said his loved ones, friends, and kinsmen gave him no support, and his enemies sought to harm him. He said he was as a deaf and a mute man. He told Jehovah that he hoped in him. He said they magnified themselves against him when his foot slipped. He said his sorrow was continually before him. He said he would declare his iniquity and be sorry for his sin. He said his enemies were energetic and strong, and those who hated him wrongfully were multiplied. He said all who rendered evil for good were adversaries to him, because he followed what was good. He ended, “**Forsake me not, O Jehovah. O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.**”

Psalm 39 (266 words): The author began, “**I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.**” He said he kept quiet in the presence of the wicked man, yet his sorrow was stirred, and his heart was hot within him. Then he spoke to Jehovah, and asked him to know his end and the measure of his days. He spoke of the shortness of life, and the vanity of man, even at his best. He told Jehovah that his hope was in him, and he asked to be delivered from his transgressions. He said he was consumed by the blow

of Jehovah's hand. He asked Jehovah to hear his prayer. And he said, "**O spare me, that I may recover strength before I go from here, and be no more**" (39:13).

Psalm 40 (406 words): The author began, "**I waited patiently for Jehovah, and he inclined to me, and heard my cry**" (40:1). He said he brought him up out of a horrible pit, set his feet upon a rock, and put a new song in his mouth. He said the man who trusts Jehovah was blessed. He said the wonderful works of Jehovah were more than could be numbered. Then he said, "**Sacrifice and offering thou did not desire, but a body thou have prepared for me**" (40:6). He said he delighted to do Jehovah's will, and his law was in his heart. He asked Jehovah to preserve him with his loving kindness and truth. The author said his iniquities were more than the hairs of his head. And he asked Jehovah to deliver him. He asked that those who sought to destroy his soul be defeated. And he said, "**Let all those who seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee. Let such as love thy salvation say continually, Jehovah be magnified**" (40:16).

Psalm 41 (239 words): This psalm begins, "**Blessed is he who considers a poor man. Jehovah will deliver him in the day of evil.**" The author asked Jehovah to have mercy upon him and heal his soul, for he had sinned. He told of the hypocrisy of his enemies, who wanted him to die. He said, "**Yea, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted up his heel against me**" (41:9). He said Jehovah had mercy upon him. He said Jehovah upheld him in his integrity. He ended, "**Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from everlasting and to everlasting. Truly, and Truly.**"

Psalm 42 (273 words): The author began, "**As the hart pants after the water brooks, so my soul pants after thee, O God.**" He said his tears had been his food day and night. He said he remembered leading the throng to the house of God with joy and praise to keep the holyday. He asked why his soul was cast down and disquieted within him. He said to hope in God. He said he would ask God his rock why he had forgotten him. He said his enemies reproached him, wanting to know where was his God. Then he said again, "**Why are thou cast down, O my soul? And why are thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him,**

the help of my countenance, and my God." (42:11).

Psalm 43 (130 words): The author began, "**Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against a profane nation. O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.**" He said he was the God of his strength, and he asked why he had cast him off. He asked him to send out his light and truth to lead him. Then he would go to the altar and praise him. This psalm ends with the exact same words as the preceding one.

Psalm 44 (459 words): This is a prayer. The author told how God drove out the nations and gave the land to them. He said God was his King. He said through God they would push down their adversaries. He said, "**In God we have made our boast all the day long, and we will give thanks to thy name forever**" (44:8). Then he told about their current condition. He said God had cast them off, and made them spoil for their enemies. He said they were like sheep for food, and were scattered among the nations. He said they were a reproach to their neighbors, and a byword among the nations. He said shame had covered his face because of the enemy. He said, "**All this has come upon us, yet we have not forgotten thee, nor have we dealt falsely in thy covenant**" (44:17). He must have meant they still remembered God and his covenant after they were scattered, for they certainly did forsake him and his covenant before that. He said, "**Yea, for thy sake we are killed all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter**" (44:22). Which may have meant, by not embracing the gods of their captors they were persecuted. He asked Jehovah why he slept and ignored their oppression. He ended the prayer, "**For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our body clings to the ground. Rise up for our help, and redeem us for thy loving kindness' sake.**"

Psalm 45 (322 words): The author said his heart overflowed with a good matter. He said he spoke things about the king, whom he said was fairer than the sons of men, and grace was poured in his lips. Therefore, God had blessed him forever. He said the mighty one should gird on his sword, and ride prosperously because of truth and gentleness and righteousness.

He also said, "**Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. A scepter of straightness is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou have loved righteousness, and hated wickedness. Therefore**

God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy companions" (45:6-7). That is another of many scriptures in the psalms that are applied in the New Testament to the Messiah, Jesus Christ (see Heb. 1:8). The author also spoke of the queen. He said to her, "**Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So will the king desire thy beauty, for he is thy lord, and reverence thou him**" (45:10-11). That passage probably applies to Christ's Church. The author spoke of the glory of the queen, who entered into the king's palace with gladness.

Psalm 46 (201 words): This psalm begins, "**God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**" The author said therefore we would not fear, though the waters roared and the mountains shook. He spoke of a river that made the city of God glad. He said God was in the midst of her (see Rev. 22:1). He said the nations raged, but when God uttered his voice the earth melted. He told how Jehovah caused wars to cease. Then he quoted God, who said, "**Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth**" (46:10). And he said the God of Jacob was our refuge.

Psalm 47 (134 words): This is a psalm of praise. It begins, "**O clap your hands, all ye peoples. Shout to God with the voice of triumph. For Jehovah Most High is awesome. He is a great King over all the earth.**" The author told how God subdues nations under them and chooses their inheritance. Then five times he said to sing praises to God our King, because he is King of all the earth. He said, "**The rulers of the peoples are gathered together, the people of the God of Abraham**" (47:9). The New Testament says the disciples of Christ will reign with him.

Psalm 48 (226 words): This psalm begins, "**Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in his holy mountain.**" Then it praises mount Zion, the city of the great King, in whose palaces God had made himself known for a refuge. The author said the kings assembled and looked. He said, then they were amazed and dismayed. He said they hastened away trembling. He said God would establish the city of Jehovah of hosts forever (see Rev. 21:10). He praised God, and said to walk about Zion, examining its parts, in order to tell the next generation. He ended, "**For this God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even to death.**"

Psalm 49 (336 words): The author began, "**Hear this, all ye peoples. Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together.**" He said he would speak wisdom. He asked why he should fear in the days of evil, when iniquity surrounded him. Then he said that none of those who trust in their wealth could give God a ransom that they would not see corruption. He said wise men and fools both die, and leave their wealth to others. He said they think their houses are forever, but they are like the beasts that perish. He said, "**This their way is their folly. Yet after them men approve their sayings**" (49:13). He said God would redeem his soul from the power of Sheol and would receive him. He said not to fear when a man is made rich, for his glory will die with him. He said, "**Though while he lived he blessed his soul (and men praise thee, when thou do well for thyself)**" (49:18). He ended the psalm, "**A man who is in splendor, and understands not, is like the beasts that perish.**"

Psalm 50 (398 words): This psalm begins by saying that the Mighty One, God, Jehovah, has spoken and called the earth from sunrise to sunset. It says he has shone forth out of Zion. It says he comes with a devouring fire before him, and he does not keep silent. It says he calls to the heavens and the earth, that he may judge his people. God said to gather his sanctified together to him, those who had made a covenant with him by sacrifice. He said, "**Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify to thee, I am God, even thy God**" (50:7). He said he would not reprove them for their animal sacrifices. However, he also said he would not take them. He said, "**For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills**" (50:10).

He told Israel to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, pay the vows to him, and call upon him in the day of trouble. He said, "**I will deliver thee, and thou shall glorify me**" (50:15). Then he rebuked the wicked man: the man who hates instruction, and casts God's words behind him. God described some of the evil he did. God said he kept silent when he did them, but he would reprove him.

Then God said, "**Now consider this, ye who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver: Whoever offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies me. And to him**

who orders his way aright I will show the salvation of God” (50:22-23).

Psalm 51 (326 words): This psalm is a prayer for forgiveness. The author asked God for mercy, and said, “**Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin**” (51:2). He said his sin was ever before him. He said he was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin his mother conceived him. Which may simply mean that he was born into a sinful world. He asked among other things to hear joy and gladness. He said, “**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me**” (51:10), and “**Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit**” (51:12). He said he would then teach transgressors his ways, and would show forth his praise. He said God had no pleasure in burnt offerings, but “**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou will not despise**” (51:17).

Psalm 52 (172 words): This psalm is a rebuke to the mighty man who devises wickedness, who loves evil more than good, who loves lying rather than speaking righteousness. The author said God would destroy him forever. He said the righteous would see, and fear, and laugh at him, because he trusted his riches and not God. The author said he would trust the loving kindness of God forever and give him thanks.

Psalm 53 (150 words): This psalm is almost exactly the same as Psalm 14; only two sentences are worded differently. It begins, “**The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.**” The author said Jehovah looked down from heaven to see if any sought after God. He said they had all become filthy. Which probably means no mortal man has lived a sinless life. Then he spoke of the workers of iniquity. He ended by asking Jehovah to save Israel and bring back their captives.

Psalm 54 (116 words): This is a prayer for salvation from enemies. It begins, “**Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me in thy might.**” The author said violent men sought his soul, but God was his helper, who would requite their evil. He said he would sacrifice and give thanks to the name of Jehovah, “**For he has delivered me out of all trouble, and my eye has seen it upon my enemies**” (54:7).

Psalm 55 (435 words): This is a prayer for deliverance from the wicked. The author began, “**Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not thyself**

from my supplication.” He said he moaned because of the oppression of the wicked. He said fearfulness and trembling had come upon him. He said, “**O that I had wings like a dove! Then I would fly away, and be at rest**” (55:6). He asked Jehovah to destroy them. He said violence and strife, iniquity and mischief, oppression and deceit were in the midst of the city.

He said it was not an enemy who reproached him; then he could have borne it. He said it was a companion and friend, who walked with him in the house of God. He said, “**Let death come suddenly upon them**” (55:15) because of their wickedness. He said he would call upon Jehovah and he would save him. He said that his (the wicked man’s) mouth was smooth as butter, yet his heart was war. He said Jehovah would never allow the righteous man to be moved. He ended, “**But thou, O God, will bring them down into the pit of destruction. Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days, but I will trust in thee.**”

Psalm 56 (232 words): This psalm is a plea for deliverance. The author began, “**Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up. Fighting all the day long he oppresses me.**” He said there were many who fought proudly against him. He said he would trust God and not fear. He said all their thoughts were against him for evil. He asked if they should escape by iniquity. He said God recorded his wanderings in his book. He said he knew that God was for him, and he would praise his word. He said, “**In God I have put my trust. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?**” (56:11). He said God had delivered his soul from death.

Psalm 57 (231 words): This psalm begins, “**Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for my soul takes refuge in thee.**” The author said God would send from heaven and save him. He said his soul was among lions—sons of men, whose teeth and tongue were weapons. He praised God. He said they had prepared a pit for him, but had fallen into it themselves. Then he said his heart was fixed, and he would sing praises. He said, “**I will give thanks to thee, O Lord, among the peoples. I will sing praises to thee among the nations. For thy loving kindness is great to the heavens, and thy truth to the skies**” (57:9-10).

Psalm 58 (210 words): The author asked if the sons of men judged uprightly. He answered and said, no, they worked wickedness in their hearts and

violence with their hands. He said, “**The wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies**” (58:3). That could only refer to their mental being, the birth of that evil mind-set, which, like the spiritual birth of the Christian, can come at any age in a man’s life.

He said their poison was like the poison of a serpent. He asked God to break their teeth and melt them away like water. He said, “**A righteous man shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance. He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, so that men shall say, Truly there is a reward for the righteous man. Truly there is a God who judges in the earth**” (58:10-11).

Psalm 59 (346 words): This psalm is a prayer for deliverance from wicked enemies. The author said they lie in wait for his soul, and he asked God to help him. He said, “**Even thou, O Jehovah God of hosts, the God of Israel, arise to visit all the nations. Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors**” (59:5). He said they howled like a dog, with swords in their lips. He said, “**But thou, O Jehovah, will laugh at them. Thou will have all the nations in derision**” (59:8). He said God was his high tower. He asked Jehovah not to kill them, lest his people forget, but to bring them down and scatter them by his power, because of their cursing and lying. He said, “**Consume them in wrath, consume them, so that they shall be no more. And let them know that God rules in Jacob, to the ends of the earth**” (59:13). He said to let them howl like a dog, but he would sing of God’s strength and loving kindness. He said, “**For God is my high tower, the God of my mercy**” (59:17).

Psalm 60 (209 words): The psalm begins, “**O God thou have cast us off. Thou have broken us down. Thou have been angry. O restore us again.**” The author asked God to answer and save his beloved ones. Then he said God had spoken in his holiness. And he mentioned several lands he said he would exult over. Again he asked God for help against the adversary. And he said, “**Through God we shall do valiantly, for he it is who will tread down our adversaries**” (60:12).

Psalm 61 (133 words): The author began, “**Hear my cry, O God. Attend to my prayer.**” He said he would call him from the end of the earth when his heart was overwhelmed. And he said, “**Lead**

me to the rock that is higher than I” (61:2). He said God had been his strong tower from the enemy. He said God had heard his vows, and would prolong the king’s life. He ended, “**O prepare loving kindness and truth that they may preserve him. So I will sing praise to thy name forever, that I may daily perform my vows.**”

Psalm 62 (227 words): This psalm begins, “**My soul waits in silence for God only. From him is my salvation.**” The author said that God was his only salvation, his rock and high tower. He spoke of evil men who delight in lies, blessing with their mouth but cursing inwardly. Again he said that God was his salvation and his rock. And he said, “**Trust in him at all times, ye people. Pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us**” (62:8). He said men of low degree were vanity, and men of high degree were a lie. Base men are nothing, and men on pedestals do not belong there. He warned against trusting in oppression. He ended, “**God has spoken once, twice I have heard this, that power belongs to God. Also to thee, O Lord, belongs loving kindness, for thou render to every man according to his work.**”

Psalm 63 (198 words): This psalm begins, “**O God, thou are my God. I will earnestly seek thee.**” The author said he would praise him, because his loving kindness was better than life. He said God had been his help, but those who sought to destroy his soul would perish. He said, “**But the king shall rejoice in God. Everyone who swears by him shall glory, for the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped**” (63:11).

Psalm 64 (186 words): This psalm is a prayer for deliverance from evil enemies. The author began, “**Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint. Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.**” He said they use their tongues like a sword, even bitter words, to secretly attack a blameless man. He said, “**They encourage themselves in an evil purpose. They converse of laying snares secretly. They say, Who will see them?**” (64:5). He said, however, that God would shoot at them, and they would stumble. He said all who saw them would wag the head, fear, declare the work of God, and wisely consider of his doing. He said a righteous man would be glad in Jehovah.

Psalm 65 (262 words): The author began, “**Praise waits for thee, O God, in Zion. And to thee the vow shall be performed.**” He said Jehovah

hears prayers and forgives transgressions. He said the man Jehovah chooses was blessed. Then he said, “**By awesome things thou will answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation ...**” (65:5). And he spoke of his power over the mountains and the seas. He also told how God waters the earth and enriches it. He ended, “**The pastures are clothed with flocks. The valleys also are covered over with grain. They shout for joy; they also sing.**”

Psalm 66 (318 words): This is a psalm of praise. It begins, “**Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth. Sing forth the glory of his name. Make his praise glorious.**” The author said all the earth would worship God. He spoke of God’s power and rule. He said, “**For thou, O God, have proved us. ... Thou laid a great burden upon our loins. ... But thou brought us out into a wealthy place**” (66:10-12). He said he would come into his house with burnt offerings, and would pay the vows he made when he was in distress. He asked all who fear God to come, and he would declare what he had done for his soul. He said Jehovah would not hear if iniquity was in his heart. But he had heard his prayer, and he praised Jehovah.

Psalm 67 (109 words): This psalm begins, “**God be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy salvation among all nations.**” It tells the nations to be glad and sing for joy. It tells all peoples to praise God. And it says God will bless us.

Psalm 68 (660 words): This psalm begins, “**Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered.**” The author said to let the wicked perish, but the righteous be glad. Among other things he said God was a father of the fatherless, and sets the lonely in families. He spoke of God’s blessings to his people during their Exodus and conquest of kings. He said, “**Why look ye askance, ye high mountains, at the mountain which God has desired for his abode?**” (68:16). Which may refer to the attitude of lofty nations toward Zion, the temple mount. He spoke of the supremacy of Jehovah. He praised God, who is our salvation. He said escape from death belongs to Jehovah, but he would smite his enemies through the head. He said Jehovah would again rescue them, and defeat their enemies.

He spoke of the singers, the minstrels, and the damsels playing with timbrels in the sanctu-

ary. And he said, “**Bless ye God in the congregations, the lord of the fountain of Israel**” (68:26). He mentioned rulers of some tribes of Israel, and said that God had commanded their strength. He said kings would bring presents to God because of his temple in Jerusalem. He said all kingdoms would sing to God, and ascribe strength to him. He ended, “**O God, awesome out of thy holy places, the God of Israel, he gives strength and power to his people. Blessed be God.**”

Psalm 69 (676 words): Peter said David wrote this psalm. David began, saying, “**Save me, O God, for the waters have come in to my soul.**” He said he was weary with his crying. He said those who hated him without a cause were more than the hairs of his head. He said God knew his foolishness, and he asked that those who sought for Jehovah not be put to shame through him. He said for Jehovah’s sake he had borne reproach, and had become an alien to his mother’s sons. He said, “**For the zeal of thy house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach thee have fallen upon me**” (69:9). Paul applied that passage to Christ (see Rom. 15:3).

David said his mourning made him a byword, and he was the song of drunkards. He pleaded with Jehovah to answer his prayer according to his loving kindness, and deliver him from those who hated him. He said, “**Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. And I looked for some to take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. They also gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink**” (69:20-21).

He asked that their table become a snare, and their eyes become darkened, and bow down their back continually. He asked that their habitation become desolate, because of their persecution. He asked that they be blotted out of the book of life. He said he was poor and sorrowful, and he asked God to set him up on high. He said he would praise and thank God. He said that would please him more than an ox (on the altar). He said the meek had seen it and were glad. He said Jehovah hears the needy. He asked that heaven and earth praise Jehovah. He ended by saying that God would save Zion, and the seed of his servants would inherit it.

Psalm 70 (102 words): This is a prayer for help. The author asked that those who sought after his soul

be shamed and confounded. He asked that all who seek God rejoice and be glad in him. He said he was poor and needy. And he ended, “**Thou are my help and my deliverer, O Jehovah. Delay thou not.**”

Psalm 71 (473 words): The author began, “**In thee, O Jehovah, do I take refuge. Let me never be put to shame.**” He asked Jehovah to rescue him from the wicked and cruel man. He said Jehovah was his rock and fortress. He said Jehovah was his hope and trust from youth, and he would continually praise him. He asked Jehovah not to forsake him when his strength failed. He said his enemies took counsel together against him, and he asked God to make haste to help him. He asked that the adversaries of his soul be covered with reproach and dishonor. He said he would praise Jehovah more and more, and would tell of his righteousness and salvation. He said, “**O God, thou have taught me from my youth, and I have declared thy wondrous works until now**” (71:17). He asked God not to forsake him, even when he was old, until he had declared his strength to everyone who was to come. He said God’s righteousness was very high. He said God had shown them many and great troubles, but would revive them again. He said he would praise him with song, and his lips would shout for joy. He ended, “**My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long. For they are put to shame, for they are confounded, who seek my hurt.**”

Psalm 72 (361 words): This psalm seems to have been written by David. It begins, “**Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness to the king’s son. He will judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with justice. ... He will judge the poor of the people. He will save the sons of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.**”

The author told more about his (the king’s) blessedness. He said his enemies would lick the dust, all the kings would fall down before him, and all nations would serve him. He said he would have pity on a poor and needy man. He said he would save the souls of the needy, and redeem them from oppression and violence. He said men would pray for him continually, and bless him all the day long. He said there would be prosperity, and his name would endure forever.

He ended, “**Blessed be Jehovah God, the**

God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever. And let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Truly, and Truly. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” That last sentence does not mean none of the psalms listed later in this collection were by David. It probably refers to all the prayer requests and statements in that particular psalm.

Psalm 73 (415 words): The author began, “**Surely God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone. My steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.**” Then he gave a vivid description of what they are like. Among other things he said they did not have troubles as other men; pride is a chain around their neck; violence covers them as a garment; they think God does not know; they prosper and have wealth. So he thought, “**Surely in vain I have cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocence, for all the day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning**” (73:13-14).

However, he immediately said if he had spoken thus he would have dealt treacherously with the generation of God’s sons. Yet when he thought to understand, he said it was too painful for him, until he considered their latter end. He said God had put them in slippery places, so they would become desolate in a moment, consumed with terrors. The author said he had been brutish and ignorant. He said that nevertheless Jehovah had held his right hand, and would guide him with his counsel, afterward receiving him to glory. He said his flesh failed, but God was his strength forever. He said those who were far from God would perish. He concluded, “**But it is good for me to draw near to God. I have made lord Jehovah my refuge, that I may tell of all thy works.**”

Psalm 74 (414 words): This psalm is a lamentation. The author began, “**O God, why have thou cast off forever?**” He asked God to remember the tribe of his inheritance, and mount Zion where he had dwelt. Then he spoke of the desolation of the land. He said, “**Lift up thy feet to the perpetual ruins, all the evil that the enemy has done in the sanctuary**” (74:3). He told how they had wantonly destroyed God’s sanctuary and profaned it. He said they had burned all the meeting-places of God in the land. He said there was no

more any prophet. He asked God how long the adversary would reproach and blaspheme. He said yet God was his King of old, and he spoke of his power and control of the world. He said to God, **“Have respect to the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of violence”** (74:20). He ended, **“Arise, O God, plead thine own cause. Remember how the foolish man reproaches thee all the day. Forget not the voice of thine adversaries. The tumult of those who rise up against thee ascends continually.”**

Psalm 75 (191 words): The author began by giving thanks to God. Then the psalm says, **“When I shall find the set time, I will judge uprightly; when the earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved. I have set up the pillars of it”** (75:2-3), which seems to be a quote from God. The author then spoke to the arrogant and the wicked, telling them to cease. He said God was the judge, putting one down and lifting another up. He said there was a cup in the hand of Jehovah that all the wicked would drink. He said he would praise the God of Jacob. He ended, saying the horns of the wicked would be cut off, but the horns of the righteous would be lifted up.

Psalm 76 (197 words): This psalm says that God is known in Judah, is great in Israel, and has a dwelling-place in Zion. The author said it was there he broke the weapons and the battle. He said God was greater than the mighty. He said both chariot and horse were cast into a deep sleep at his rebuke. He asked who could stand when God was angry. He said, **“The earth feared and was still when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth”** (76:8-9). He said the inward thought of man would praise him. He said let all who are around him bring presents to him who ought to be feared. He said Jehovah was fearful to the kings of the earth.

Psalm 77 (327 words): The author began by saying he would cry to God. He said in the day of his trouble he sought Jehovah. He said he was so troubled he could not speak, and he considered the days of old. He said he communed with his own heart, and asked if Jehovah would cast off forever, and had forgotten to be gracious. Then he said, **“I will make mention of the deeds of Jehovah, for I will remember thy wonders of old”** (77:11). He asked who was a great god like God. And he said, **“Thou are the God who does wonders. Thou have made known thy**

strength among the peoples” (77:14). Then he spoke of God’s redemption of his people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. He spoke of the thunder and lightning, and the trembling of the earth, when God led his people by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Psalm 78 (1209 words): This is the second longest psalm in the Bible. Most of it is about the history of Israel from the Exodus to about the time of the divided kingdom. It begins, **“Give ear, O my people, to my law. Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.”** The author said that God established a testimony, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded be known to generations to come. He said sons were to tell their sons to set their hope in God, and keep his commandments. They were not to be as their fathers, who were a stubborn and rebellious generation. He said the sons of Ephraim, although armed, turned back in the day of battle, and refused to walk in his law, forgetting the wondrous works he had shown them.

Then he spoke of their history as a nation. He said God did marvelous things in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt. He said God also guided them, and gave them water out of the rock. Then he said, **“Yet they went on to still sin against him, to rebel against the Most High in the desert”** (78:17). He said they challenged God about food. He said they angered him because they did not believe in him, yet he gave them food from heaven. He said, **“For all this they still sinned, and did not believe in his wondrous works”** (78:32). He said when God killed them, then they remembered that he was their rock and their redeemer. Then he said, **“But they flattered him with their mouth, and lied to him with their tongue”** (78:36), because their heart was not right with him. He said yet God was merciful and did not destroy them. The author said, **“How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness, and grieved him in the desert!”** (78:40).

Then he told about the plagues that God sent against Egypt. He said God’s people did not remember how he had redeemed them. He told how God drove out nations to give them their inheritance, but they rebelled and provoked him to anger with their idolatry. He said, **“When**

God heard, he was angry, and greatly abhorred Israel” (78:59), and he gave them over to the sword. He said then Jehovah awoke as out of sleep, and he smote his adversaries. He said Jehovah chose the tribe of Judah and mount Zion where he built his sanctuary. He ended the psalm, saying that Jehovah chose his servant David to be their shepherd.

Psalm 79 (276 words): This psalm begins, “**O God, the nations have come into thine inheritance. They have defiled thy holy temple. They have laid Jerusalem in heaps. They have given the dead bodies of thy servants to be food to the birds of the heavens.**” The author also said they had become a reproach to their neighbors, and he asked Jehovah if he would be angry forever. He asked for mercy, deliverance, and forgiveness. He said, “**Why should the nations say, Where is their God?**” (79:10). He asked Jehovah to render to their neighbors sevenfold into their bosom their reproach. He ended, saying that they, the sheep of his pasture, would give thanks forever, and show forth his praise to all generations.

Psalm 80 (327 words): The author called upon God, the Shepherd of Israel, to come and save them. He asked how long Jehovah would be angry against the prayer of his people. He said God fed them with the bread of tears, and made them hated to their enemies. Then he spoke of Israel as a vine that God brought out of Egypt, drove out nations, and planted it. He said it took deep root and filled the land, covering the mountains with the shadow of it. And he asked God why he had broken down its walls so that all who passed by plucked it. He asked God to look down from heaven, and visit the vine which his right hand had planted. He ended, “**Revive thou us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O Jehovah God of hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.**”

Psalm 81 (276 words): This psalm begins, “**Sing aloud to God our strength. Make a joyful noise to the God of Jacob.**” The author said to blow the trumpet on their feast-day, because it was an ordinance of the God of Jacob. Then the psalm tells of God, who appears to speak of Israel. God said when he (Israel) called in trouble, he delivered him. Then he said, “**Hear, O my people, and I will testify to thee, O Israel, if thou would hearken to me!**” (81:8). He said he was Jehovah, and they should worship no for-

eign god. He said, however, that the people would not listen, so he let them go after the stubbornness of their heart. Then he said, “**O that my people would hearken to me, that Israel would walk in my ways!**” (81:13). He said he would subdue their enemies, and make them prosperous.

Psalm 82 (117 words): This psalm begins, “**God stands in the congregation of God. He judges among the gods.**” The author then asked how long they would judge unjustly. He said they should judge the weak, and deliver from the hand of the wicked man. He said they were ignorant, walking in darkness. Then he said, “**I said, Ye are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High. Nevertheless ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the rulers**” (82:6-7). And he asked God to arise and judge the earth, for he would inherit all the nations.

Psalm 83 (270 words): This psalm begins, “**O God, keep thou not silence. Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult, and those who hate thee have lifted up the head.**” The author said they plot to destroy Israel, and he mentioned several nations that were involved. Then he asked God to defeat them as he had former enemies. He asked God to pursue them with a tempest, and make them stubble before the wind. He ended, “**Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever. Yea, let them be confounded and perish, that they may know that thou alone, whose name is Jehovah, are the Most High over all the earth.**”

Psalm 84 (229 words): The author praised the dwellings of Jehovah. And he told of the blessedness of those who dwell in his house, and whose strength was in him. He said, “**Passing through the valley of weeping they make it a place of springs**” (84:6). He said they went from strength to strength. He asked God to hear his prayer. And he said, “**I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness**” (84:10). He said Jehovah would give grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from those who walk worthily. He ended, “**O Jehovah of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in thee.**”

Psalm 85 (200 words): The author said Jehovah had brought back the captives of Jacob, and had forgiven the iniquity of his people. He said Jehovah had turned from the fierceness of his anger, but

he asked him if he would be angry forever. That must mean he was still angry, but no longer expressed it fiercely. He asked for Jehovah's loving kindness and salvation. He said he would hear what Jehovah spoke, for it would be peace to his people, but they should not turn again to folly. He ended, "**Yea, Jehovah will give that which is good, and our land shall yield its increase. Righteousness shall go before him, and shall make his footsteps a path.**"

Psalm 86 (318 words): This is a prayer for mercy and help. The author began, "**Bow down thine ear, O Jehovah, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul, for I am devout. O thou my God, save thy servant who trusts in thee.**" He said he would call upon him in the day of his trouble and he would answer. He said there was none like him among the gods. And all nations, whom he had made, would worship him and glorify his name. He said, "**Teach me thy way, O Jehovah, I will walk in thy truth. Unite my heart to fear thy name**" (86:11). He said he would praise him with his whole heart. He said violent men sought after his soul. He ended, "**Show me a sign for good, that those who hate me may see it, and be put to shame, because thou, Jehovah, have helped me, and comforted me.**"

Psalm 87 (111 words): The author said, "**Jehovah loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob**" (87:2). And he went on to praise the city (Jerusalem), saying that it was an honor to be born there.

Psalm 88 (309 words): This is a prayer for deliverance from troubles. The author began, "**O Jehovah, the God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee.**" He said his soul was full of troubles, and his life drew near to Sheol. He said he was as a man who had no help, for Jehovah's wrath laid hard upon him. He said he had made him an abomination to all his acquaintances, and they were far from him. He said his eye wasted away because of affliction. Then he asked Jehovah if the dead would praise him, or see and declare his wonders. He asked why Jehovah had cast off his soul and hid his face from him. He ended, "**Thou have put beloved and friend far from me, and my acquaintances into darkness.**"

Psalm 89 (864 words): This psalm begins, "**I will sing of the loving kindness of Jehovah forever. With my mouth I will make known thy faith-**

fulness to all generations." Then the author quoted Jehovah saying that he made a covenant with his servant David to establish his seed and his throne forever. The author spoke of the wonder and power of Jehovah, the founder of the heavens and the earth. He said, "**Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne. Loving kindness and truth go before thy face**" (89:14). He spoke of the blessedness of the people who knew the joyful sound, who rejoiced in his name and his righteousness, for he was their strength. Then he said that God had exalted a chosen man, David whom he found. He said, "**And I will beat down his adversaries before him, and smite those who hate him, but my faithfulness and my loving kindness shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted**" (89:23-24). He said David would call Jehovah his Father, and God, and rock of his salvation. And again he quoted Jehovah's covenant with David. Jehovah said that if his sons forsook his law, he would chasten them with the rod, but would not break his covenant with David.

The author then said that God was angry, and had cast off and rejected his anointed. He said Jehovah abhorred the covenant of his servant and profaned his crown. He said Jehovah exalted the right hand of his adversaries and caused his defeat in battle. He said he covered him with shame. Then he asked if Jehovah would hide himself forever. He asked him to remember how short the life of a man was. He said, "**Lord, where are thy former loving kindnesses, which thou swore to David in thy faithfulness?**" (89:49). He asked Jehovah to remember the reproach of his servants. He ended, "**Blessed be Jehovah for evermore. Truly, and Truly.**"

Psalm 90 (322 words): The psalm begins, "**Lord, thou have been our dwelling-place in all generations.**" The author said that before the world was made God was from everlasting to everlasting. He said a thousand years in his sight was but as yesterday when it is past. He compared the sons of men to grass, which grows and then perishes. He said we were consumed in God's anger; he had set our iniquities before him. He asked Jehovah to teach us to number our days that we may get us a heart of wisdom. He said, "**O satisfy us in the morning with thy loving kindness, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days**

in which thou have afflicted us, and the years in which we have seen evil” (90:14-15).

Psalm 91 (285 words): The author began, “**He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.**” Then the author addressed the reader. He said Jehovah would protect him from all harm. He said thousands might fall beside him, but it would not come near him. He said to the reader, “**Thou shall only behold with thine eyes, and see the reward of the wicked**” (91:8).

Then he made the statement that Satan quoted when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness: “**There shall no evil befall thee, nor shall any plague come near thy tent, for he will give his agents charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone**” (91:10-12).

After that the author quotes God speaking. Jehovah said he would deliver him because he had set his love upon him. Jehovah said, “**He shall call upon me, and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will deliver him, and honor him**” (91:15).

Psalm 92 (248 words): The author said it was a good thing to give thanks to Jehovah, to sing praises to his name, and show forth his loving kindness with instruments of music. He said, “**How great are thy works, O Jehovah! Thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knows not, nor does a fool understand this**” (92:5-6). He said the wicked live and die like grass. He said Jehovah’s enemies would perish, but God had blessed him.

He said, “**Men who are planted in the house of Jehovah shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age. They shall be full of sap and green to show that Jehovah is upright. He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him**” (92:13-15).

Psalm 93 (88 words): The author began, “**Jehovah reigns! He is clothed with majesty.**” He said Jehovah was from everlasting. He spoke of floods and waters and mighty breakers of the sea (which may symbolize mankind). He ended, “**Thy testimonies are very sure. Holiness befits thy house, O Jehovah, for evermore.**”

Psalm 94 (342 words): The author began, “**O Jeho-**

vah, thou God to whom vengeance belongs, thou God to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth. Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth. Render to the proud a recompense.” He asked how long the wicked would triumph. He described some of their cruelty, and said they did not think that God cared. He said to them, “**Consider, ye brutish among the people, and ye fools, when will ye be wise?**” (94:8). He said Jehovah sees and hears. He then said that the man whom Jehovah chastened and taught was blessed. He said Jehovah would not cast off his people. Then the author asked who would rise up for him against evil-doers. He said that Jehovah held him up when his foot slipped. He said the comforts of Jehovah delighted his soul. Then he said, “**Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with thee, which frames mischief by statute? They gather themselves together against the soul of a righteous man, and condemn innocent blood**” (94:21). He said Jehovah would cut them off in their own wickedness.

Psalm 95 (194 words): The author of the book of Hebrews said that David wrote this psalm. David began, “**O come, let us sing to Jehovah. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.**” He said Jehovah was a great King above all gods, and the sea and the land was his. And he said, “**O come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before Jehovah our maker**” (95:6). The rest of the psalm is God speaking. God asked them to hear his voice, and not harden their heart, as when their fathers challenged him and saw his work. He said forty years long he was grieved with that generation, because they erred in their heart, and had not known his ways. He said, “**Therefore I swore in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest**” (95:11).

Psalm 96 (214 words): This psalm begins, “**O sing to Jehovah a new song. Sing to Jehovah, all the earth.**” The author said to bless his name, show forth his salvation day to day, and declare his glory and marvelous works among the nations. He said all the gods of the peoples were idols, but Jehovah made the heavens. He said, “**Ascribe to Jehovah the glory due to his name. Bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship Jehovah in holy array. Tremble before him, all the earth**” (96:8-9). He said to say among the nations that Jehovah reigns. He said the heavens should be glad and the earth rejoice. He said, “**For he comes to**

judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth” (96:13).

Psalm 97 (193 words): This psalm begins, “**Jehovah reigns! Let the earth rejoice. Let the multitude of isles be glad.**” The author said righteousness and justice were the foundation of his throne. He said the mountains melted like wax at the presence of Jehovah. He said the heavens declare his righteousness, and all the peoples have seen his glory. He said idol worshipers should be put to shame. He said, “**Bow yourselves to him, all ye gods**” (97:7). He said Zion heard and was glad. He said, “**O ye who love Jehovah, hate evil. He preserves the souls of his sanctified. He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked**” (97:10). He said light was sown for the righteous man. He said the righteous should be glad in Jehovah, and give thanks to the memory of his holiness.

Psalm 98 (167 words): The author began, “**O sing to Jehovah a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand, and his holy arm, has wrought salvation for him.**” He said Jehovah had revealed his salvation and his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He said all the earth should make a joyful noise to Jehovah, and sing praises with instruments of music. He said the sea should roar, and the hills sing for joy together before Jehovah, because, “**He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity**” (98:9).

Psalm 99 (150 words): The author said that Jehovah reigns, and all the peoples should tremble. He said they should praise his great and awesome name. He said, “**The king’s strength also loves justice. Thou establish equity. Thou execute justice and righteousness in Jacob**” (99:4). He spoke of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, who called upon Jehovah, and kept his testimonies. He said, “**Thou answered them, O Jehovah our God. Thou were a God who forgave them, though thou took vengeance on their doings**” (99:8).

Psalm 100 (82 words): This psalm begins, “**Make a joyful noise to Jehovah, all ye lands.**” The author said Jehovah made us, and we should serve him with gladness, praise him, give thanks to him, and bless his name. He said, “**For Jehovah is good. His loving kindness is forever, and his faithfulness to all generations**” (100:5).

Psalm 101 (177 words): The author spoke as having

the authority of a king; most likely he was David. He said he would sing of loving kindness and justice. He said he would behave himself wisely, and walk with a perfect heart. He told of ways he would oppose evil. He said, “**He who walks in a perfect way, he shall minister to me**” (101:6). He said, however, “**Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked of the land, to cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of Jehovah**” (101:8).

Psalm 102 (452 words): The author began, “**Hear my prayer, O Jehovah, and let my cry come to thee.**” He asked Jehovah to answer him speedily in the day of his distress. He said his days were consumed away like smoke, and his heart was smitten like grass. He said he was like a pelican in the wilderness. He said, “**My enemies reproach me all the day. Those who are mad against me do curse by me**” (102:8). He said Jehovah had taken him up and cast him away. He said Jehovah would arise and have mercy upon Zion, so the nations would fear the name of Jehovah. He said Jehovah had regarded the prayer of the destitute. And he said, “**This shall be written for the generation to come. And a people which shall be created shall praise Jehovah**” (102:18).

He said Jehovah had looked down from heaven to loose those who were appointed to death, “**that men may declare the name of Jehovah in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem, when the peoples are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve Jehovah**” (102:21-22). He said God had weakened his strength and shortened his days. And he asked God not to take him away in the midst of his days, for God’s years were throughout all generations. He said God created the heavens and the earth. He said, “**They shall perish, but thou shall endure. Yea, all of them shall grow old like a garment. As a vesture thou shall change them, and they shall be changed, but thou are the same, and thy years shall have no end**” (102:26-27).

Psalm 103 (335 words): This psalm begins, “**Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.**” The author said not to forget all his benefits, and then he mentioned several of them. He said Jehovah made his ways known to Moses, and his doings to the sons of Israel. He said Jehovah would not always chide.

Then he said these beautiful words: “**For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great**

is his loving kindness toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pities his sons, So Jehovah pities those who fear him” (103:11-12).

To give you some idea about how high that is, consider this. If a spaceship could travel at the speed of light, it would only take about one second to reach the moon. However, it would take the ship about fourteen billion years to go to the edge of the current visible universe. That is about 82,000,000,000,000,000 miles from earth. Indeed, astronomers say the heavens probably extend farther out than that. Moreover, they say the universe is continuing to expand. And yet the psalmist said Jehovah’s loving kindness toward those who fear him was that high. We can talk about such numbers, but to comprehend such magnitudes is far beyond our capability.

The psalmist said the days of man are like grass, but the loving kindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear him, keep his covenant, and do his precepts. He said, “**Jehovah has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all**” (103:19). Then he said for his mighty agents, all his hosts, his ministers, and all his works, to bless Jehovah. He ended, “**Bless Jehovah, O my soul**” (103:22).

Psalm 104 (577 words): This psalm begins, “**Bless Jehovah, O my soul. O Jehovah my God, thou are very great.**” The author said Jehovah clothed himself with honor and majesty, and covered himself with light as with a garment. He said Jehovah stretches out the heavens like a curtain. He said he made his agents spirits, his ministers a flame of fire. He told how God covered the earth with water. Then at his rebuke, “**The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place which thou had founded for them**” (104:8). He spoke of many things that God does in the world to provide for it and the things in it. Then he said, “**O Jehovah, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom have thou made them all. The earth is full of thy riches**” (104:24).

He mentioned the sea and the ships. And he said, “**Thou give to them, they gather. Thou open thy hand, they are satisfied with good. Thou hide thy face, they are troubled. Thou take away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou send forth thy Spirit, they**

are created, and thou renew the face of the ground” (104:28-30).

He said to let the glory of Jehovah endure forever, and let Jehovah rejoice in his works. He said he would sing to Jehovah as long as he lived. He ended, “**Let thy meditation be sweet to him. I will rejoice in Jehovah. Let sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless Jehovah, O my soul. Praise ye Jehovah.**”

Psalm 105 (622 words): This psalm begins, “**O give thanks to Jehovah, call upon his name. Make known among the peoples his doings. Sing to him, sing praises to him. Talk ye of all his marvelous works. Glory ye in his holy name. Let the heart of those who seek Jehovah rejoice. Seek ye Jehovah and his strength. Seek his face evermore.**”

The author told the seed of Abraham to remember the marvelous works of Jehovah. He told about Jehovah’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them the land. Then he reviewed their history, from the time they were a few sojourners in it until they possessed it. He told about Joseph being sent before them in Egypt. He said he was placed in iron, and the word of Jehovah tried him until the time for his word to come to pass. He said the king made Joseph ruler of all his substance. He said then Israel came into Egypt, and his people increased greatly. So the Egyptians dealt craftily with them. He told how Jehovah sent Moses and Aaron whom he had chosen. And he told about the plagues that God sent against the Egyptians. He told how God cared for his people in the wilderness. He ended, “**And he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took the labor of the peoples in possession, that they might keep his statutes, and observe his laws. Praise ye Jehovah.**”

Psalm 106 (755 words): The author began, “**Praise ye Jehovah. O give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good, for his loving kindness is forever. Who can utter the mighty acts of Jehovah, or show forth all his praise? Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times.**”

He asked Jehovah to remember him with his salvation, so that he could rejoice in the gladness of God’s nation. He said they had sinned with their fathers, and he told of many acts of rebellion they committed. He told of their lack of

faith during the Exodus at the Red Sea. He said when they saw his salvation they sang his praise but soon forgot his works. He told how they lusted in the wilderness, and envied Moses. He told about the molten calf at Horeb (Sinai). He said, “**Thus they changed their glory for the likeness of an ox that eats grass**” (106:20).

He told how they did not believe the word of Jehovah about the pleasant land. He said they joined themselves to Baal-peor, but Phinehas executed judgment which halted the plague. He said they angered God at the waters of Meribah, provoking Moses to speak ill-advisedly. He said they did not destroy the peoples as Jehovah had commanded, but mingled with them, learned their works, and served their idols. He said, “**Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan. And the land was polluted with blood**” (106:37-38).

He said therefore the wrath of Jehovah was kindled against his people, and he abhorred his inheritance. He said he gave them into the hand of their enemies who oppressed them. He said many times Jehovah delivered them but they were rebellious. He said that nevertheless Jehovah remembered his covenant with them, and relented according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses.

He ended with a plea: “**Save us, O Jehovah our God, and gather us from among the nations, to give thanks to thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise. Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, Truly. Praise ye Jehovah.**”

Psalm 107 (688 words): The author began, “**O give thanks to Jehovah, For he is good, for his loving kindness is forever.**” Then he described four examples of men crying out to Jehovah in times of trouble. In each example he described their distress, and said they cried to Jehovah and he delivered them. Then each time after telling how they were saved, he said, “**O that men would praise Jehovah for his loving kindness, and for his wonderful works to the sons of men!**” (107:8, 15, 21, 31). The first example was of men lost in the wilderness. The second was about men who were in slavery because they rebelled against the words of God. The third was about

fools who were near death because of their iniquities. The last example was about seamen who were caught in a fierce storm. He said, “**They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end**” (107:27).

Then the author told how Jehovah dries up lands because of the wickedness of the inhabitants. He also told how Jehovah turns a wilderness into a fruitful land, blessing the people so they could multiply. Then he said that again they were diminished because of oppression, trouble, and sorrow. He said Jehovah pours contempt upon rulers, causing them to wander, but he sets up a needy man above affliction. He said the upright would see it and be glad. He ended, “**He who is wise will give heed to these things, and they will consider the loving kindnesses of Jehovah.**”

Psalm 108 (210 words): This psalm is virtually the same as parts of Psalms 57 and 60. The last half of Psalms 57 and 60 match the first and last halves of this one, respectively. The psalm begins, “**My heart is fixed, O God, I will sing, yea, I will sing praises, even with my glory.**” He said Jehovah’s loving kindness was great above the heavens, and his truth was to the skies. And he asked for his salvation. He said God had spoken in his holiness. Jehovah told of his dominion over the nations, mentioning several by name. The author asked God for help against the adversary. He ended, “**Through God we shall do valiantly, for he it is who will tread down our adversaries.**”

Psalm 109 (534 words): According to Peter, David was the author of this psalm. David began by pleading to God for deliverance from wicked men who use deceitful words of hatred against him. He said they rewarded him evil for good and hatred for his love. Then he called for several imprecations (curses) against them, including the one applied to Judas in the New Testament (see Acts 1:20), which says, “**Let his days be few, and let another take his office**” (109:8).

David said he called for those curses upon such a man because “**he did not remember to show kindness, but persecuted the poor and needy man, and the broken in heart, to kill. Yea, he loved cursing, and it came to him. And he did not delight in blessing, and it was far from him**” (109:16-17). He said that was the reward of his adversaries from Jehovah.

Then he asked Jehovah to deliver him, because he was poor and needy, and his heart was wounded within him. He said his knees were weak through fasting, and he had become a reproach to them (his adversaries). He said, “**When they see me, they shake their head**” (109:25). He asked Jehovah to help him so they would know he had done it, and they would be put to shame. David ended, “**I will give great thanks to Jehovah with my mouth. Yea, I will praise him among the multitude. For he will stand at the right hand of the needy, to save him from those who judge his soul.**”

Psalm 110 (135 words): Jesus said David wrote this psalm (see Mat. 22:43). David began, “**Jehovah says to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.**” David spoke of the conquering power of “**my Lord**” (meaning the Messiah). And he said his priesthood would be forever.

Psalm 111 (167 words): The author began, “**Praise ye Jehovah. I will give thanks to Jehovah with my whole heart, in the council of the upright, and in the congregation.**” He praised Jehovah for his wonderful works and blessings. He said, “**The works of his hands are truth and justice. All his precepts are sure. They are established forever and ever**” (111:7-8). He ended, “**The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom, and all who act accordingly have a good understanding. His praise endures forever.**”

Psalm 112 (168 words): This psalm praises the man who fears Jehovah, and delights greatly in his commandments. The author tells of the many blessings of such a man. He said, “**His righteousness endures forever. His horn shall be exalted with honor**” (112:9). Then he said the wicked man would see it and be grieved. He said the desire of wicked men would perish.

Psalm 113 (132 words): This is a psalm of praise to Jehovah. The author said to praise his name, for he is high above all nations. He said Jehovah’s seat was on high, yet he looks upon the low things in heaven and in the earth. He said he raises up a poor man that he may set him with rulers. He said he makes the barren woman a joyful mother of sons.

Psalm 114 (104 words): The author said that when Israel went forth out of Egypt, Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion. He said the sea and Jordan moved back, and the mountains skipped like rams. He ended, “**Tremble, thou**

earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a fountain of waters.”

Psalm 115 (262 words): This psalm begins, “**Not to us, O Jehovah, not to us, but to thy name give glory. For thy loving kindness, and for thy truth’s sake.**” The author asked why the nations should ask where was their God. He said he was in the heavens, and has done whatever he pleased. He said their idols were silver and gold. He said they had various parts of the body, none of which functioned. He said, “**Those who make them shall be like them. Yea, everyone who trusts in them**” (115:8). Then he said for Israel, the house of Aaron, and those who fear Jehovah, to trust him, for he is their help and shield. He said Jehovah would bless them. He said, “**The heavens are the heavens of Jehovah, but the earth he has given to the sons of men**” (115:16). He said the dead do not praise Jehovah, but they would for evermore.

Psalm 116 (269 words): The author began, “**I love Jehovah because he hears my voice and my supplications. Because he has inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call as long as I live.**” He said he called the name of Jehovah when he was in trouble and sorrow. He said Jehovah was gracious and righteous, and saved him when he was brought low. He told his soul to rest, because Jehovah had dealt bountifully with it, delivering it from death. He said, “**I believed, therefore I have spoken, but I was greatly afflicted. I said in my haste, All men are liars**” (116:10-11). Then he asked what he could render to Jehovah for all his benefits toward him. He said he would pay his vows to Jehovah in the presence of all his people. He said, “**Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his sanctified**” (116:15). He told Jehovah that he was his servant, and would offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving. He ended, “**Praise ye Jehovah**” (116:19).

Psalm 117 (29 words): “**O praise Jehovah, all ye Gentiles, laud him, all ye peoples. For his loving kindness is great toward us, and the truth of Jehovah is forever. Praise ye Jehovah.**”

Psalm 118 (446 words): The author both began and ended the psalm with the words, “**O give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good, for his loving kindness is forever.**” He said that Israel, the house of Aaron, and those who fear Jehovah, should now say that his loving kindness is forever. He said he

called upon Jehovah out of his distress, and he answered him. He said, "**Jehovah is on my side, I will not fear. What can man do to me?**" (118:6). He said it was better to take refuge in Jehovah than to put confidence in man or in rulers. Three times he said that nations surrounded him, and three times he said that in the name of Jehovah he would cut them off. He said that Jehovah was his strength and song and his salvation. And three times he praised the right hand of Jehovah. He said he would not die, but would live and declare the works of Jehovah. He said Jehovah had chastened him greatly but had not given him over to death. He spoke of the gates of righteousness and the gate of Jehovah. Then he said, "**The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is Jehovah's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which Jehovah has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it**" (118:22-24). He asked Jehovah to save, and he said, "**Blessed be he who comes in the name of Jehovah**" (118:26). He said Jehovah was his God and he would give thanks to him.

Psalm 119 (2427 words): This is the longest psalm in the Bible. It is more than twice the length of Psalm 78 which is the second longest. The major subject of the psalm is the author's love for the laws of God. Many and varied are his expressions of that sentiment. He often asked Jehovah to teach him, and give him understanding of his commandments. He often told of the hostility and lawlessness of the wicked, and of his affliction and persecutions. And he often asked for God's mercy.

The author began, "**Blessed are those who are perfect in the way, who walk in the law of Jehovah.**" He author said that God had commanded his precepts, that we should observe them diligently. And he said he would give thanks to him when he learned of his righteous judgments. He asked, "**With what shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to thy word**" (119:9). He said he had sought Jehovah with his whole heart, and he asked that Jehovah teach him his statutes. He said he would meditate on them and not forget his word. He said to Jehovah, "**Deal bountifully with thy servant that I may live, so I will observe thy word**" (119:17). He asked him to open his eyes that he might behold wondrous things out of his law. He said Jehovah had

rebuked the proud who wander from his commandments. He asked to take reproach and contempt from him, for he had kept his testimonies. He said, "**My soul clings to the dust. Enliven thou me according to thy word**" (119:25).

He asked Jehovah to make him understand the way of his precepts, and remove him from the way of falsehood. He said he would cling to his testimonies. He asked Jehovah, "**Teach me, O Jehovah, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it to the end**" (119:33). He asked for understanding, and said he would observe his law with his whole heart. He asked Jehovah to turn his eyes away from beholding vanity. He said to him, "**Let thy loving kindnesses also come to me, O Jehovah, even thy salvation, according to thy word**" (119:41). He said then he would have an answer for him who reproached him, for he trusted in his word. He said he would speak of his testimonies before kings, and would not be put to shame. And he asked, "**Remember the word to thy servant, because thou have made me to hope**" (119:49). He said that was his comfort in his affliction, for his word had revived him.

The psalmist said the proud had him in great derision, but he had not swerved from his law. He said hot indignation had taken hold upon him because of the wicked who forsake his law. He said, "**Jehovah is my portion; I have said that I would observe thy words**" (119:57). He asked Jehovah to be merciful to him according to his word. He said he made haste to observe his commandments. He said he was a companion of all those who fear him, and who observe his precepts. He said to him, "**Thou have dealt well with thy servant, O Jehovah, according to thy word**" (119:65). He asked Jehovah to teach him good judgment and knowledge.

He said that before he was afflicted he went astray, but now he observed his word. He said the proud had forged a lie against him, but he would keep his precepts with his whole heart. He said it was good for him that he was afflicted, that he might learn his statutes. He said to Jehovah, "**Thy hands have made me and fashioned me. Give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments**" (119:73). He said he knew that Jehovah's judgments were righteous. He asked for Jehovah's loving kindness to comfort him, for his law was his delight. He asked that the proud be put to shame. He said to God,

“My soul faints for thy salvation. I hope in thy word” (119:81). He told of his affliction, and asked Jehovah when he would execute judgment on those who persecuted him. He said they had almost made an end of him on the earth, but he had not forsaken his precepts. He said, **“Forever, O Jehovah, thy word is settled in heaven”** (119:89). He said Jehovah’s faithfulness was to all generations. He said that unless his law had been his delight, he would have perished in his affliction. He said, **“I am thine. Save me, for I have sought thy precepts”** (119:94). He said the wicked tried to destroy him.

He told Jehovah, **“O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day”** (119:97). He said Jehovah’s commandments made him wiser than his enemies. He said he had more understanding than all his teachers, and more than the aged, because he kept his precepts. He said Jehovah’s words were sweet to his taste, more than honey. He said it was through them that he got understanding. And he said to him, **“Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and light to my path”** (119:105). He said he had sworn to observe Jehovah’s righteous ordinances.

He said he was very afflicted, and he asked Jehovah to revive him. He said the wicked laid a snare for him, but he had not gone astray from his precepts. He said, **“I hate those who are of a double mind, but I love thy law”** (119:113). He said Jehovah was his shield. And he told evildoers to depart from him, that he might keep the commandments of his God. He asked Jehovah to uphold him. He said Jehovah had put away the wicked of the earth like dross, therefore he loved his testimonies. He said, **“I have done justice and righteousness. Leave me not to my oppressors”** (119:121). He asked Jehovah to deal with him according to his loving kindness, and teach him his statutes. He said he was his servant.

He said he loved his commandments above gold, and he hated every false way. He told Jehovah, **“Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore my soul keeps them”** (119:129). He said the opening of Jehovah’s words gives light, and it gives understanding to the simple. He asked Jehovah to establish his footsteps in his word, and redeem him from the oppression of man. He said streams of water ran down his eyes because they did not observe his law. He said to him, **“Thou are righteous, O Jehovah, and upright**

are thy judgments” (119:137). He said his zeal had consumed him, because his adversaries had forgotten the words of Jehovah. He said his law was truth.

He said trouble and anguish had taken hold on him, but his commandments were his delight. He said, **“I have called with my whole heart. Answer me, O Jehovah. I will keep thy statutes”** (119:145). He said he called to Jehovah, and he asked him to save him and he would observe his testimonies. He said those who follow after wickedness draw near to him, but they were far from his law. He said Jehovah was near and all his commandments were truth. And he asked, **“Consider my affliction, and deliver me, for I do not forget thy law”** (119:153). He asked that Jehovah plead his cause and redeem him. He said Jehovah’s tender mercies were great, and he asked him to enliven him according to his ordinances. He said he had many persecutors, but he had not swerved from his testimonies. He said, **“Rulers have persecuted me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of thy words”** (119:161). He said he hated and abhorred falsehood but loved his law.

He said that seven times a day he praised him because of his righteous ordinances. He said he had hope for his salvation. He said to him, **“Let my cry come near before thee, O Jehovah. Give me understanding according to thy word”** (119:169). He asked Jehovah to deliver him according to his word. He said he had gone astray like a lost sheep. He ended, **“Seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.”**

Psalm 120 (89 words): The author began, **“In my distress I cried to Jehovah, and he answered me.”** He asked Jehovah to deliver his soul from a deceitful tongue. He said such should be given the sharp arrows of the mighty. He lamented living among those who hate peace. He said, **“I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war”** (120:7).

Psalm 121 (105 words): The author asked from where his help would come. Then he said it was from Jehovah who made heaven and earth. He said **“He will not allow thy foot to be moved. He who keeps thee will not slumber”** (121:3). He said, **“Jehovah will keep thee from all evil. He will keep thy soul. Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and for evermore”** (121:7-8).

Psalm 122 (124 words): This is a psalm of praise for Jerusalem. The author began, "**I was glad when they said to me, Let us go to the house of Jehovah.**" He said Jerusalem was where the tribes of Jehovah went to give thanks to the name of Jehovah. He said thrones were set there for judgment, the thrones of the house of David. He said, "**Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper who love thee**" (122:6). He ended, "**For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God I will seek thy good**" (122:9).

Psalm 123 (91 words): The author said he lifted up his eyes to him who sits in the heavens. He asked for mercy, because they were exceedingly filled with the contempt of the proud.

Psalm 124 (121 words): The author said Israel should say that if it had not been Jehovah who was on their side when men rose up against them, then they would have been swallowed up alive. Then he said, "**Blessed be Jehovah, who has not given us as a prey to their teeth**" (124:6). He said their help was in the name of Jehovah who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 125 (104 words): The author began, "**Those who trust in Jehovah are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.**" He said the scepter of wickedness would not rest upon the lot of the righteous. He asked Jehovah to do good to those who are good. He said Jehovah would lead away the workers of iniquity.

Psalm 126 (90 words): This is a psalm of rejoicing for those who returned to Zion from their captivity. The author said their mouth was filled with laughter and their tongue with singing. He said Jehovah had done great things for them. And he said, "**Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy**" (126:5).

Psalm 127 (108 words): The author began, "**Unless Jehovah builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless Jehovah guards the city, the watchman wake but in vain.**" He also told of the blessing of sons, which were a heritage of Jehovah.

Psalm 128 (94 words): The author told of the blessedness of all who fear Jehovah and walk in his ways. Then he said, "**Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears Jehovah**" (128:4). He ended by calling for peace upon Israel.

Psalm 129 (122 words): The author said, "**Let Israel now say, Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth up, yet they have**

not prevailed against me" (129:1-2). He said Jehovah was righteous, and he had cut apart the cords of the wicked. Then he called for a curse upon all those who hate Zion.

Psalm 130 (103 words): The author began, "**Out of the depths I have cried to thee, O Jehovah.**" He said that if Jehovah took note of iniquity who could stand? But there was forgiveness with Jehovah, that he may be feared. He said his soul waited for Jehovah and hoped in his word. He told Israel to hope in Jehovah, for with him is loving kindness and redemption of iniquities.

Psalm 131 (61 words): This psalm says, "**Jehovah, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I exercise myself in grand matters, or in things too wonderful for me. Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul like a weaned child with his mother. Like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in Jehovah from this time forth and for evermore.**"

Psalm 132 (272 words): The author asked Jehovah to remember for David all his affliction, and how he swore to Jehovah and vowed, saying he would not sleep until he found out a place for Jehovah, a tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob. The author said they would go into his tabernacles and worship at his footstool. He asked Jehovah to arise into his resting-place, he and the ark of his strength. He said Jehovah's priest should be clothed with righteousness, and his sanctified should shout with joy. He said Jehovah had sworn to David that his sons would sit upon his throne forever, if they kept his covenant. He said that Jehovah had chosen Zion for his habitation and would bless her provision. He ended, "**There I will make the horn of David to bud. I have ordained a lamp for my anointed. I will clothe his enemies with shame, but upon himself his crown shall flourish.**"

Psalm 133 (65 words): This psalm says, "**Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!** [Are those not very beautiful words?] **It is like the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that came down upon the skirt of his garments, like the dew of Hermon, that comes down upon the mountains of Zion. For there Jehovah commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.**"

Psalm 134 (42 words): This psalm says, "**Behold, bless ye Jehovah, all ye servants of Jehovah, who stand by night in the house of Jehovah.**"

Lift up your hands to the sanctuary, and bless ye Jehovah. Jehovah bless thee out of Zion, even he who made heaven and earth.”

Psalm 135 (311 words): This is a psalm of praise to Jehovah. The author began, “**Praise ye Jehovah. Praise ye the name of Jehovah.**” He said the servants of Jehovah who stand in the house of Jehovah should praise him, for Jehovah is good. He said Jehovah had chosen Israel for his own possession. He said Jehovah was above all gods. And he said, “**Whatever Jehovah pleased, that he has done, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps, who causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain, who brings forth the wind out of his treasures ...**” (135:6-7).

He went on to mention the wonders Jehovah did in Egypt, and his destruction of many nations and mighty kings, and that he gave the land as a heritage to Israel his people. He said the name of Jehovah was forever and he would judge his people. Then he spoke of the idols of the nations. The wording is almost the same as in the first half of Psalm 115. He said they were the work of men’s hands. He said they had different parts of the body, but none of them was functional. He said, “**Those who make them shall be like them, yea, everyone who trusts in them**” (135:18). Then he said the house of Israel, the house of Aaron, the house of Levi, and those who fear Jehovah, should bless Jehovah. He ended, “**Praise ye Jehovah.**”

Psalm 136 (348 words): This psalm has a very unique style. Twenty-six statements are made, each of which is followed by the clause, “**for his loving kindness is forever.**” The author began, “**O give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good, for his loving kindness is forever.**” He said to give thanks to the God of gods, and the Lord of lords. He said Jehovah alone does great wonders. He mentioned how by his power God brought about things of the Creation, the Exodus, and the conquest of their land. He said Jehovah remembered them in their low estate, and delivered them from their adversaries. He said Jehovah gives food to all flesh. He ended, “**O give thanks to the God of heaven, for his loving kindness is forever.**”

Psalm 137 (161 words): The author began, “**By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.**” He said their captors required they sing for them songs of Zion. Then he said, “**How shall we sing Jeho-**

vah’s song in a foreign land?” (137:4). He said if he forgot Jerusalem let his right hand forget. And he asked Jehovah to remember how the sons of Edom wanted it destroyed. He also spoke of the daughter of Babylon, who was to be destroyed. He said, “**Happy shall he be who takes and dashes thy little ones against the rock**” (137:9). Babylon was apparently exceedingly evil.

Psalm 138 (175 words): The author said he would give thanks to Jehovah with his whole heart, and would sing praises to him before the gods. He said he would worship toward his holy temple, and thank him for his loving kindness and for his truth. He said Jehovah answered him in the day he called, and encouraged him with strength in his soul. He said all the kings of the earth would give him thanks and sing of his ways. He said that although Jehovah was high, yet he has respect to the lowly, but he knows the haughty from afar. He said Jehovah would revive him in the midst of trouble and save him. He ended, “**Thy loving kindness, O Jehovah, is forever. Forsake not the works of thine own hands.**”

Psalm 139 (406 words): The author said that God knew all about him, even his thoughts. He also said, “**Thou have beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me**” (139:5), which may refer to God’s control of him. Then he said that such knowledge was too wonderful for him. He said it was high, and he could not attain to it, which probably means he could not understand how God could do such things. He said there was nowhere he could go away from God’s spirit. He said that God formed his inward parts and covered him in his mother’s womb. He said, “**I will give thanks to thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are thy works, and that my soul knows right well**” (139:14). He spoke of when he was made, and he said, “**Thine eyes saw my unformed substance, and in thy book they were all written, even the days that were ordained, when as yet there was none of them**” (139:16). He said God’s thoughts were precious to him. Then he spoke of the wicked. And he said, “**Do I not hate them, O Jehovah, who hate thee? And am I not grieved with those who rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred. They have become my enemies**” (139:21-22). He asked God to search his heart and try him. He ended, “**And lead me in the way everlasting.**”

Psalm 140 (243 words): This is a prayer for deliverance from the evil man. He said they were treacherous and violent. He said they had sharpened their tongue like a serpent, and had set snares for him. He said Jehovah was his God, and he was the strength of his salvation. He said Jehovah covered his head in the day of battle. He asked that Jehovah not grant the desires of the wicked man. He said, "**Let burning coals fall upon them. Let them be cast into the fire, into deep pits, from where they shall not rise**" (140:10). He said he knew that Jehovah would maintain the cause of the afflicted man, and justice for the needy. He ended, "**The upright shall dwell in thy presence.**"

Psalm 141 (202 words): The author began, "**Jehovah, I have called upon thee. Make haste to me.**" Then he asked Jehovah to make him righteous. He asked Jehovah to guard the door of his lips, and incline his heart not to do any evil thing. He said to let a righteous man smite him as a kindness, and reprove him as oil upon his head. He said even in their wickedness his prayer would continue. He said his eyes were upon Jehovah. He ended, "**Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass over.**"

Psalm 142 (146 words): The author began, "**I cry with my voice to Jehovah. With my voice to Jehovah I make supplication. I pour out my complaint before him. I show my trouble before him.**" He said his spirit was overwhelmed within him, and no man cared for his soul. He asked Jehovah to attend to his cry, and deliver him from his persecutors so that he may give thanks to his name.

Psalm 143 (255 words): The author asked Jehovah to hear his prayer and not judge him. He said, "**For in thy sight no man living is righteous**" (143:2). He said the enemy had persecuted his soul, and smitten his life down to the ground. He said he meditated on all the doings of Jehovah. He asked Jehovah to make haste to answer him, and cause him to hear his loving kindness in the morning. He asked Jehovah to cause him to know the way in which he should walk, and deliver him from his enemies. He said, "**In thy righteousness bring my soul out of trouble**" (143:11).

Psalm 144 (267 words): The author praised Jehovah his rock, who taught his hands to war. Dear reader, not going to war to combat evil contributes to evil. Among other things the author called

him his loving kindness, his fortress, and his deliverer. He asked what was man that Jehovah took knowledge of him, for his days were as a shadow that passes away. He asked that Jehovah would use his great power to discomfit them, and rescue him out of the hand of aliens who are deceitful. He said he would sing a new song to Jehovah. He said Jehovah was who gives salvation to kings. Then he mentioned some blessings of the people, and ended, "**Blessed are the people whose God is Jehovah.**"

Psalm 145 (322 words): This is a psalm of praise to God. The author said he would always praise Jehovah. He said, "**Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall laud thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts**" (145:3-4). He said Jehovah was good to all. He said all his works would praise him, and speak of the glory of his kingdom and his power, which was everlasting. He said, "**Thou open thy hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing. Jehovah is righteous in all his ways, and gracious in all his works**" (145:16-17). He said Jehovah was near to all those who call upon him in truth. He said Jehovah preserves all those who love him, but he will destroy all the wicked. He ended, "**My mouth shall speak the praise of Jehovah. And let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.**"

Psalm 146 (166 words): The author began, "**Praise ye Jehovah. Praise Jehovah, O my soul.**" He said not to put trust in men, for they perish. He said happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help. He said God made the world and keeps truth forever. He told of several ways Jehovah blesses the lowly, but he turns upside down the way of the wicked. He ended, "**Jehovah will reign forever, thy God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise ye Jehovah.**"

Psalm 147 (291 words): The author began, "**Praise ye Jehovah, for it is good to sing praises to our God. For it is pleasant, and praise is comely.**" He told of his loving kindness and the greatness of his majesty. He said Jehovah upholds the meek, but brings the wicked down to the ground. He said to sing to Jehovah with thanksgiving, and he mentioned some ways Jehovah blesses the earth. He said Jehovah had no delight in the strength of the horse, or the legs of man, but rather in those who fear him and hope in his loving kindness. He said, "**Praise Jehovah, O**

Jerusalem. Praise thy God, O Zion” (147:12) because of his blessings. Then he mentioned several things that Jehovah does in the world, such as giving snow, and causing wind to blow and waters to flow. He said Jehovah shows his word and his law to Israel and to no other nation. The Hebrews were God’s chosen people, and they wrote his Holy Bible.

Psalm 148 (176 words): This is a psalm of praise to Jehovah. The author urged all things to praise Jehovah. He began with the heavens and all his agents. Next he mentioned the sun, moon, and stars. Then he named some things on the earth, like the snow, wind, mountains, trees, and beasts. Then he mentioned kings, rulers, judges, and all peoples. He said, “**Let them praise the name of Jehovah, for his name alone is exalted. His glory is above the earth and the heavens**” (148:13). He said Jehovah had lifted up the horn of the sons of Israel, the praise of all his sanctified, a people near to him.

Psalm 149 (139 words): The author began and ended with the words, “**Praise ye Jehovah.**” He said to sing to Jehovah a new song and his praise

in the assembly of the sanctified. He said Israel should rejoice in him, praising his name in dance and with musical instruments. He said Jehovah took pleasure in his people, and would beautify the meek with salvation. He said the sanctified should exult in glory. He said the high praises of God were in their mouth, and a two-edged sword was in their hand “**to execute vengeance upon the nations, and punishments upon the peoples, to bind their kings with chains, and their ranking men with fetters of iron, to execute upon them the judgment written.**” (149:7-9). He said all his sanctified had that honor (see also Rev. 2:26-27).

Psalm 150 (74 words): This psalm also begins and ends with the words, “**Praise ye Jehovah.**” Nine times in this short psalm the author said to “Praise him.” He said to praise God in his sanctuary and in the firmament of his power; for his mighty acts and according to his excellent greatness. He named several musical instruments to praise him with, and he also said to praise him with dance. Then he said, “**Let everything that has breath praise Jehovah**” (150:6).

A Description of **Proverbs**

The book begins, “**The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, to know wisdom and instruction, to discern the words of understanding, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness and justice and equity ...**” Solomon said the proverbs are to instruct the young and the simple, as well as the wise man. Many times in the first third of the book Solomon urged the reader to listen to good teaching, and seek wisdom and understanding. And many times he warned against the many ways of sin and folly. Many times also Solomon addressed the reader as “my son,” which makes his appeal very personal. Since God is the ultimate author of the words, and we are his sons, we should accept them personally, as spoken by our heavenly Father to us.

After giving the purpose of the proverbs, the first thing Solomon said was that the fear of Jehovah was the beginning of knowledge. He said the foolish despise wisdom and instruction. Then he warned the reader against sinners who might entice to join them and use violence to prey upon others, claiming they would get much spoil. He said their feet run to evil, but it would destroy them. He said, “**So are the ways of everyone who is greedy of gain. It takes away the life of the owners of it**” (Pro. 1:19).

Solomon personified wisdom as a woman, and he said she cries aloud in the busy thoroughfares, saying, “**How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And scoffers delight them in scoffing, and fools hate knowledge?**” (Pro. 1:22). She (wisdom) said she would teach them. She said that because they refused, she would laugh at their calamity when it came upon them as a whirlwind. She said they would call upon her then, but it would be too late; they would have to eat the fruit of their own way. She said, “**For the backsliding of the simple shall kill them, and the careless ease of fools shall destroy them. But he who hearkens to me shall dwell securely, and shall be quiet without fear of evil**” (Pro. 1:32-33).

Solomon told his son that if he would accept his words, listen to wisdom, and search for it as hidden treasures, then he would understand the fear of Jehovah, and find the knowledge of God. He said, “**For Jehovah gives wisdom. Out of his mouth is knowledge and understanding**” (Pro. 2:6). He said then he would understand righteousness and justice, yea, every good path. He said wisdom would be

pleasant to his soul, and would protect him from the way of evil, from crooked and perverse men who love to do evil. He said it would also protect him from the adulterous woman, who flatters with her words, luring men into the paths of death. He said then he would walk in the way of good men. He said they would dwell in the land, but the wicked would be rooted out of it.

He told his son not to forget his law, because it would add long life and peace to him. He also told him not to forsake kindness and truth, for then he would find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man. He said, “**Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, and lean not upon thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths**” (Pro. 3:5-6). He told him not to be wise in his own eyes, but fear Jehovah and depart from evil. He said to honor Jehovah with his substance so that he would be prosperous. He also told him not to despise the chastening of Jehovah. He said, “**For whom Jehovah loves he reproves, and he whips every son whom he receives**” (Pro. 3:12).

He said the man was happy who finds wisdom and understanding. He said they were better than silver and gold. He mentioned a few of her benefits, and said, “**She is a tree of life to those who lay hold upon her**” (Pro. 3:18). Indeed, he said that Jehovah founded the earth by wisdom, and established the heavens by understanding. Solomon urged his son not to depart from them, for they would bless him and protect him.

He told him not to be afraid of the destruction of the wicked when it came. He also gave some good advice about neighbors. And he said not to envy the man of violence. He said the curse of Jehovah was in the house of the wicked man, but he blesses the habitation of the righteous.

Solomon again pleaded for sons to hear the instructions of a father. He said he also was a son to his father and he taught him. He said to get wisdom and understanding, and not forsake her. He said, “**Wisdom is the principal thing. Get wisdom, yea, with all thy getting get understanding**” (Pro. 4:7). He said that if he loved and exalted her, she would promote him and bring him to honor. Again he appealed to him, saying, “**Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wis-**

dom. I have led thee in paths of uprightness” (Pro. 4:10-11).

Then he told him again not to enter into the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. He said they could not even sleep unless they did evil, for they indulge themselves in it. He said their way was darkness, and they do not know what will cause them to stumble.

He told his son to attend to his words, and keep them in the midst of his heart, for they were life and health. He also said, “**Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life**” (Pro. 4:23). He told him to look and walk straight and not deviate into evil. And again he told him to attend to his wisdom and understanding.

Then he warned about the interloping woman—the adulteress. He said her lips drop honey and her mouth is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood and sharp as a two-edged sword. He said her feet go down to death. He said her ways were unstable, and she was ignorant about it. He then said, “**Now therefore, ye sons, hearken to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Remove thy way far from her, and do not come near the door of her house**” (Pro. 5:7-8). He warned of the bitter consequences at the end. He said to rejoice in the wife of thy youth, a lovely maiden, and be satisfied with her breasts. He asked why embrace the bosom of a stranger? For Jehovah sees all the ways of a man.

He also warned his son about becoming surety for a neighbor (such as guaranteeing the debt of an acquaintance). He told him not to sleep until he was freed from the obligation. Then he told the sluggard to learn from the diligence of the ant. He asked him how long he would sleep. He said poverty would seize him like a robber. He also spoke of the man with a perverse mouth, who signals with his eyes and feet, and devises evil continually. He said he would suddenly be broken without remedy.

He went on to say, “**There are six things which Jehovah hates, yea, seven which are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked purposes, feet that are swift in running to mischief, a false witness who utters lies, and he who sows discord among brothers**” (Pro. 6:17-19).

And again he told his son to keep the commandment of his father, and not forsake the law of his mother. He said they would continually guide and

protect him. He said, “**For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life ...**” (Pro. 6:23). He said they would keep him from the evil seductress. He warned of the punishment associated with her. He said whoever commits adultery with a woman is void of understanding. He said it would destroy his soul, because jealousy makes a man furious and unforgiving.

Again he urged his son to keep his words and his commandments. And again he said it would keep him from the interloping woman, the stranger who flatters with her words. Then he told of seeing a young ignorant man meeting a woman in the night. She dressed and acted like a harlot. She caught him and kissed him. She lured him to her couch, saying she had carefully prepared her bed for him. She said to him, “**Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning. Let us solace ourselves with love**” (Pro. 7:18). She said her husband had gone on a long journey. Solomon said the man went after her like an ox to the slaughter. He warned about her, saying her house was the way of Sheol. He said all her slain were a mighty host, which means a great multitude of men have fallen because of adulteresses.

Then he said again, “**Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding put forth her voice?**” (Pro. 8:1). And again he said she cried out in all the busy concourses of men. She told the simple and fools to be of an understanding heart. She said she would speak excellent things, and her mouth would utter truth. She told them to receive her instruction rather than gold and silver. She said nothing that may be desired could be compared with wisdom. She said kings and rulers functioned by her. She told of all the many blessings she brings. Then she said, “**Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth was ...**” (Pro. 8:22-23). She said she was a master workman used by him during the Creation. She urged sons to listen to her and be wise. She said he who finds her finds life, and will obtain favor of Jehovah. She said all who hate her love death.

Then Solomon said wisdom had prepared a great feast. And she went out upon high places in the city to cry out, inviting all who were simple to eat and drink what she had prepared. She said to them, “**Forsake ye simpleness, and live, and walk in the way of understanding**” (Pro. 9:6).

Solomon warned about the danger of trying to correct wicked men and scoffers. He said, however,

that wise men appreciate reproof, and become even wiser. And he said again that the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom. Solomon often repeated his words of wisdom, perhaps the better to learn them.

Then he described the foolish woman. He said she is clamorous, simple, and ignorant. He said she sits at the door of her house calling to those who are passing by on their ways. She says, “**He who is simple, let him turn in here. And as for him who is void of understanding, she says to him, Stolen waters are sweet, and bread in secret is pleasant**” (Pro. 9:16-17). He said such a man does not know that her guests are in the depths of Sheol. I would compare her to the carnivorous pitcher plant, which lures flies with its fragrant but intoxicating and slippery nectar into a trap full of digestive fluid.

After that about six hundred proverbs are listed, which comprise the major portion of the book. The list begins with the words, “**The proverbs of Solomon**” (Pro. 10:1). There seems to be no organization to the listing. However, I have written another book in which I organized those proverbs (and his other writings) according to various topics. It is entitled *King Solomon's Advice for the World*. Below are some of Solomon's proverbs:

- “**A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother**” (Pro. 10:1).
- “**He who works with a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich**” (Pro. 10:4).
- “**Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions**” (Pro. 10:12).
- “**Transgression is not lacking in the multitude of words, but he who refrains his lips does wisely**” (Pro. 10:19).
- “**It is as sport to a fool to do mischief, and so is wisdom to a man of understanding**” (Pro. 10:23).
- “**When the whirlwind passes, the wicked man is no more, but the righteous man is an everlasting foundation**” (Pro. 10:25).
- “**When pride comes, then comes shame, but with the lowly is wisdom**” (Pro. 11:2).
- “**Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death**” (Pro. 11:4).
- “**The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way, but the wicked man shall fall by his own wickedness**” (Pro. 11:5).
- “**The hypocrite destroys his neighbor with his mouth, but the righteous shall be delivered through knowledge**” (Pro. 11:9). Words can be used as deadly weapons.
- “**He who goes around as a tale-bearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter**” (Pro. 11:13).
- “**A gracious woman obtains honor, and aggressive men obtain riches**” (Pro. 11:16).
- “**The merciful man does good to his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh**” (Pro. 11:17).
- “**A ring of gold in a swine's snout, is a beautiful woman who is without discretion**” (Pro. 11:22).
- “**The generous soul shall be made prosperous, and he who waters shall also be watered himself**” (Pro. 11:25).
- “**He who troubles his own house shall inherit the wind. And a foolish man shall be servant to a wise man of heart**” (Pro. 11:29).
- “**Behold, a righteous man shall be compensated in the earth, how much more the wicked man and the sinner!**” (Pro. 11:31).
- “**He who loves correction loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is brutish**” (Pro. 12:1).
- “**A worthy woman is the crown of her husband, but she who makes ashamed is as rottenness in his bones**” (Pro. 12:4).
- “**A righteous man regards the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel**” (Pro. 12:10).
- “**He who tills his land shall have plenty of bread, but he who pursues vanities is void of understanding**” (Pro. 12:11).
- “**The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who is wise hearkens to counsel**” (Pro. 12:15).
- “**The lips of truth shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment**” (Pro. 12:19).
- “**Heaviness in the heart of a man makes it droop, but a good word makes it glad**” (Pro. 12:25).
- “**Life is in the way of righteousness, and in the pathway thereof there is no death**” (Pro. 12:28).

- “He who guards his mouth keeps his life. He who opens wide his lips shall have destruction” (Pro. 13:3).
- “There is he who makes himself rich, yet has nothing, *and* he who makes himself poor, yet *has* great wealth” (Pro. 13:7).
- “Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished, but he who gathers by labor shall have increase” (Pro. 13:11).
- “Every prudent man works with knowledge, but a fool flaunts folly” (Pro. 13:16).
- “The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul, but it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil” (Pro. 13:19).
- “Walk with wise men, and thou shall be wise. But the companion of fools shall smart for it” (Pro. 13:20).
- “Much food is *in* the tillage of the poor, but there is *that is* consumed because of injustice” (Pro. 13:23).
- “He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him chastens him promptly” (Pro. 13:24).
- “Every wise woman builds her house, but a foolish woman plucks it down with her own hands” (Pro. 14:1).
- “A scoffer seeks wisdom, and *finds it* not, but knowledge is easy to him who has understanding” (Pro. 14:6).
- “There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Pro. 14:12).
- “A simple man believes every word, but the prudent man looks well to his going” (Pro. 14:15).
- “A wise man fears, and departs from evil, but the fool bears himself insolently, and is confident” (Pro. 14:16).
- “He who is soon angry will deal foolishly. And a man of wicked devices is hated” (Pro. 14:17).
- “The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor, but the rich man has many friends” (Pro. 14:20).
- “In all labor there is profit, but the talk of the lips *tends* only to poverty” (Pro. 14:23).
- “The fear of Jehovah is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death” (Pro. 14:27).
- “He who is slow to anger is of great understanding, but he who is hasty of spirit exalts folly” (Pro. 14:29).
- “He who oppresses a poor man reproaches his maker, but he who has mercy on a needy man honors him” (Pro. 14:31).
- “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Pro. 14:34).
- “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a grievous word stirs up anger” (Pro. 15:1).
- “The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, keeping watch upon the evil and the good” (Pro. 15:3).
- “A fool despises his father’s correction, but he who regards reproof gets prudence” (Pro. 15:5).
- “Sheol and Abaddon are before Jehovah. How much more then the hearts of the sons of men!” (Pro. 15:11).
- “A scoffer does not like to be reproved. He will not go to the wise” (Pro. 15:12).
- “A glad heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken” (Pro. 15:13).
- “All the days of the afflicted are evil, but he who is of a cheerful heart *has* a continual feast” (Pro. 15:15).
- “Better is little with the fear of Jehovah, than great treasure and trouble with it” (Pro. 15:16).
- “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted ox and hatred with it” (Pro. 15:17).
- “Where there is no counsel, plans are disappointed, but in the multitude of counselors they are established” (Pro. 15:22).
- “He who is greedy of gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes shall live” (Pro. 15:27).
- “The heart of a righteous man meditates to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things” (Pro. 15:28).
- “The fear of Jehovah is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility” (Pro. 15:33).
- “All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but Jehovah weighs the spirits” (Pro. 16:2).

- “Commit thy works to Jehovah, and thy purposes shall be established” (Pro. 16:3).
- “Jehovah has made everything for its own end, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Pro. 16:4).
- “Better is a little, with righteousness, than great revenues with injustice” (Pro. 16:8).
- “Righteous lips are the delight of kings, and they love him who speaks right” (Pro. 16:13).
- “Pride is before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Pro. 16:18).
- “Pleasant words are a honeycomb: Sweet to the soul, and health to the bones” (Pro. 16:24).
- “A perverse man scatters abroad strife, and a whisperer separates chief friends” (Pro. 16:28). The Greek word for devil means slanderer.
- “A man of violence entices his neighbor, and leads him in a way that is not good” (Pro. 16:29).
- “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who takes a city” (Pro. 16:32).
- “The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of Jehovah” (Pro. 16:33).
- “A servant who deals wisely shall have rule over a son who causes shame, and shall have part in the inheritance among the brothers” (Pro. 17:2).
- “A bribe is a precious stone in the eyes of him who has it; wherever it turns, it prospers” (Pro. 17:8). Bribery is widely used in the world, because it is an effective device to achieve goals. However it destroys justice, and God will punish those who uses it.
- “A rebuke enters deeper into him who has understanding than a hundred stripes into a fool” (Pro. 17:10).
- “Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly” (Pro. 17:12).
- “He who rewards evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house” (Pro. 17:13).
- “He who justifies a wicked man, and he who condemns a righteous man, both of them alike are an abomination to Jehovah” (Pro. 17:15). That proverb describes many people in modern America. But they will face the great judgment day.
- “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Pro. 17:17).
- “He who begets a fool it is to his sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy” (Pro. 17:21).
- “A wicked man receives a bribe out of the bosom, to pervert the ways of justice” (Pro. 17:23).
- “A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him” (Pro. 17:25).
- “He who spares his words has knowledge, and he who is of a cool spirit is a man of understanding” (Pro. 17:27).
- “A fool has no delight in understanding, but only that his heart may reveal itself” (Pro. 18:2). That probably means he just wants to talk.
- “The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts” (Pro. 18:8).
- “The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall in his own imagination” (Pro. 18:11).
- “Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility” (Pro. 18:12).
- “He who pleads his case first seems just, but his neighbor comes and searches him out” (Pro. 18:17). Remember that when you hear one man complain about another.
- “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it shall eat the fruit of it” (Pro. 18:21).
- “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from Jehovah” (Pro. 18:22).
- “A poor man uses entreaties, but a rich man answers roughly” (Pro. 18:23).
- “Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than he who is perverse in his lips and is a fool” (Pro. 19:1).
- “A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he who utters lies shall not escape” (Pro. 19:5).
- “Many will entreat the favor of a generous man, and every man is a friend to him who gives gifts” (Pro. 19:6).
- “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression” (Pro. 19:11).
- “House and riches are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from Jehovah” (Pro. 19:14).

- “He who has pity upon a poor man lends to Jehovah, and he will repay him his good deed” (Pro. 19:17).
- “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Pro. 19:18).
- “Smite a scoffer, and a simple man will learn prudence. And reprove him who has understanding, *and he will understand knowledge*” (Pro. 19:25). Public punishment helps discourage others from doing wrong, but sinners hate it.
- “It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarrelling” (Pro. 20:3).
- “The sluggard will not plow because of the winter. Therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing” (Pro. 20:4).
- “Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness, but a faithful man who can find?” (Pro. 20:6).
- “Even a child makes himself known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right” (Pro. 20:11).
- “Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty. Open thine eyes, *and thou shall be satisfied with bread*” (Pro. 20:13).
- “It is bad, it is bad, says the buyer, but when he is gone his way, then he boasts” (Pro. 20:14).
- “An inheritance gotten hastily at the beginning shall not be blessed in the end” (Pro. 20:21).
- “Say thou not, I will recompense evil. Wait for Jehovah, and he will save thee” (Pro. 20:22).
- “A wise king winnows the wicked, and brings the wheel over them” (Pro. 20:26).
- “The spirit of man is the lamp of Jehovah, searching all his innermost parts” (Pro. 20:27).
- “The glory of young men is their strength, and the beauty of old men is the hoary head” (Pro. 20:29). The hoary head symbolizes wisdom acquired with age.
- “Stripes that wound cleanse away evil, and strokes, the innermost parts” (Pro. 20:30). Outlawing corporal punishment has contributed to the rapid growth of evil in America.
- “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but Jehovah weighs the hearts” (Pro. 21:2).
- “The violence of the wicked shall sweep them away, because they refuse to do justice” (Pro. 21:7).
- “When a scoffer is punished, a simple man is made wise, and when a wise man is instructed, he receives knowledge” (Pro. 21:11).
- “It is joy to the righteous to do justice, but it is a destruction to the workers of iniquity” (Pro. 21:15).
- “He who loves pleasure shall be a poor man. He who loves wine and oil shall not be rich” (Pro. 21:17). Wine and oil symbolize pleasure.
- “It is better to dwell in a desert land, than with a contentious and fretful woman” (Pro. 21:19).
- “The proud and haughty man, scoffer is his name. He works in the arrogance of pride” (Pro. 21:24).
- “The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor” (Pro. 21:25).
- “The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but victory is from Jehovah” (Pro. 21:31).
- “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold” (Pro. 22:1).
- “A prudent man sees the evil, and hides himself, but the simple pass on, and suffer for it” (Pro. 22:3).
- “Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Pro. 22:6).
- “Cast out the scoffer, and contention will go out, yea, strife and reproach will cease” (Pro. 22:10).
- “He who loves pureness of heart, *for the grace of his lips, the king will be his friend*” (Pro. 22:11).
- “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, *but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him*” (Pro. 22:15).

Among that list of proverbs Solomon again urged the reader to listen and learn. He said, “Incline thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thy heart to my knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee, if they be established together upon thy lips. That thy trust may be in Jehovah, I have made them known to thee this day, even to thee. Have I

not written to thee excellent things of counsels and knowledge, to make thee know the certainty of the words of truth, that thou may carry back words of truth to those who send thee?" (Pro. 22:17-21).

Then the list continues. Here are more examples:

- **"Be thou not one of those who strike hands, or of those who are sureties for debts. If thou have not wherewith to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?" (Pro. 22:26-27).**
- **"See thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before obscure men" (Pro. 22:29).**
- **"Weary not thyself to be rich. Out of thine own wisdom, cease" (Pro. 23:4).**
- **"Speak not in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of thy words" (Pro. 23:9).**
- **"Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beat him with the rod, he will not die. Thou shall beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from Sheol" (Pro. 23:13-14).** However, it will make you a criminal in many places of the world, including pagan America. The prophet Isaiah warned about calling good evil (see Isa. 5:20).
- **"Let not thy heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of Jehovah all the day long. For surely there is a reward, and thy hope shall not be cut off" (Pro. 23:17).**
- **"Be not among winebibbers, among gluttonous eaters of flesh" (Pro. 23:20).** Pagan America has become full of gluttons and drunkards.
- **"The father of a righteous man will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise son will have joy of him" (Pro. 23:24).**

The following is a classic description of a drunkard: **"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long at the wine. Those who go to seek out mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly. At the end it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange things, and thy heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shall be as he who lies down in the midst of the sea, or as he who lies upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, thou shall say, and I was not hurt.**

They have beaten me, and I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again" (Pro. 23:29-35).

The drunkard is a fool who willingly destroys his life to feel good for a few moments. Modern disciples of the devil excuse such men. Yea, they comfort and support them. But God does not, because he loves truth and justice and righteousness.

Here are more examples of his proverbs:

- **"If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small" (Pro. 24:10).**
- **"Lay not in wait, O wicked man, against the habitation of the righteous. Do not destroy his resting place. For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises up again, but the wicked are overthrown by calamity" (Pro. 24:15-16).**
- **"Rejoice not when thine enemy falls, and let not thy heart be glad when he is overthrown, lest Jehovah see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him" (Pro. 24:17-18).**
- **"He who says to a wicked man, Thou are righteous, peoples shall curse him, nations shall abhor him. But to those who rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them" (Pro. 24:24-25).**
- **"Prepare thy work outside, and make it ready for thee in the field, and afterwards build thy house" (Pro. 24:27).**

Next the book says, **"These also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out" (Pro. 25:1).** Examples of which are the following:

- **"Go not forth hastily to strive. What will thou do in the end of it when thy neighbor has put thee to shame? Debate thy case with thy neighbor himself, and disclose not the secret of another, lest he who hears it revile thee, and thine infamy turn not away" (Pro. 25:8-10).**
- **"By long-suffering a ruler is persuaded, and a soft tongue breaks the bone" (Pro. 25:15).** Gentle words can have great power.
- **"Let thy foot be seldom in thy neighbor's house, lest he be weary of thee, and hate thee" (Pro. 25:17).**
- **"Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint" (Pro. 25:19).**

- “As he who takes off a garment in cold weather, *and* vinegar upon soda, so is he who sings songs to a heavy heart” (Pro. 25:20).
- “If thine enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. For thou will heap coals of fire upon his head, and Jehovah will reward thee” (Pro. 25:21).
- “As the sparrow in her wandering, as the swallow in her flying, so the curse that is causeless does not alight” (Pro. 26:2).
- “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools” (Pro. 26:3).
- “See thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope for a fool than of him” (Pro. 26:12).
- “The door turns upon its hinges, so does the sluggard upon his bed” (Pro. 26:14).
- “As a madman who casts firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, Am I not in sport” [joking]? (Pro. 26:19).
- “He who hates masquerades with his lips, but he lays up deceit within him. When he speaks graciously, believe him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart” (Pro. 26:24-25).
- “A lying tongue hates those whom it has wounded, and a flattering mouth works ruin” (Pro. 26:28).
- “Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou know not what a day may bring forth” (Pro. 27:1).
- “Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth, a stranger, and not thine own lips” (Pro. 27:2).
- “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are profuse” (Pro. 27:6).
- “He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be considered a curse to him” (Pro. 27:14).
- “Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend” (Pro. 27:17). Healthy competition encourages improvement.
- “Though thou should pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him” (Pro. 27:22).
- “A wicked man flees when no man pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Pro. 28:1).
- “For the transgression of a land many are the rulers of it. But by men of understanding *and* knowledge the state shall be prolonged” (Pro. 28:2). Bureaucratic and other government rulers in America have multiplied enormously since it became pagan. We have lost many of our freedoms. The only freedoms that have increased are freedoms to sin, but that seems to be what the people now prefer.
- “Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep the law contend with them” (Pro. 28:4).
- “Better is the poor man who walks in his integrity, than he who is perverse in *his* ways, though he be rich” (Pro. 28:6).
- “The rich man is wise in his own conceit, but a poor man who has understanding searches him out” (Pro. 28:11).
- “A roaring lion, and a ranging bear, *is* a wicked ruler over a poor people” (Pro. 28:15).
- “He who tills his land shall have plenty of bread, but he who follows after vanity shall have poverty enough” (Pro. 28:19).
- “A faithful man shall abound with blessings, but he who makes haste to be rich shall not be unpunished” (Pro. 28:20).
- “He who rebukes a man shall afterward find more favor than he who flatters with the tongue” (Pro. 28:23).
- “He who robs his father or his mother, and says, It is no transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer” (Pro. 28:24).
- “He who, being often reproved, hardens his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Pro. 29:1).
- “By justice the king establishes the land, but he who exacts gifts overthrows it” (Pro. 29:4).
- “A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his steps” (Pro. 29:5).
- “Scoffers set a city in a flame, but wise men turn away wrath” (Pro. 29:8).
- “A fool utters all his anger, but a wise man keeps it back and calms it” (Pro. 29:11).
- “If a ruler hearkens to falsehood, all his servants are wicked” (Pro. 29:12).

- “**The king who faithfully judges the poor, his throne shall be established forever**” (Pro. 29:14).
- “**The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself causes shame to his mother**” (Pro. 29:15).
- “**Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint, but he who keeps the law, happy is he**” (Pro. 29:18). Modern Americans have cast off restraint because they no longer honor truth and righteousness.
- “**Many seek the ruler’s favor, but a man’s justice is from Jehovah**” (Pro. 29:26).

Next are the words of Agur, a man who is otherwise unknown. Most of his words are also proverbs, examples of which are the following:

- “**Every word of God is tried. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Add thou not to his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar**” (Pro. 30:5-6).
- “**There is a generation who curses their father, and does not bless their mother. There is a generation who are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness**” (Pro. 30:11-12). How aptly that describes the generation of the 1960’s when Americans first chose to become pagan.
- “**The eye that mocks at his father, and despises to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it**” (Pro. 30:17).

- “**So is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats, and wipes her mouth, and says, I have done no iniquity**” (Pro. 30:20).

After those things the book says, “**The words of king Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him**” (Pro. 31:1). He said his mother urged him not to give his strength to women, nor his ways to that which destroy kings. She also told him it was not for kings to drink wine or strong drink, lest they forget the law, and pervert the justice due to whomever was afflicted. She said strong drink was for a man who was in misery (no doubt as an anesthetic). She told him to judge righteously, and minister justice to the poor and needy. She was a wise woman indeed.

Finally, Lemuel described an ideal woman. He said, “**A worthy woman who can find? For her price is far above rubies**” (Pro. 31:10). Lemuel then gave a beautiful description of her life, a model for all women. He said she was a blessing to her husband. He said she was wise and industrious, and generous to the needy. He said she worked hard to produce goods, and then marketed them. He said she had strength and dignity, spoke with wisdom and kindness, and looked well to the ways of her household. He said her sons and her husband praised her. He concluded, “**Many daughters have done worthily, but thou excel them all**” (Pro. 31:29).

The book ends with these words: “**Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears Jehovah, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.**”

A Description of **Ecclesiastes**

The book begins, “**The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.**” The Preacher was Solomon, and this book is primarily about the nature of the world (things under the sun). He said, “**Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit has man from all his labor in which he labors under the sun?**” (Ecc. 1:3). That means everything about the world is futile and pointless. Then in the rest of the book he tells how bad the world is. And indeed, compared with heaven it truly is. Therefore, dear reader, do not dismiss his conclusions, as most people do. The older and wiser you become, the more you will realize we cannot put our hope in this life. It is filled with pain and sorrows, and sooner or later we all die and lose everything. Real hope is for the greater world promised by Jesus Christ.

Solomon said generations come and go. He said things of the world cycle in a constant pattern, like day and night. For example, in a little over a hundred years everyone in the world today will be dead, yet there will be billions of new souls. He said all things were full of inexpressible weariness. People drink liquor and take drugs to escape it. Yet doing that too much destroys them. He said, “**It is a great tribulation that God has given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith**” (Ecc. 1:13). He said there was nothing new under the sun; the world simply forgets. Solomon was probably referring to the pattern of the world not changing. Of course, for God nothing is new.

He said he applied his heart to seek out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven. He said nothing could be perfected. He said he obtained great wisdom, and applied himself to know wisdom, madness, and folly. Then he said, “**I perceived that this also was a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow**” (Ecc. 1:17-18). The more a man knows about this world, the more frustrated and disappointed he will become, because it is so full of evil and unfairness.

Solomon said he decided to test himself with mirth and pleasure, and he found those things were useless. He said he sought what was good for the sons of men to do during their lives. He said he build great works, such as houses and gardens and pools of water; he bought servants and livestock; he gathered silver and gold; he got singers and things

of luxury; he got many wives. He said he increased more than all before him in Jerusalem. He said whatever he desired he got; he withheld no joy from his heart.

Then he looked at all his works, and said, “**... all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun**” (Ecc. 2:11). He said he considered wisdom, madness, and folly, and found that wisdom excelled folly as far as light excels darkness. Yet he saw that the same thing happens to everyone—death. He said, “**So I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun was grievous to me. For all is vanity and a striving after wind. And I hated all my labor in which I labored under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who shall be after me**” (Ecc. 2:17-18).

He said all that a man labors to get he leaves to someone else. He said it was vanity and a great evil. He asked why a man strives and labors. He found that the normal condition was aches and pains, day and night. He said there was nothing better for a man than to eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labor. He said that was from the hand of God, “**For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, without him?**” (Ecc. 2:25). He said that God blesses the man who pleases him, but he gives travail to the sinner.

Then he said, “**For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven**” (Ecc. 3:1). And he mentioned examples, such as, birth and death, killing and healing, breaking down and building up, weeping and laughing, embracing and refraining, keeping and casting away, being silent and speaking, loving and hating, war and peace. He said God had made everything beautiful in its time. Yet does not everything eventually become ugly?

He said God had made men aware of eternity, yet limited their ability to know God’s work from the beginning to the end. He said there was nothing better for them than to rejoice, do good, eat and drink, and enjoy good in all their labor. He said it was the gift of God. He said that whatever God does was forever; we can neither add to it nor subtract from it, so that men should fear before him.

The Preacher said he saw under the sun wickedness in the place of justice and righteousness. He

said God was going to judge the righteous man and the wicked man, for there was a purpose for everything. He said God was proving to men that in themselves they are beasts, and die just as they do. Then he asked who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward, and the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth. We can say now, through faith in Jesus Christ, that the spirit of man does go upward.

Solomon said there was nothing better than for a man to rejoice in his works, for that is his portion. Then he said he saw the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter. He said their oppressors had power, but there was no comforter. Therefore Solomon praised the dead more than the living. He said that better still was him who was not yet born to see the evil work that is done under the sun.

He told of a man who was alone in life, yet there was no end of all his labor, and he was not satisfied with riches. He said, "**For whom then, he says, do I labor, and deprive my soul of good?**" (Ecc. 4:8). Solomon said it was vanity and a great travail. Then he told of the strength of cooperation. After that he told of an old and foolish king who refused to receive admonition anymore. He said there was no end of all his people, yet those who came after would not rejoice in him. He said that also was vanity and a striving after wind.

He then gave advice about making vows. He said not to make them rashly. He said it was better not to vow than to vow and not pay. That warning is made at several places in the Bible. He said if you vowed and did not pay, God would be angry, and would destroy the work of your hands. He said, "**For in the multitude of dreams there are vanities, and in many words. But fear thou God**" (Ecc. 5:7).

He said not to marvel if you see the oppression of a poor man, and the violent wresting of justice and righteousness in a province. He said there is a hierarchy of power that keeps watch. At the top is the king (or chief ruler), and his support is based upon the prosperity of the land. He implied that even the king would suffer if there was too much injustice.

Then he spoke about riches. He said the man who loves wealth would not be satisfied with it. Moreover, a man can only utilize personally so much. And he said, "**The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the fullness of the rich will not allow him to sleep**" (Ecc. 5:12). After that he told of a man who lost all his wealth in a bad venture which plunged him into poverty. He said it was a grievous evil, with no

profit that he labored for the wind. He said the man lived out his days in depression and anger. He said that what was good and fitting for a man was to eat and drink, and enjoy good in all his labor, for that was his portion.

He said, "**Every man also to whom God has given riches and wealth, and has given him power to eat of it, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God**" (Ecc. 5:19). He also said he had seen an evil under the sun that was heavy upon men. It was the man to whom God had given wealth and honor, so that he lacked nothing, yet without power to enjoy it. He said it was vanity and an evil disease. He said a stillborn child was better than he. Then Solomon gave several proverbs, examples of which are the following:

- **"All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled"** (Ecc. 6:7).
- **"Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made glad"** (Ecc. 7:3).
- **"Surely oppression makes the wise man foolish, and a bribe destroys the understanding"** (Ecc. 7:7).
- **"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning of it. The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit"** (Ecc. 7:8).
- **"Say thou not, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou do not inquire wisely concerning this"** (Ecc. 7:10). Every generation has its share of sorrows and joys, which often differ in kind.
- **"All this I have seen in my days of vanity. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evil-doing"** (Ecc. 7:15).

Judging from things he wrote in this book, Solomon seems to have tried to be wise about everything, but he could not. He said it was too deep, and he wondered if it were possible. He said, "**Behold, this only I have found: That God made man upright, but they have sought out many contrivances**" (Ecc. 7:29).

He then gave advice about keeping the king's command, advice which could be applied to that of any powerful ruler. He said not to be hasty or persist in an evil matter. He said a wise man would consider when and how to keep it (the command); then he would venture forth, for no man can be certain of the future.

Solomon spoke of our limited power. He spoke of having seen the abuse of power, and wicked men praised. Then he said, “**Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil**” (Ecc. 8:11). One of the great evils of modern America is the enormous delay imposed between crimes committed by the guilty and the application of their sentence. Therefore, lawlessness has multiplied. Nevertheless, Solomon also said, “**Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and prolongs his days, yet surely I know that it shall be well with those who fear God, who fear before him. But it shall not be well with a wicked man, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he did not fear before God**” (Ecc. 8:12-13).

He commended joy, for he said there was nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and be cheerful, for that would abide with him in his labor all his life which God has given him. And again he said he applied his heart to know wisdom, but he concluded, “**I beheld all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. Because however much a man labors to seek it out, yet he shall not find it. Yea moreover, though a wise man thinks to know it, yet he shall not be able to find it**” (Ecc. 8:17).

He said the same event—death—happens to all, both good and bad. He said the heart of the sons of men was full of evil and madness while they live, then they go to the dead. He said the living have hope, but the dead have nothing any more under the sun. So he advised to eat bread with joy, drink wine with a merry heart, care for your body, and live joyfully with your wife. He said, “**For that is thy portion in life, and in thy labor in which thou labor under the sun**” (Ecc. 9:9). He also advised, “**Whatever thy hand finds to do, do with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, where thou go**” (Ecc. 9:10).

Then he said, “**I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill, but time and chance happens to them all**” (Ecc. 9:11). He said men were like fish taken in an evil net, or birds caught in the snare, when an evil time suddenly falls upon them. The best do not always win or succeed. Wise men

always consider the element of what the world calls bad luck in any endeavor.

Next he told about a little city with few men in it that was besieged by a great king. He said there was a poor wise man who used his wisdom to deliver the city, yet no man remembered him. He said wisdom was better than strength. Nevertheless, the poor man’s wisdom was despised and he was ignored.

Then he gave several more proverbs. Some of which are the following:

- “**Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good**” (Ecc. 9:18).
- “**Dead flies cause the oil of the perfumer to send forth an evil odor, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor**” (Ecc. 10:1).
- “**There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as it were an error which proceeds from the ruler: Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in a low place**” (Ecc. 10:5-6).
- “**If the iron be blunt, and he does not whet the edge, then he must increase strength. But wisdom is advantageous to make right**” (Ecc. 10:10).
- “**Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shall find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, yea, even to eight, for thou know not what evil shall be upon the earth**” (Ecc. 11:1-2).
- “**In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou know not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good**” (Ecc. 11:6).

Solomon said that life was a pleasant thing, and if a man lived many years he should rejoice in them all. Yet he should remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. He said all that comes is vanity. Then he warned a young man about how he chooses to live, saying, “**Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes. But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment**” (Ecc. 11:9). What that seems to say is that a man is free to chose carnal ways, but God will judge him for all those things. He told him to put away sorrow and evil, and remember his Creator in the days of his youth, before the ravages of age afflicted him, which he described with many poetic words. Then he said, “**Vanity of vanities, says the**

Preacher, all is vanity” (Ecc. 12:8). It is therefore wise to prepare for a better world to come, the way of which is through Jesus Christ.

The book says the Preacher was wise and taught the people knowledge. It says he also pondered, sought out and set in order many proverbs, and sought to find words of truth. Then he said, “**And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making**

many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Ecc. 12:12). He gave this conclusion at the end of the book: “**This is the end of the matter, all has been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether good or evil”** (Ecc. 12:13-14).

A Description of **Song of Solomon**

The book begins, “**The Song of songs, which is Solomon’s. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine.**” This book is about love between a man and his wife. There is no more intimate relationship than marriage, and the example in this book seems to be a model for every husband and wife to emulate. It must describe Solomon’s first marriage, before he got so many wives and they led him astray from God. It contains much figurative language, and so is sometimes hard to interpret. Moreover, the context must be used to determine who is speaking, and that also is sometimes difficult.

The woman first said the king had brought her into his chambers. She said she was dark, because of the sun, but still attractive. Her husband praised her beauty. He said, “**I have compared thee, O my love, to a steed in Pharaoh’s chariots**” (Song 1:9). And she said of him, “**My beloved is to me a bundle of myrrh that lies between my breasts**” (Song 1:13). He spoke more of her beauty, saying, “**Behold, thou are fair, my love, behold thou are fair. Thine eyes are doves**” (Song 1:15). She was modest, saying she was a lily of the valleys, meaning ordinary. He responded, saying that among the daughters she was as a lily among thorns, meaning extraordinary.

She spoke of how pleasant was his love for her. She said she sat down under his shadow with great delight, and she told how he embraced her. Then she said, “**I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, or by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake love, until it please**” (Song 2:7). In other words, she urged young women not to awaken the forces of amorous love until it was right. How often young women become emotionally attached to a man prematurely, which leaves deep emotional scars when the relationship breaks apart.

Then she said she heard the voice of her beloved coming to her. He said, “**Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past. The rain is over and gone**” (Song 2:10-11). The winter and rain may symbolize their separation. He went on to describe the flowers and fruit of the springtime, which may symbolize the joy of their being together. He said to her, “**O my dove ... let me see thy countenance; let me hear thy voice. For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely**” (Song 2:14). She said, “**My beloved is mine, and I am his**” (Song 2:16).

Then she told about seeking him on her bed one night and not finding him. So she went about the city searching until she found him. She said she held him, and would not let him go until she had brought him to the place of intimacy. Then she warned young women again against awakening love until it please. Next the book tells about a luxurious palanquin that Solomon made, which was surrounded by sixty bodyguards. And it told the daughters of Zion to go out and see king Solomon with his crown, coming up in the day of his espousal.

After that Solomon again told his wife of her beauty. He compared parts of her body to different things of nature. For example, he said her eyes were doves behind her veil, and her neck was like the tower of David. He said, “**Thou are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee**” (Song 4:7), and, “**Thou have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride. Thou have ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck**” (Song 4:9). He said honey and milk were under her tongue. Then he compared her to a private garden full of lovely fruits and flora. And they both spoke of enjoying it.

Next she told of being asleep when her beloved knocked for her to open. She first said she was not prepared for him, but then her heart was drawn to

him. So she opened but he had withdrawn himself. Then she went out to search for him. She was treated roughly by the watchmen, so she pleaded with the daughters of Jerusalem to help her find him. They asked her why he was so special. Therefore, she described his beauty by comparing parts of his body with things in the world. For example, she said his cheeks were as a bed of spices, and his hands were pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold. She said, “**Yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem**” (Song 5:16).

Then he returned, and described to her again her beauty. He spoke of queens, concubines, and virgins, but he said she was special. He said they called her blessed and they praised her. He continued to speak of her beauty, and he said, “**How fair and how pleasant thou are, O love, for delights!**” (Song 7:6). He said her stature was like a palm tree, and he would climb up into it, taking hold of the branches of it.

She said, “**I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me**” (Song 7:10). And she invited him to go into the field and the vineyards. That may symbolize their intimacy, for she said, “**There I will give thee my love**” (Song 7:12). She said she had pre-

pared precious fruits for him. She also said, “**His left hand under my head, and his right hand should embrace me**” (Song 8:3). And she again warned the daughters of Jerusalem not to awaken love until it please.

Then one of them said, “**Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm**” (Song 8:6). That probably means that their relationship should be deep and permanent, because the admonition was followed by this reason: “**For love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as Sheol. The flashes of it are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame**” (Song 8:6).

After that it tells of a little sister whom they were preparing (based upon her individuality) for the day she would be spoken for. That probably means offered in marriage. The book says that Solomon had a vineyard, which he let out to keepers. His wife also had a vineyard, and she gave him her profit from it. The book ends with a plea by his wife that he come quickly to her. She said, “**Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices**” (Song 8:14).

This and the book of Esther are the only two books of the Bible that do not mention God.

A Description of Isaiah

The book says it is the vision of Isaiah which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. This book is rich with stirring words and profound ideas. And it contains many prophesies about the Christ. Nevertheless, there are some very difficult passages in it. Part of the difficulty is a style of wording that often does not identify the speaker and/or to what or to whom he is referring. In other words, when you read the book you will often find yourself wondering not only what he is talking about, but who is talking or who he is talking to. An example of that is described in the New Testament: “**... the eunuch said to Philip, I ask thee, about whom does the prophet say this, about himself, or about some other man?**” (Act 8:34). Several of the other books of prophecy, however, also have passages with the same kinds of difficulties. Understanding all they say is a great challenge.

Isaiah first quoted Jehovah. He said, “**Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Jehovah has spoken. I have nourished and brought up sons, and they have rebelled against me**” (Isa. 1:2). Jehovah said the ox knows his owner, but Israel did not consider. He called them a sinful nation laden with iniquity, sons who dealt corruptly. He said they forsook Jehovah, and even despised the Holy One of Israel. He asked why they would continue being stricken. And he told of the desolation of their country.

Jehovah compared Israel to Sodom and Gomorrah. He said he had enough of their animal sacrifices; he did not delight in them. He said he could not bear iniquity and the solemn meeting. He said he hated their appointed feasts, and was weary of bearing them. And he said he would not hear their many prayers because their hands were full of blood.

He told them to wash themselves, and put away the evil of their doings. He told them to learn to do good, seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow. Then he said, “**Come now, and let us reason together, says Jehovah, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool**” (Isa. 1:18). He said if they were willing and obedient, they would eat of the good of the land, but if they refused they would be devoured with the sword.

Then he said, “**How the faithful city has become a harlot! She who was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers**” (Isa. 1:21). It grieves my soul to see how that scripture describes many of the cities of America nowadays. It was not always that way. I recently read an article by an elderly woman who said she was raised in our nation’s capital when it was safe for children.

Isaiah told how crooked they were, including their rulers. He said they were companions of thieves. Jehovah then said he would avenge himself of his enemies, and would purge away their dross. He said he would restore their judges as at the first, and afterward they would be called the city of righteousness. But those who forsake Jehovah would be consumed.

Then Isaiah said the time was coming when the mountain of Jehovah’s house would be exalted above the hills, and all the nations would flow to it. He said many peoples would go there and ask to be taught his ways. He said the word of Jehovah would go forth from Jerusalem. He said, “**And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more**” (Isa. 2:4). Those are beautiful and oft quoted words of peace.

Then he asked Jacob (the people of Israel) to come and walk in the light of Jehovah. He said Jehovah had forsaken his people because they had joined with the pagans. He said their land was full of silver and gold, horses and chariots—and idols. He said the common man and the great man both bowed down and degraded themselves. He said, “**Therefore do not forgive them**” (Isa. 2:9). He told them to enter into the rock, and hide from before the terror of Jehovah. He said the pride of men would be brought low; Jehovah alone would be exalted in that day. He said men would then cast away their idols, and go into the caverns of the rocks when Jehovah arose to shake the earth mightily.

Isaiah said Jehovah was going to take away from Jerusalem and Judah prosperity and all the better trained men. He said he was going to set babes to rule over them, and all the people would oppress

each other. He said, “**The child shall behave himself proudly against the old man, and the base against the honorable**” (Isa. 3:5). And he said nobody would want to be ruler because of their ruined condition.

He said they declared their sin as Sodom. He said woe to their soul, because they had done evil to themselves. He said to tell the righteous it would be well with them, for they would eat the fruit of their doings. He said woe to the wicked, for what his hands had done would be done to him. Then he lamented, “**As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, those who lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths**” (Isa. 3:12).

He said Jehovah stood up to judge the peoples, and he rebuked the elders and rulers. Jehovah said to them, “**What do ye mean that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor?**” (Isa. 3:15). I rejoice that America still cares for the poor. Then Jehovah rebuked the daughters of Zion for being haughty. He said they walked with wanton eyes, mincing as they went. He said he was going to take away the beauty of their apparel and their ornaments, and give them ugliness and humiliation instead, like baldness in place of well-set hair. He said their men would fall by the sword, and they would become desperate for husbands.

Isaiah said in “that day” the branch of Jehovah would be beautiful, and the fruit of the land would be excellent for those who had escaped from Israel. And he said those who were left in Jerusalem would be called holy when Jehovah had washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the blood of Jerusalem, which he would do by the spirit of justice and by the spirit of burning. He said Jehovah would shelter mount Zion and her assemblies from the elements.

Then Isaiah referred to Jehovah as his well-beloved. He said, “**Let me sing for my well-beloved a song of my beloved concerning his vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill**” (Isa. 5:1). He said he worked to build a good place for it, and he expected it to bring forth grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes. He asked what more he could have done for his vineyard. He said he was going to tear down what he built, and make it waste, a place of briers and thorns. Then he said the vineyard of Jehovah was the house of Israel and the men of Judah. Isaiah said, “**And he looked for justice, but, behold,**

oppression, for righteousness, but, behold, a cry” (Isa. 5:7).

Then in a short space he uttered six woes. He first said woe to those who added houses and fields. Jehovah said many houses would be desolate, and the land would be very unproductive. The second woe was to those who rose early and tarried late to be intoxicated with strong drink. He said they used musical instruments in their feasts, but did not regard the work of Jehovah. He said, “**Therefore my people have gone into captivity for lack of knowledge, and their honorable men are famished, and their multitude are parched with thirst**” (Isa. 5:13). He said both the common man and the great man were brought low, but Jehovah of hosts was exalted in justice. The third woe was to those who drew iniquity with cords of falsehood, and sin as it were with a cart rope, and who told Jehovah to show his work quickly. Which may mean they laden themselves with sin, and were impatient with Jehovah’s blessings.

The last three woes in this group are as follows: “**Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, who put darkness for light, and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe to those who are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink, who justify the wicked for rewards, and take away the justice of the righteous man from him!**” (Isa. 5:20-23).

He said therefore their root would be as rottenness, because they rejected the law of Jehovah. He said the anger of Jehovah was kindled against his people, and their dead bodies would be as garbage in the midst of the streets. And he said, “**For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still**” (Isa. 5:25). Isaiah said Jehovah was going to call for fierce nations against them, who would roar as lions and carry away the prey. He said the land would be in darkness and distress.

Then Isaiah told of a vision of Jehovah sitting high upon a throne. His train filled the temple, and the seraphim stood above him, each having six wings. He said they cried out to each other, saying, “**Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory**” (Isa. 6:3). Isaiah thought he was undone because of his unclean lips, and his people’s unclean lips. But one of the seraphim flew with a live coal from off the altar, and touched his mouth with it to forgive his sin.

Then Isaiah heard the voice of Jehovah asking who would go for them. Isaiah answered, “**Lo, send me!**” (Isa. 6:8). Jehovah told him, “**Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but do not understand, and see ye indeed, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn, and be healed**” (Isa. 6:9-10). When Isaiah asked how long, Jehovah said until the cities were emptied and the land was utterly waste.

Next the book says that during the days of Ahaz king of Judah, both Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the king of Israel, went to war against Jerusalem, but they could not prevail against it. When the house of David heard it, the heart of the people trembled greatly. Then Jehovah told Isaiah and his son to go forth to meet Ahaz at a certain place. He was to tell him not to fear those two kings and their evil purpose against him. Jehovah said it would not happen. He also told him that within sixty-five years Ephraim would be broken, and would no longer be a people. Israel was sometimes called Ephraim after they split from Judah, because it was the dominant tribe. And Jehovah said, “**If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established**” (Isa. 7:9).

Then Jehovah told Ahaz to ask a sign of him, deep or high, but Ahaz refused. Because he refused, Isaiah asked them if it was a small thing to weary men, that they would weary his God also. He said Jehovah would give him a sign anyway: “**Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel**” (Isa. 7:14). He said that before the child would know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the lands of both those kings would be forsaken.

Isaiah also told Ahaz that Jehovah was going to bring the king of Assyria upon him and his people. He also said Jehovah would whistle for the fly in Egypt, and the bee in Assyria, to come against them. He said Jehovah would shave with a razor from the head to the foot. He said in that day a man would keep alive a young cow and two sheep, and everyone who was left in the land would eat butter and honey. What that and other things he said may mean is that Egypt and Assyria would so devastate the countryside, that the few rural inhabitants who were left would have no competition for food. Although Jerusalem was spared that time, Babylon conquered it later.

Next Isaiah said Jehovah told him to take a great tablet, and write upon it “For Maher-shalal-hash-baz,” which means something like “make haste.” After two witnesses recorded it, Isaiah went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. And Jehovah told Isaiah to call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Jehovah said that before the child was able to say, “My father” and “My mother,” the wealth of Damascus (capital of Syria) and Samaria (a major part of Israel) would be carried away before the king of Assyria. Jehovah also told Isaiah that because the people (of Israel) rejoiced in the kings of Syria and Israel, he was going to bring the king of Assyria against them. He compared the Assyrians to a great flood, which would spread even in the land of Judah.

Next Isaiah spoke to the peoples of far countries. He told them to make an uproar and be broken in pieces, and gird themselves and be broken in pieces. He told them to take counsel and speak, but it would fail. He said, “**... for God is with us**” (Isa. 8:10).

Then Isaiah said that Jehovah spoke to him with a strong hand, and instructed him not to walk in the way of “this people,” which probably refers to the sons of Israel. Jehovah said, “**Say ye not, A conspiracy, concerning all of which this people shall say, A conspiracy, nor fear ye their fear, nor be in dread of it**” (Isa. 8:12). He told them to sanctify and fear Jehovah. He said Jehovah would be a sanctuary, but for a stone of stumbling to both houses of Israel, and many would stumble and fall because of it. That may refer to the Christ.

He also told Isaiah to bind up the testimony and seal the law among his people. Isaiah said, “**And I will wait for Jehovah, who hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will be a man who has trusted in him**” (Isa. 8:17). He said that he and the children whom Jehovah had given him were for signs and wonders in Israel from Jehovah. Then Isaiah spoke of those who sought sorcerers and psychics. He asked if a people should not seek for their God. He ridiculed them for seeking the dead on behalf of the living. He told them to seek the law and the testimony, otherwise there was no morning for them (no end of darkness). He said they would be greatly distressed and hungry. He said they would see only the gloom of anguish, and would be driven away into thick darkness.

Isaiah said, “**But there shall be no gloom to her who was in anguish**” (Isa. 9:1). He said that in the former time the land of Zebulun and Naphtali were brought into contempt (perhaps referring to its bas-

tardization by the Assyrians), but in the latter time he made it glorious (because of the Galilean ministry of Jesus). He called it Galilee of the Gentiles. He said, “**The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them the light has shone**” (Isa. 9:2). The book of Matthew says that prophecy referred to Jesus (see Mat. 4:15-16). Isaiah said Jehovah had multiplied the nation and increased their joy, for he had broken the yoke of the burden.

He also made another prophecy about Christ when he said, “**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even forever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this**” (Isa. 9:6-7).

Isaiah said Jehovah sent word into Jacob. He said that because Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria spoke proudly, claiming though the bricks were fallen they would rebuild even better, that Jehovah would stir up the Syrians and the Philistines to devour them. Isaiah said, “**For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still**” (Isa. 9:12).

He said the people had still not turned to Jehovah who smote them. Therefore, he would cut off in one day from Israel, elder, honorable man, and the prophet who taught lies. He said they caused the people to err and be destroyed. Isaiah said, “**Therefore Jehovah will not rejoice over their young men, nor will he have compassion on their fatherless and widows. For everyone is profane and an evil-doer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still**” (Isa. 9:17).

He said wickedness burned as the fire. He described how vicious they would be toward each other when their land was being consumed. And again he said his anger was not turned away. He uttered a woe to those who decreed unrighteous decrees to prey upon the poor and the needy. He said they would bow down under the prisoners and fall under the slain. And again he said his anger was not turned away.

Jehovah called for the Assyrian, the rod of his anger. He said he would send him against a profane nation, to take spoil and tread them down like mire. He said the Assyrian did not know that Jehovah had sent him, but he boasted about himself. Therefore, Jehovah said that after he was finished with Jerusalem, he would punish the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria. Jehovah said, “**Shall the axe boast itself against him who hews with it?**” (Isa. 10:15). He said therefore that Jehovah would destroy him also. He said in that day the remnant of Israel would return to the mighty God. He said that although they were as the sand of the sea a remnant would return. He said the destruction was determined.

Then he told his people who dwelt in Zion not to fear the Assyrian, even though he smote with the rod. Jehovah said that after a little while he would stir up a scourge against him. He said his yoke would be off the neck and would be destroyed. He mentioned the fear of various cities in the path of the Assyrian march to Jerusalem. Then he seems to have compared the Assyrian army to a forest whose boughs would be cut off bringing them low (see 2Ki. 19:35).

Next he said a shoot would come out of the stock of Jesse. That is another prophecy about Jesus. He said, “**And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah**” (Isa. 11:2). He said he would judge with righteousness, and would smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and kill the wicked with the breath of his lips, which refers to the power of his words. He said righteousness would be the belt of his waist. He said that both predatory animals and prey would live together in peace. He said, “**They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea**” (Isa. 11:9). He said in that day the Gentiles would hope in the root of Jesse who would rule over them.

Jehovah said he would recover the remnant of his people the second time, and Ephraim would not envy Judah, nor would Judah vex Ephraim. He said together they would despoil the sons of the east, their enemies. He said in that day they would give thanks to Jehovah, for his anger was turned away to comfort. He said they would draw water out of the wells of salvation with joy. He said in that day they would give thanks to Jehovah, and would proclaim him among the peoples, and would sing to him.

Next the book says, “**The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw**” (Isa. 13:1). Eleven times in this book Isaiah told about the burden of a particular people. And each time the burden was punishment because of their sins. The first was against Babylon. Isaiah told about Jehovah mustering kingdoms for an army to destroy. He told them (the people of Babylon) to wail. He said all hands would be feeble and they would be dismayed. He said, “**Behold, the day of Jehovah comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it**” (Isa. 13:9). There follows a description of destruction like the end of the world. Then Jehovah said he was going to stir up the Medes against them, and they would not spare even the children. He said Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, would be like Sodom and Gomorrah. He said it would never again to be inhabited; it would be for the wild beasts. And so it remains.

Then Isaiah spoke words of comfort to Jehovah’s people. Isaiah said that Jehovah would have compassion on Jacob, and would set them in their own land. He said they would rule over their oppressors. He said in the day that Jehovah gives them rest from their trouble and hard service they would take up a parable against the king of Babylon. They would tell how the cruel oppressor had ceased, that Jehovah had broken the staff of the wicked. His pomp would be brought down to Sheol.

Isaiah said, “**How thou are fallen from heaven, O day-star, son of the morning! How thou are cut down to the ground, who laid the nations low! And thou said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the outermost parts of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the Most High**” (Isa. 14:12-14). The King James version translates the word for day-star to Lucifer, and some have thought it refers to Satan. However, the description is about the arrogant king of Babylon, perhaps the last one. For Isaiah said he would not have a burial.

Then Jehovah said he would rise up and cut off from Babylon name and remnant, son and son’s son. He said he would sweep it with the broom of destruction. He also said he would break the Assyrian from his (Jehovah’s) land, and take their yoke from off them. He said, “**This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations.**

For Jehovah of hosts has purposed, and who shall annul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” (Isa. 14:26-27).

Next the book says, “**In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden**” (Isa. 14:28). Isaiah told Philistia not to rejoice because the rod that smote him was broken. He said an adder would come out of the serpent’s root. He said, “**And I will kill thy root with famine, and thy remnant shall be slain**” (Isa. 14:30). He told Philistia to howl, for there was smoke coming out of the north. The smoke probably refers to a destroying army, perhaps Assyria and/or Babylon. He said Jehovah had founded Zion, and in her the afflicted of his people would take refuge.

Then the book says, “**The burden of Moab**” (Isa. 15:1). Isaiah mentioned some cities of Moab that were laid waste. He spoke of destruction and wailing in Moab. He said, “**For the waters of Dimon (a city of Moab) are full of blood. For I will bring yet more upon Dimon, a lion upon those of Moab who escape, and upon the remnant of the land**” (Isa. 15:9). In this part of the book there are words that are especially difficult to understand. Isaiah said to send lambs for the ruler, to the mount of the daughter of Zion. The lambs may mean gifts for shelter, because he said the daughters of Moab would be as wandering birds at the fords of the river Arnon (at their border). Then he speaks about giving counsel and executing justice. He said to hide the outcasts, the fugitives. Which may mean that the Israelites should shelter the fugitives from Moab. He said the oppressors were consumed out of the land, which may mean that the fugitives would be the harmless survivors of Moab. Then he said, “**And a throne shall be established in loving kindness, and he shall sit on it in truth, in the tent of David, judging, and seeking justice, and swift to do righteousness**” (Isa. 16:5). That may refer to the Messiah, so that Isaiah was telling them what kind of nation they should be—kind, supported by truth, being just and righteous.

Then he said, “**We have heard of the pride of Moab, that he is very proud, even of his arrogance, and his pride, and his wrath. His boastings are nothing. Therefore Moab shall wail for Moab, everyone shall wail**” (Isa. 16:6-7). Jehovah said he would weep for their vineyards. The Bible says Jesus wept for Jerusalem (see Luke 19:41). Jehovah said the battle had fallen on their summer fruits, therefore there would be no singing and joyful noise. Jehovah said his heart sounded like a harp

for Moab. He said when Moab came to his sanctuary to pray (to his idols) he would not prevail. That those were the words of Jehovah is indicated by the verse that ends them: "**This is the word that Jehovah spoke concerning Moab in time past**" (Isa. 16:13). After that Isaiah said Jehovah had now spoken, saying, "**Within three years, as the years of a hireling, the glory of Moab shall be brought into contempt, with all his great multitude. And the remnant shall be very small and of no account**" (Isa. 16:14).

Next Isaiah said, "**The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap**" (Isa. 17:1). He said the remnant of Syria would be as the glory of the sons of Israel, which would be made thin in that day. He said it would be like gleaning an olive tree with only two or three berries at its extremities. He said men would look to their maker, and would respect the Holy One of Israel in that day, and they would abandon their idols. He said their strong cities would be as forsaken places. He said it was because they had forgotten the God of their salvation. Therefore, they plant but the harvest flees away in the day of grief.

Then he spoke of the uproar of many peoples, like the roaring of the seas. But he (which must mean Jehovah) would rebuke them, and they would flee far off like whirling dust. Isaiah said, "**This is the portion of those who despoil us, and the lot of those who rob us**" (Isa. 17:14).

After that are more words that are difficult to understand. Isaiah said, "**Ah, the land of the rustling of wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia ...**" (Isa. 18:1). He said they send ambassadors by the sea to a nation tall and smooth, a fearful people, a nation that metes out and treads down, whose land the rivers divide. He said all the inhabitants of the earth should take notice when an ensign was lifted up on the mountains. Jehovah said to Isaiah that he would be still and watch. He said that before the harvest he would cut down the spreading branches, and they would be left for the ravenous birds and beasts. Isaiah said in that time a present would be brought to Jehovah of hosts from a people tall and smooth, etcetera, to mount Zion.

Next the book says, "**The burden of Egypt. Behold, Jehovah rides upon a swift cloud, and comes to Egypt**" (Isa. 19:1). Jehovah said the idols of Egypt would tremble at his presence. He said he would stir up the Egyptians against each other in a civil war, and he would give them over into the hand

of a cruel lord. He said the streams of Egypt would be diminished and dried up, causing the fishermen to lament. He spoke of other laborers who would be confounded. He said their rulers were foolish, causing Egypt to go astray. He said, "**In that day the Egyptians shall be like women, and they shall tremble and fear because of the shaking of the hand of Jehovah of hosts, which he shakes over them**" (Isa. 19:16).

He said the land of Judah would become a terror to Egypt. He said Jehovah would be known to Egypt, and they would know him in that day. He said Jehovah would both smite and heal Egypt, and they would return to him. In that day Egypt, Assyria, and Israel would all join together, for Jehovah had blessed them, saying, "**Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance**" (Isa. 19:25). Perhaps Isaiah was prophesying about the unity of Christians of all nations. Or perhaps that prophecy has yet to be fulfilled.

Then the book says that in the year Assyria conquered Ashdod (a Philistine city), Jehovah told Isaiah to walk naked and barefoot. Jehovah said that just as his servant walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder to Egypt and Ethiopia, so Assyria was going to lead away the captives of them, and they would be confounded. And the inhabitant of the coastland would ask how they would escape the king of Assyria.

Next Isaiah said, "**The burden of the wilderness of the sea**" (Isa. 21:1). He said it comes from the wilderness like whirlwinds in the South. He said a grievous vision was declared to him. He said the treacherous man deals treacherously, and the destroyer destroys. Then he told Media to besiege, for he had made the sighing of it cease. He said his loins were filled with anguish, and he was so dismayed that ye could not hear or see. He said horror had frightened him. He said, "**They prepare the table, they set the watch, they eat, they drink. Rise up, ye rulers, anoint the shield**" (Isa. 21:5). Then he said Jehovah told him to set a watchman to declare what he sees. The watchman said he saw a troop of men. Then he said that Babylon was fallen, and all the graven images of its gods were broken to the ground. Then he said, "**O my threshing, and the grain of my floor! That which I have heard from Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, I have declared to you**" (Isa. 21:10). All of that may be about the destruction of Babylon by the Medes and Persians.

After that he spoke of the burden of Dumah, which may refer to Edom. He asked the watchman about the night. The watchman said the morning comes, and also the night. That is another difficult passage to understand. Next the book says, “**The burden upon Arabia**” (Isa. 21:13). That seems to refer to Ishmaelites. Isaiah said Jehovah told him that within a year the mighty men of Kedar (an Ishmaelite city) would be few.

After that the book says, “**The burden of the valley of vision**” (Isa. 22:1). That was about Jerusalem. Isaiah asked what troubled the city, that they went up to the housetops. He said their slain were not slain with the sword. He said all their rulers fled away. Isaiah said therefore he would weep bitterly. And he asked not to be comforted for the destruction of the daughter of his people. He said it was a day of trouble and perplexity from Jehovah, a breaking down of the walls. He said their choicest valleys were full of chariots, and the horsemen were arrayed at the gate. Isaiah was apparently describing a siege.

He said they worked to build their defenses and prepared water, “**But ye did not look to him who had done this, nor had ye respect to him who purposed it long ago**” (Isa. 22:11), meaning Jehovah. He said Jehovah called for mourning and sack-cloth in that day, but they feasted joyfully, saying, “**Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die**” (Isa. 22:13). Jehovah told Isaiah that iniquity would not be forgiven them until they died. That “burden of the valley of vision” seems to describe things about the siege by the Assyrians, and also the later one by the Babylonians.

Jehovah then told Isaiah to go to Shebna the treasurer. Shebna lived during the time of the siege of the Assyrians (see 2Ki. 18). Jehovah told Isaiah to rebuke Shebna for hewing out a sepulcher for himself (an expensive luxury). He said Jehovah would take him into a large country to die. He called him the shame of his lord’s house, and he would thrust him from his office. He said he would replace him with Eliakim, who would be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Among other things he said he would fasten him as a nail in a sure place, but the nail that was fastened in a sure place would give way and fall.

Next the book says, “**The burden of Tyre**” (Isa. 23:1). Isaiah told the ships of Tarshish to howl, for it was laid waste. He said she was the mart of nations. He told Sidon to be ashamed. He said Egypt would be greatly pained at the report of Tyre. Isaiah asked,

“**Who has purposed this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose merchants are rulers, whose traders are the honored of the earth?**” (Isa. 23:8). He said it was Jehovah of hosts, to stain the pride of all glory. Isaiah said Jehovah had also shaken the kingdoms, and commanded to destroy the strongholds of Canaan. He spoke of the Chaldeans (of Babylon), and he said that Tyre would be forgotten for seventy years. Isaiah said that after seventy years Jehovah examined Tyre, and found she had repented of her worldwide harlotry. He said her merchandise would be for food and clothing to those who dwelt before Jehovah.

After that Isaiah said Jehovah makes the earth waste, scattering the inhabitants of it, great and small alike. He said the earth was polluted under its inhabitants, because they had transgressed the laws and broken the everlasting covenant. He said therefore the curse had devoured the earth, with few men left. He described the bitterness of a city destroyed, and said it would be that way in the midst of the earth among the peoples. He said they would lift up their voice for the majesty of Jehovah. Isaiah urged them therefore to glorify Jehovah, the God of Israel. He said that from the outermost part of the earth they had heard songs, glory to the righteous.

Then he said, “**I pine away, I pine away. Woe is me! The treacherous have dealt treacherously, yea, the treacherous have dealt very treacherously**” (Isa. 24:16). He told how fear, the pit, and the snare would take the inhabitant of the earth. He said the earth was utterly broken. He said its transgression was heavy upon it; it would fall and not rise again. He said in that day Jehovah would punish the high ones. They would be gathered as prisoners in the pit. He said Jehovah of hosts would reign in Jerusalem, and glory would be before his elders. Those things may refer to the end of the world, judgment, and the new Jerusalem in heaven (see Rev. 21).

Isaiah said, “**O Jehovah, thou are my God. I will exalt thee. I will praise thy name. For thou have done wonderful things, even counsels of old, in faithfulness and truth**” (Isa. 25:1). He said Jehovah had made a fortified city a ruin that would never be built. He said therefore a strong people would glorify him. He said Jehovah had been a stronghold to the poor and needy, and a refuge from oppression. He said that in this mountain (Zion) Jehovah would make all peoples a feast of fat things, and would destroy the veil that was spread over all nations.

Isaiah said, “**He will swallowed up death in victory, and the lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces. And he will take away the reproach of his people from off all the earth. For Jehovah has spoken it**” (Isa. 25:8). He said they had waited for him, and in that day they would be glad and rejoice in his salvation. And he said Moab would be trodden down and his pride laid low.

Then he told of a song that would be sung in the land of Judah in that day. He said they had a strong city, and Jehovah would appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. Then he said, “**Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps faith may enter in. Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee. Trust ye in Jehovah forever, for in Jehovah, even Jehovah, is an everlasting rock**” (Isa. 26:2-4).

He said Jehovah had brought down those who dwell on high, even to the dust. He said Jehovah directs the path of the just. Isaiah said he desired Jehovah with his soul in the night. He said when his judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. He said a wicked man would deal wrongfully even in the land of uprightness. He said fire would devour Jehovah’s adversaries.

Isaiah said Jehovah would ordain peace for them (sons of Israel). He said other lords had dominion over them, but they would not live. He said Jehovah had increased the nation. He said they had poured out a prayer when his chastening was upon them. They were in pain as a woman near delivery. Then either Isaiah or Jehovah said, “**Thy dead shall live**” (Isa. 26:19). And he told his people to hide themselves for a little moment until the indignation was passed over. He said, “**For, behold, Jehovah comes forth out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity**” (Isa. 26:21). Many times Isaiah told about God punishing people on earth because of their sins, and God still does. Isaiah said Jehovah would punish Leviathan, the crooked serpent, with his great sword in that day. And he would kill the monster that was in the sea. Leviathan may be Satan, and the monster in the sea may refer to organized sin in the world, for the sea sometimes symbolizes mankind.

Isaiah told them to sing to a vineyard of wine in that day. Jehovah said he was its keeper, and he was zealous to defend it. He said that in days to come Israel would take root, blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. He asked if he had smit-

ten them as he smote those who smote them. He said he contended with it in measure, therefore by that the iniquity of Jacob would be forgiven. He said, “**And this is all the fruit of taking away his sin: ...**” (Isa. 27:9). He said the fortified city was solitary and forsaken like the wilderness. He said the people were of no understanding, and he who made them would not have compassion upon them.

Perhaps all of that means Jehovah had not punished them as severely as he had their enemies. He had destroyed their city but he would bring them back. For he said, “**And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will beat off his fruit, from the flood of the River to the brook of Egypt. And ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye sons of Israel**” (Isa. 27:12). He said those who were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and were outcasts in the land of Egypt, would come and worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

Then Isaiah said, “**Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim ...**” (Isa. 28:1). He said Jehovah had a mighty one who would cast them down to the earth like a destroying storm. He said in that day Jehovah of hosts would become a crown of glory to the residue of his people. He said the priest and the prophet reeled with strong drink, erring in vision and stumbling in judgment. He asked who would Jehovah teach knowledge. He said it was precept upon precept. Then he said no, but by men of another tongue he would speak to them, to say it is rest, yet they would not hear. Perhaps that refers to efforts by Christian Gentiles to convert Jews. He said therefore the word of Jehovah would be to them precept upon precept, so that they would fall and be broken. That probably means they would be condemned for failing to keep the laws of their legalistic system, which Christ abolished for his disciples.

Isaiah said, “**Therefore hear the word of Jehovah, ye scoffers, who rule this people that is in Jerusalem**” (Isa. 28:14). He said they had made a covenant with death to escape the overflowing scourge. He said they made lies their refuge. Therefore, Jehovah said he was going to lay a precious cornerstone in Zion, and he who believes in him would not be shamed. Peter said that cornerstone was Jesus (see 1Pe. 2:6). Jehovah said he would make justice the line, and hail would sweep away the refuge of lies. And their covenant with death would be annulled; they would be trodden down by the overflowing scourge. He said, “**Now therefore be ye not scoffers, lest your bonds be made strong. For I have heard a decree of destruction**

from the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, upon the whole earth" (Isa. 28:22). Then he told about planting and harvesting wisely, and he said, "**This also comes forth from Jehovah of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in wisdom**" (Isa. 28:29).

Next he spoke of Ariel, the city where David encamped (Jerusalem). Jehovah said he was going to distress Ariel, laying a siege against it, and it would be brought down. However, he also said the multitude of its foes would be as chaff that passes away. He said the multitude of the nations that fought against Ariel would be as a dream.

Then he said the people of Ariel are drunken but not with wine. He said Jehovah had poured out upon them the spirit of deep sleep. The Lord said, "**Inasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but have removed their heart far from me, but in vain they worship me, teaching the commandments and doctrines of men. Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder. I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden**" (Isa. 29:13-14).

He said woe to those whose works are in the dark, and think they are not seen. He asked them if the potter should be esteemed as clay, or the thing made say that he who formed it had no understanding. Which thing is exactly what evolutionists say about what created them—mindless chance out of dumb dirt.

He said that in a very little while Lebanon would be blessed, the deaf would hear, the blind would see, and the meek and poor would rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. He said for the terrible one was brought to nothing, and sinners were cut off, who oppose justice. He said therefore, Jehovah, who redeemed Abraham, said that Jacob would not now be ashamed, but his children would sanctify his name and stand in awe of him. He said those who err in spirit would come to understanding.

Then the book says, "**Woe to the rebellious sons, says Jehovah, who take counsel, but not of me, and who make a league, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin ...**" (Isa. 30:1). He said they sought the aid of Egypt, but had not asked of his mouth. He said therefore that would be their shame and confusion, because those people could not help them.

Next the book says, "**The burden of the beasts of the South**" (Isa. 30:6). Isaiah spoke about carrying their riches through the wild land (probably the wilderness of Sinai) to a people who would not profit them. He said Egypt helps in vain. He said to record it for all time. He said, "**For it is a rebellious people, lying sons, sons who will not hear the law of Jehovah, who say to the seers, Do not see, and to the prophets, Do not prophesy to us right things. Speak to us smooth things. Prophesy deceits. Get you out of the way. Turn aside out of the path. Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us**" (Isa. 30:9-11).

Jehovah told them that because they despised the word, and trusted oppression and perverseness, Jehovah would break them suddenly. Jehovah told them they would be saved in returning and rest, and their strength would be in quietness and confidence. Yet they would not, and chose instead to flee upon horses. He said therefore a thousand of them would flee at the threat of one, and they would be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, which probably means alone and isolated.

Isaiah said therefore Jehovah would wait that he might be gracious to them. And he said Jehovah would be exalted that he might have mercy upon them. Which seems to say that Jehovah was going to be gracious and merciful to them, but they were unfit at the time. He said Jehovah was a God of justice, and all who wait for him were blessed. He said the people would dwell in Zion at Jerusalem, and would weep no more. He said, "**And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet thy teachers shall not be hidden anymore, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers**" (Isa. 30:20). He said they would be told the way to go, and they were to cast away their graven images. Jehovah said he would give them prosperity, and there would be extraordinary light in the day that he bound up the hurt of his people.

Then Isaiah said, "**Behold, the name of Jehovah comes from far, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke**" (Isa. 30:27). He said he was going to sift the nations with a sieve of destruction. He said they (Israel) would have a song as in the night when a holy feast was kept, and Jehovah would cause his glorious voice to be heard, and would show his arm coming down in anger. He said the Assyrian would be dismayed, and he told how Jehovah would smite him. Then he said, "**Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are**

many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they look not to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek Jehovah!" (Isa. 31:1).

Isaiah said Jehovah was wise, and would arise against the house of evil-doers. He said the Egyptians were men and not God. And when Jehovah stretched out his hand, both helper and helped would be consumed together. He said Jehovah would fight upon mount Zion as a fearless lion; he would protect and deliver.

Isaiah said, "**Turn ye to him from whom ye have deeply revolted, O sons of Israel**" (Isa. 31:6). He said in that day they would all cast away their idols. He said the Assyrian would not fall by the sword of man (see 2Ki. 19:35), and their rulers would be dismayed at the ensign whose fire was in Zion. Isaiah said a king would reign in righteousness and rulers would rule in justice. He said a man would be as a hiding-place from the wind. He said the eyes would not be dim, and the ears of those who hear would hearken. He said the heart of the rash would understand knowledge, and stammerers would speak plainly. He said, "**The fool shall no more be called noble, nor the churl said to be bountiful**" (Isa. 32:5). He told of the folly and evil of fools. I groan when I see how much that folly, fools, and churlish men, are glamorized by this generation of Americans. Isaiah said a noble man devises noble things and would continue in them.

Then he said, "**Rise up, ye women who are at ease. Hear my voice, ye careless daughters**" (Isa. 32:9). He said they would be troubled days beyond a year, for the vintage would fail. He told them to be troubled and beat upon the breasts. He said the palace would be forsaken, and the populous city deserted, until the Spirit was poured upon them from on high, and the wilderness became a fruitful field. He said, "**Then justice shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness shall abide in the fruitful field**" (Isa. 32:16). He said the work of righteousness would be peace and security forever. He said his people would abide in safe dwellings, but it would hail in the downfall of the forest, and the city would be utterly laid low. That is another passage difficult to understand.

Then he said, "**Woe to thee who destroys, and thou were not destroyed, and deal treacherously, and they did not deal treacherously with thee!**" (Isa. 33:1). He said when they ceased to destroy, they would be destroyed. Isaiah asked Jehovah to be gracious to them (Israel), and be their salvation in the time of trouble. Then he seems to have said that

when Jehovah lifted himself up the nations would scatter, and Israel would gather the spoil. He said Jehovah was exalted, and had filled Zion with justice and righteousness. He said, "**And there shall be stability in thy times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. The fear of Jehovah is thy treasure**" (Isa. 33:6).

After that Isaiah spoke of bitterness and devastation. He said the enemy despised the cities and did not regard man. So the land mourned and languished. Then Jehovah said he would arise and be exalted. He said "your" breath was a fire that would devour "you," which probably refers to their enemies, and means they would be devoured by their own destructive spirit. Then Jehovah said, "**Hear, ye who are far off, what I have done, and ye who are near, acknowledge my might**" (Isa. 33:13).

Isaiah said the sinners in Zion were afraid. And he asked who among them could dwell with the devouring fire. He answered and said, "**He who walks righteously, and speaks uprightly. He who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes away his hands from taking a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil**" (Isa. 33:15). Isaiah said such a man would dwell on high, secure and well-fed. He said his eyes would see the king in his beauty. He said they would behold a land that reaches afar. Alas, this generation of Americans loves to look upon evil; they consider it entertainment.

Isaiah asked where was he who counted and weighed, perhaps referring to defense preparations. He said they would not see the fierce people who spoke a strange language. He said their eyes would see Jerusalem a quiet habitation. He said Jehovah would be with them there in majesty. He said, "**For Jehovah is our judge. Jehovah is our lawgiver. Jehovah is our king, he will save us**" (Isa. 33:22). That may be a prophecy about Jehovah saving them from the Assyrian army, which is described a little further on in the book.

Then Isaiah told the nations to listen. He said that Jehovah had indignation against them all, and had delivered them to the slaughter. He also said, "**And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. And all their host shall fade away as the leaf fades from off the vine, and as a fading leaf from the fig tree**" (Isa. 34:4). That is obviously a prophecy about the end of the world (See Heb. 1:10-12 and 2Pe. 3:10).

Then Jehovah said his sword was coming “**upon Edom, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment**” (Isa. 34:5). He said their land would be drunken with blood. He said Jehovah had a day of vengeance, and a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. He said Edom would become a wilderness, a waste-land from generation to generation. Jehovah described how it would be inhabited only by thistles and wild beasts. And thus it has been for over two thousand years.

Then Jehovah said the wilderness would be glad, and the desert would rejoice and blossom abundantly. He said they would see the glory of Jehovah. He told the weak hands to be strengthened, and those of a fearful heart not to fear. He said their God was coming with vengeance and recompense to save them. He said then the blind would see, the deaf would hear, the lame would leap, and the mute would sing. He said waters would break out abundantly in the wilderness and the desert. And he said a highway would be there, called “The way of holiness.” He said the unclean would not pass over it, nor any ravenous beast, but only the redeemed. He said, “**And the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come with singing to Zion. And everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy. And sorrow and sighing shall flee away**” (Isa. 35:10). That seems to be a prophecy of the new covenant, which began with John the immerser in the wilderness. He was followed by Jesus and his miracles of healing. Jesus also preached the good news of salvation, which may be the way of holiness that Isaiah spoke about. Christ’s Church is composed of those he ransomed for everlasting joy in heaven.

Next the book says, “**Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and took them**” (Isa. 36:1). The king of Assyria also sent Rabshakeh with a great army against Jerusalem. Three of Hezekiah’s officials came forth to Rabshakeh. He told them to tell Hezekiah not to trust Egypt or Jehovah to deliver him. Among other things he said Jehovah told him to go and destroy the land. They told Rabshakeh to speak to them in the Syrian language, and not in the Jews’ language. But he said, “**Has my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words, and not to the men who sit upon the wall, to eat their own dung, and to drink their own urine with you?**” (Isa. 36:12). Then he cried out in the Jews’ language, and told

them to surrender. He said he would take them to a good land of bread and vineyards. He told them not to trust Hezekiah about Jehovah. He said none of the gods of the nations had saved them, so Jehovah would not save Jerusalem from him. However, nobody answered him because Hezekiah commanded against it.

The three officials went to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him what Rabshakeh had said. Then Hezekiah tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Jehovah. He also sent the three officials to ask Isaiah to pray for the remnant, those in Judah not yet conquered by the Assyrians. Isaiah told them to tell their master that Jehovah said not to fear the words of the servants of the king of Assyria, who had blasphemed him. He said Jehovah would cause him to return to his own land and be killed there.

Then Rabshakeh heard that the king of Ethiopia had come out to fight against him, so he sent messengers to Hezekiah saying the same kind of things. He told him not to be deceived by their God, for none of the other gods had saved anybody from them. When Hezekiah received the letter, he went up to the house of Jehovah, spread it before him, and prayed. He said Jehovah was the only God, and he asked him to hear the words of Sennacherib king of Assyria. He said it was true that none of the other gods had saved the other lands, but it was because they were no gods. And he asked Jehovah to save them so that all the kingdoms would know that he alone was Jehovah.

Then Isaiah sent to Hezekiah with Jehovah’s reply. Jehovah said the virgin daughter of Zion had despised and scorned Sennacherib who had defied and blasphemed Jehovah. He said Sennacherib spoke proudly about his army and his power. But Jehovah said, “**Have thou not heard how I have done it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? Now I have brought it to pass, that it should be thine to lay waste fortified cities into ruinous heaps**” (Isa. 37:26). Jehovah said that was why their inhabitants were of small power and confounded. Jehovah said he knew about Sennacherib’s raging against him, and his arrogance. Therefore, he was going to put a hook and bridle in him, and turn him back by the way he came. Then Isaiah gave Hezekiah a sign. He said they would eat that which grows of itself for two years, but would sow and reap the third year. He also said a remnant would go out of Jerusalem. That may mean they would be

able to cultivate crops in the land of Judah the second year.

Isaiah told Hezekiah that Jehovah said the king of Assyria would not attack the city, but would return the way he came. Jehovah said, “**For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake**” (Isa. 37:35). Then the agent of Jehovah went and smote the camp of the Assyrians so that 185,000 died. Consequently, Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and was killed by his own two sons while he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god.

Next the book says, “**In those days Hezekiah was sick to death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, Thus says Jehovah, Set thy house in order, for thou shall die, and not live**” (Isa. 38:1). After Isaiah left, however, Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed that Jehovah would spare his life because he had been faithful to him. The book says he wept greatly. Then Jehovah told Isaiah to go back to Hezekiah, and tell him he had heard his prayer and seen his tears. He was going to add fifteen years to his life. He also said he would deliver him and the city from the hand of the king of Assyria. Jehovah also gave him a sign by causing the shadow on the sundial to return backward ten steps.

Then the book gives the writing of Hezekiah after his recovery. In that writing Hezekiah said he was going into the gates of Sheol in the noontime of his days. With many words he said Jehovah was going to take his life. He said, “**Like a swallow or a crane, so I chattered. I moaned as a dove. My eyes fail with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed, be thou my surety**” (Isa. 38:14). He said he was in great bitterness, and asked Jehovah to recover him. After saying Jehovah would save him, he said, “**Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of Jehovah**” (Isa. 38:20). The book says that Isaiah told them to treat his boil with a cake of figs. Hezekiah had also asked for a sign, which is why the shadow went back on the sundial.

At about that same time the king of Babylon sent men with letters and a present to Hezekiah, because he heard about his sickness and recovery. Hezekiah was glad to receive them, and he showed them all the treasures of his dominion. Then Isaiah came and asked about the men. When Hezekiah said he showed them everything, Isaiah told him what Jehovah said about that. Jehovah said the days were coming when everything would be carried to Baby-

lon. Even his sons would be taken and made eunuchs in the palace of their king. Then Hezekiah said, “**The word of Jehovah which thou have spoken is good. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days**” (Isa. 39:8). Was it right for Hezekiah to think only of himself?

After that Isaiah said, “**Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, says your God**” (Isa. 40:1). He said the warfare of Jerusalem was completed, her iniquity was pardoned, she had received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins. Then he said, “**The voice of a man crying out in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low. And the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places smooth**” (Isa. 40:3-4). Later John the immerser said those words referred to him (Luke 3:4-5). Isaiah also prophesied about Jesus, saying, “**And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. For the mouth of Jehovah has spoken it**” (Isa. 40:5).

After that Isaiah spoke of a voice saying that all flesh was grass. He said the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God would stand forever. Next Isaiah said those who tell good news to Jerusalem should get up on a high mountain, and proclaim the coming of Jehovah. Jehovah said his arm would rule, his reward was with him, and he would feed and protect his flock like a shepherd.

Then he asked things like who had measured the waters in the hollow of his hand. And he asked, “**Who has known the mind of Jehovah, or being his counselor has taught him?**” (Isa. 40:13). Isaiah said the nations were as a drop of a bucket. He said that all the nations were as nothing before him. Then he asked, “**To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare to him?**” (Isa. 40:18). He said a workman makes a graven image. And he asked if they had not known about him who sits above the circle of the earth, who stretches out the heavens as a curtain, who brings rulers to nothing. Then the Holy One asked to whom they would liken him. Isaiah told them to look and see who had created those things.

He asked Israel why they said, “**My way is hid from Jehovah. And the justice due to me is passed away from my God?**” (Isa. 40:27). Which may mean they said he neither sees them nor cares about them. Isaiah asked if they did not know that the everlasting God is never weary. It is he who

gives power to the faint. He said young men would fall, but those who wait for Jehovah would renew their strength. They would run and not be weary.

Next the book says, “**Keep silence before me, O islands, and let the peoples renew their strength. Let them come near, then let them speak. Let us come near together to judgment**” (Isa. 41:1). Islands may refer to independent nations. Then Jehovah asked who raised up the righteous man from the east, and gave him nations and kings to rule over. Jehovah said he had done it. He said the isles had seen and feared, and the ends of the earth trembled. He said every man helped and encouraged his neighbor. Then he described workmen building what seemed to be an idol. All of that is another riddle in the book of Isaiah. It may refer to Jehovah provoking a campaign of conquest by an eastern king, which aroused the fear of other nations, so that their citizens worked together, putting their faith in idols.

Then Jehovah addressed Israel his servant whom he had chosen. He said not to fear, for he was with him (Israel) and would strengthen him. He said all who strove with Israel would perish. He said, “**Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel. I will help thee, says Jehovah, and thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel**” (Isa. 41:14). He said he had made Israel like a sharp threshing instrument to thresh the mountains for the wind to carry away. And they should rejoice in Jehovah and glory in him. That may refer to the ultimate victory of God’s sanctified over the world. Then he told how the poor and needy sought water, and Jehovah provided in abundance so that they would know he had created it.

Next the book says, “**Produce your case, says Jehovah. Bring forth your strong reasons, says the King of Jacob**” (Isa. 41:21). He asked them to predict the future and explain the past, “**that we may know that ye are gods. Yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together**” (Isa. 41:23). He said they were nothing. All of that may refer to the idols men worshiped. They say nothing and do nothing, because they are nothing.

Then he told about raising “him” up from the north, who calls upon his name from the rising of the sun. He said he would come upon rulers as the potter treads clay. He asked who had declared it beforetime; he said there was none. Then Jehovah said he would give to Jerusalem a man who brings good news. Jehovah said he looked, and there was

no man who could answer a word, for their works were vanity, and their molten images were wind and confusion.

Those things are also hard to understand, but some of it may refer to the Christ, for Jehovah then spoke of him (which is quoted in Mat. 12:18-21): “**Behold, my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights. I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench, but he will bring forth justice in truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged till he has set justice in the earth. And in his name Gentiles will hope**” (Isa. 42:1-4).

And after saying that he created the heavens and the earth, Jehovah said more about him: “**I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and those who sit in darkness out of the prison-house**” (Isa. 42:6-7). Jehovah said he would not give his glory to another nor his praise to graven images. He said he would declare new things to them before they came forth. Then Isaiah encouraged singing, praising, and giving glory to Jehovah.

Next Isaiah told how Jehovah would stir himself up as a man of war against his enemies. Jehovah said he had held his peace for a long time, but now he would lay waste mountains and dry up the pools. He said he would lead the blind by a way they did not know. He would make darkness light before them and crooked places straight. And he would not forsake them. He said those who trust in graven images would be utterly put to shame. And he said, “**Hear, ye deaf, and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind, but my servant, or deaf, as my messenger that I send? Thou see many things, but thou do not observe. His ears are open, but he does not hear**” (Isa. 42:18-20). That may contrast the disciples of Christ with the unbelieving Jews, because Jesus said, “**For judgment I came into this world, so that those not seeing might see, and those who see might become blind**” (John 9:39).

Isaiah said it pleased Jehovah, for his righteousness’ sake, to magnify the law and make it honorable. He said that people, however, were robbed and plundered. He asked who gave Israel to the robbers.

And he said it was Jehovah, against whom they had sinned. He said Jehovah poured out the fierceness of his anger, and Israel was set on fire, yet he knew it not. Like today, most people do not see Jehovah's anger causing many troubles of the world.

Then he said, "**But now thus says Jehovah who created thee, O Jacob, and he who formed thee, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name, Thou are mine**" (Isa. 43:1). Jehovah said when Israel passed through the waters, and walked through the fire, they would not be harmed, for he was their God and their Savior. He told Israel not to fear. He said he was with him, and would bring his seed from the east, west, north, and south, even from the end of the earth, all who were called by his name and were created for his glory. He said to bring forth the blind who have eyes, and the deaf who have ears, and let all the nations be gathered together.

Jehovah spoke to Israel, and said they were his witnesses, and his servant whom he had chosen, that they may know and believe him. He said he was the only God. He said, "**I have declared, and I have saved, and I have shown, and there was no strange god among you. Therefore ye are my witnesses, says Jehovah, and I am God. Yea, since the day was I am he, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand. I will work, and who can hinder it?**" (Isa. 43:12-13).

Jehovah, the redeemer of Israel, said for their sake he had sent to Babylon, and was going to bring down the Chaldeans as fugitives "**in the ships of their rejoicing**" (Isa. 43:14). The ships of their rejoicing may be irony, using the ships they rejoiced in as conquerors to flee as fugitives. He told Israel he was Jehovah their God, their Creator and King. Among other things, he told them not to remember the former things, for he was going to do a new thing. He would make rivers in the desert and waters in the wilderness. He said the beasts of the field would honor him, because he gives waters there for his people, his chosen, that they might set forth his praise.

Yet Israel had not called upon him, but had been weary of him. Jehovah said they had not honored him with their sacrifices. He said he had not burdened them with offerings, meaning he had not made it hard for them. He said, "**But thou have burdened me with thy sins. Thou have wearied me with thine iniquities**" (Isa. 43:24). He said it was he who blots out their transgressions for his own sake. He told them to put him in remembrance.

He said, "**Let us plead together. Set thou forth thy case that thou may be justified**" (Isa. 43:26). He said their first father sinned, and their teachers had transgressed against him. Therefore, he would profane the rulers of the sanctuary, and make Jacob a curse and Israel a reviling.

Then Jehovah said, "**Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen**" (Isa. 44:1). He said he made him and would help him. He told him to fear not, for he would bless him and his offspring. Jehovah said he was the first and the last, and besides him there was no god. He asked who would determine things of the future as he does. He said, "**Fear ye not, nor be afraid. Have I not declared to thee of old, and shown it? And ye are my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? Yea, there is no Rock. I know not any**" (Isa. 44:8). He said those who fashion a graven image are all vanity, and they would be put to shame.

Then Jehovah described the work of the smith and how he wearies himself. And he described step by step the work of the carpenter. He said the carpenter takes a tree, and he burns some of it to get warm and some of it to bake bread or roast flesh. Then he said, "**And the residue of it he makes a god, even his graven image. He falls down to it and worships, and prays to it, and says, Deliver me, for thou are my god**" (Isa. 44:17). Christians have learned how ridiculous idol worship is, and the theory of evolution is just as ridiculous. Jehovah said idol worshipers do not consider it, because he had closed their hearts so they could not understand. And has he not done the same with modern evolutionists? Regarding such a man, Jehovah said, "**He feeds on ashes. A deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?**" (Isa. 44:20). Jehovah told Israel to remember those things.

Jehovah said he made Israel, his servant, and he would not forget him. He said he had blotted out his transgressions. And he said, "**Return to me, for I have redeemed thee**" (Isa. 44:22). Then he told the heavens to sing and the earth to shout. He told the mountains and every tree to break forth into singing, because Jehovah had redeemed Jacob, and would glorify himself in Israel. Jehovah said he makes all things, stretching forth the heavens and spreading abroad the earth. He said he frustrates the signs of liars, makes diviners mad, turns wise men backward and makes their knowledge foolish. However, he also "**confirms the word of his servant, and performs the counsel of his messengers, who says of**

Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited, and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places of it” (Isa. 44:26).

He said Cyrus (king of Persia) was his shepherd who would perform all his pleasure. Cyrus would command Jerusalem be rebuilt, and the foundation of the temple be laid. Jehovah said he would use Cyrus to subdue nations. He said he would open the gates for him, and give him hidden riches, so that he would know it was Jehovah who calls him by name for the sake of Israel his chosen.

God said he was Jehovah and there was none else. He said he would gird Cyrus, though he had not known him, so that all would know there was none but Jehovah. He said, “**I form the light, and create darkness. I make peace, and create evil [harm]. I am Jehovah who does all these things**” (Isa. 45:7). And he called for the heavens and the earth to bring forth righteousness. Then he said, “**Woe to him who strives with his maker, a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to him that fashions it, What are thou making? or thy work, He has no hands?**” (Isa. 45:9). Which same thing is what those who challenge God do. Jehovah said he created all things.

He said he had raised him up in righteousness, and he would build his city and let his exiles go free. That also probably refers to Cyrus. Isaiah made those prophesies about Cyrus even before that king was born. You can read in the first part of the book of Ezra how Cyrus, long after the death of Isaiah, ordered the temple to be rebuilt at Jerusalem.

Then Jehovah said, “**The labor of Egypt, and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over to thee, and they shall be thine. They shall go after thee. In chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down to thee. They shall make supplication to thee, saying, Surely God is in thee, and there is none else, no God**” (Isa. 45:14).

Jehovah said that makers of idols would be put to shame and go into confusion, but Israel would be saved with an everlasting salvation. And Jehovah again said he created the heavens and formed the earth. He said he did not create it a waste, but he formed it to be inhabited. He also said he had not spoken in secret, nor did he tell the seed of Jacob to seek him in vain. Jehovah said he declares things that are right. And he said again there was no other God besides him, a just God and a Savior. He told all the ends of the earth to look to him and be saved. He said every knee would bow to him, and every

tongue would confess to God. He said that all those who were incensed against him would be put to shame. However, “**In Jehovah all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory**” (Isa. 45:25), which means justification is for those who choose Jehovah.

Again Jehovah ridiculed idols and their worshippers. And he told the house of Israel that it was he who bore them from birth, and would carry them even to old age. Jehovah told them to remember the former things of old, that he alone was God. He said, “**My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure . . . Yea, I have spoken. I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed. I will also do it**” (Isa. 46:10-11). He said his righteousness would not be far off nor his salvation tarry. He said he would place salvation in Zion for Israel his glory.

Then he spoke against the virgin daughter of Babylon (which is a figure of that nation). He told how she would be brought low because he was going to take vengeance. Jehovah said he had been angry with his people and gave them into her hand, but she showed them no mercy. She claimed she would be mistress forever. Jehovah said she was given to pleasure, and claimed she would not set as a widow or know the loss of sons. Jehovah said that in one day she would experience the loss of sons and widowhood. Jehovah said, “**For thou have trusted in thy wickedness. Thou have said, None sees me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it has perverted thee. And thou have said in thy heart, I am, and there is none else besides me**” (Isa. 47:10).

Jehovah said therefore evil would come upon her. He said her enchantments, sorceries, astrologers and monthly prognosticators would not save her. They would be burned with fire. He said none of those who trafficked with her would be able to save her. Then Jehovah said, “**Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and have come forth out of the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of Jehovah, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness**” (Isa. 48:1).

He said he knew they were obstinate, therefore he declared it to them before it came to pass. Otherwise they would claim their idol had done those things (like destroy Babylon). Then he said he had shown them new things, which they had not known, lest they claimed they knew them. Jehovah said he knew they dealt very treacherously. He said they were called a transgressor from the womb, which

may refer to their persistent rebellion in the wilderness before they entered the promised land. Jehovah said for his name's sake he would defer his anger and not cut him (Israel) off. He told Israel to listen to him, for he was the first and the last. And again he told them he was the creator of the heavens and the earth.

Then Isaiah said, "**Come ye near to me, hear ye this: From the beginning I have not spoken in secret. From the time that it was, there I am. And now lord Jehovah and his Spirit has sent me**" (Isa. 48:16). And he again spoke the words of Jehovah, who said he was the God of Israel, who teaches them to profit, and leads them by the way they should go. Jehovah said, "**Oh that thou had hearkened to my commandments! Then thy peace would have been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea**" (Isa. 48:18). He told them to go forth from Babylon, for he had redeemed his servant Jacob. And he told how he gave them water in the desert.

Next the book says, "**Listen, O isles, to me, and hearken, ye peoples from far. Jehovah has called me from the womb**" (Isa. 49:1). He also said that Jehovah had made his mouth like a sharp sword, and said to him, "**Thou are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified**" (Isa. 49:3). But he said he had labored in vain and spent his strength for nothing. Yet he trusted the justice of Jehovah. Jehovah told him that he formed him from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him. He said he would also give him for a light to the Gentiles so that he might be Jehovah's salvation to the end of the earth. Paul mentioned those words to the Jews (see Acts 13:47). Hence, all of those things may refer to the Christ.

The book also says, "**Thus says Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despises, to him whom the nation abhors, to a servant of rulers. Kings shall see and arise, rulers, and they shall worship, because of Jehovah who is faithful, even the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen thee**" (Isa. 49:7).

After that Jehovah spoke many words of encouragement and comfort to Israel. Among other things he said kings and queens would minister to him (Israel). He said they would bow down to the earth and lick the dust of his feet. He said, "**And thou shall know that I am Jehovah, and those who wait for me shall not be put to shame**" (Isa. 49:23). He also said that those who oppress him

would feed on their own flesh, and would be drunk with their own blood.

Then Jehovah said, "**Where is the bill of your mother's divorce, with which I have put her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities ye were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was put away**" (Isa. 50:1). He asked why no man answered when he called. And he spoke of his awesome power to deliver.

Next Isaiah said Jehovah had given him an educated tongue to sustain with words him who was weary. He said Jehovah had opened his ear and he was not rebellious. He also said he gave himself to those who abused him violently. He said Jehovah would help him, therefore, he would not be confounded. He said, "**Behold, lord Jehovah will help me. Who is he who shall condemn me? Behold, all they shall grow old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up**" (Isa. 50:9). He told all who fear Jehovah to trust in his name. He said all who kindle fire would walk in their own flame.

Then Jehovah said for those who follow after righteousness to hearken to him. He said to look to Abraham their father and Sarah who bore them. He said Jehovah had comforted Zion and made her wilderness like Eden. And he called for his nation to attend to him. He said, "**Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath. For the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall grow old like a garment, and those who dwell in it shall die in like manner. But my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished**" (Isa. 51:6). He said not to fear the reproach of men, for the worm would eat them like wool.

Next Isaiah asked the arm of Jehovah to awake and put on strength as in the days of old, as when he dried up the sea for the redeemed to pass over. He said the ransomed of Jehovah would return and come with singing to Zion. Then he asked who he was that was afraid of man who will die, but had forgotten Jehovah his maker. He said the captive exile would speedily be loosed. Jehovah said he was God and Zion was his people.

Then he said, "**Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, who have drunk at the hand of Jehovah the cup of his wrath. Thou have drunk the bowl of the cup of staggering, and drained it**" (Isa. 51:17). He said there were none of her sons to help her. He said two things had befallen her: desolation and destruction, and famine and sword. He

said her sons had fainted, lying at the head of all the streets, full of the wrath of Jehovah.

Next, Jehovah said he had taken away the cup of his wrath. He said he would give it to those who afflict her. And again he told Jerusalem to awake. He told her to put on her strength and her beautiful garments, for the unclean would no longer come into her. He said they were sold for nothing and would be redeemed without money. The book says, “**Those who rule over them howl, says Jehovah, and because of you my name is continually blasphemed among the Gentiles**” (Isa. 52:5). He said his people would know his name, and that it was he who speaks, which may refer to Jesus.

Then Isaiah said, “**How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, Thy God reigns!**” (Isa. 52:7). That scripture was applied by Paul to the message of Christ (see Rom. 10:15). Isaiah said Jehovah had comforted his people, redeemed Jerusalem, and all the ends of the earth had seen his salvation. Then he told those who bear the vessels of Jehovah (the priests) to depart and cleanse themselves, which may refer to their return from Babylon. He said Jehovah would be ahead of and behind them.

This next part of Isaiah is a lengthy prophecy of the Christ. It describes remarkable details about him, which were written centuries before he was born: “**Behold, my servant shall deal wisely. He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Just as many were astonished at thee (his visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men), so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at him. For that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall understand.**

“**Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of Jehovah been revealed? For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground. He has no form nor comeliness. And when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.** [All those artistic renditions of him are false and deceitful.] **He was despised, and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. And as him from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we esteemed him not.**

“**Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smit-**

ten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. [His suffering was for our redemption.] **All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way, and Jehovah has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth. As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that is mute before its shearers, so he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation his justice was taken away. And as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due? And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death.** [The “grave of the wicked” was his crucifixion between two thieves. And he was buried in the sepulcher of a rich man.] **Although he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.**

“**Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him [because it was for our salvation]. He has put him to grief. When thou shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed. He shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. By the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors. Yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors**” (Isa. 52:13-53:12).

After that Isaiah said, “**Sing, O barren, thou who did not bear. Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou who did not travail with child. For more are the sons of the desolate than the sons of the married woman, says Jehovah**” (Isa. 54:1). Paul applied that scripture to the Church (see Gal. 4:27), saying the heavenly Jerusalem is our mother. Isaiah said her seed would possess the nations. He told her to forget the shame of her youth, for her maker was her husband, Jehovah of hosts. He said Jehovah had called her as a wife forsaken. Jehovah said, “**For a small moment I have forsaken thee, but with great mercies I will gather thee**” (Isa. 54:7). And with many other words he told how he would bless her and protect

her. Jehovah said that was the heritage of his servants, and their righteousness which was of him.

Then Jehovah invited everyone who desires to come, and eat and drink freely. He said to incline your ear and come to him, and your soul would live. He said he would make an everlasting covenant with you, even the faithful holy things of David. And he said, "**Behold, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples**" (Isa. 55:4), which may also refer to the Christ. For he said a nation that does not know him (which may mean the Gentiles) would run to him because of Jehovah his God. Isaiah said to seek Jehovah while he may be found. He said the wicked man should forsake his way and return to Jehovah, for he would abundantly pardon, which may refer to sinners who repent and follow Christ.

Then Jehovah said these profound words: "**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways . . . For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts**" (Isa. 55:8-9). Remember, the psalmist also said that was how great his loving kindness is toward those who fear him (see Psa. 103:11). The greatness of his thoughts and ways, and his loving kindness toward those who fear him, is far beyond our ability to even comprehend. How can we not love him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might (see Deu. 6:5)? It is a colossal understatement to say there is nobody more worthy of our love.

Jehovah also said that as the rain comes down and waters the earth, so would his word go forth and not return void; it would prosper in the thing to which he sent it. And truly the Bible has exalted the world, far more than men appreciate. And he spoke of peace and prosperity.

Then Isaiah said, "**Thus says Jehovah, Keep ye justice, and do righteousness. For my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed**" (Isa. 56:1). He said the man who did that would be blessed. Then he told the foreigner who had joined himself to Jehovah not to say he would be separated, nor the eunuch say that he was a dry tree. He said the eunuchs who hold fast his covenant would be given a memorial better than of sons and daughters, an everlasting name. The apostle Paul made himself a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of Christ, and he was truly given a great memorial, an everlasting name. Isaiah said the foreigners who joined themselves to Jehovah, to minister to him, to love his name, and hold fast his covenant, he would

make them joyful in his house of prayer. Jehovah said, "... **for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples**" (Isa. 56:7). Jesus quoted part of that scripture when he drove out the money-changers from the temple (see Mat. 21:13).

Next Isaiah (or perhaps Jehovah directly) warned of catastrophe. He told the beasts of the field to come to devour. He said his watchmen were blind and ignorant, like dogs that sleep instead of barking (to warn). He said the dogs were insatiably greedy. They were shepherds without understanding. He said, "**Come ye, they say, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink. And tomorrow shall be as this day, great beyond measure**" (Isa. 56:12). Isaiah said the righteous man perished and merciful men were taken away, and no man noticed. He said they were taken away from the evil to come. He said, "**He enters into peace. They rest in their beds, each one who walks in his uprightness**" (Isa. 57:2). I fear when the last righteous man is taken from San Francisco. Will it not also be destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah, because its citizens are becoming like they were?

He called them the seed of the adulterer and the harlot, meaning bastards. Among other things he said they inflamed themselves under every green tree and killed the children in the valleys. In other words, they engaged in sexual excess and killed the babies that resulted, which is becoming common in this adulterous generation of Americans. He told how they acted like a whore, and debased themselves to Sheol with other nations. Jehovah said, "**Have I not held my peace even of long time, and thou do not fear me?**" (Isa. 57:11).

Jehovah said that he who takes refuge in him would possess the land. He said, "**For thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite**" (Isa. 57:15).

He said he would not contend forever, nor would he always be angry. He said he would heal him (Israel), and restore comforts to him and his mourners. But he said the wicked are like the troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt. He said, "**There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked**" (Isa. 57:21).

Then he said to cry aloud and declare to his people their transgression. He said they sought him daily, and delighted to know his ways. He said they asked of him righteous judgments like a nation that did righteousness. And they wondered why Jehovah

paid no attention when they fasted and afflicted their soul. Jehovah said it was because they were not righteous. He said they fast for strife and contention, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. He asked them if they thought going about in sackcloth and ashes was the fast acceptable to Jehovah.

He said rather it was such things as to loose the bonds of wickedness, let the oppressed go free, deal their bread to a hungry man, shelter the poor, and clothe the naked. He said then they would be blessed. Then Jehovah would answer when they cried out to him. He said Jehovah would guide them continually, and make them like a watered garden. And they would build the old waste places. He said if they turned away from doing their own pleasure on the sabbath, his holy day, then he would make them ride upon the high places of the earth, and would feed them with the heritage of Jacob their father. And he said, "**Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he will not hear**" (Isa. 59:1-2).

He said their hands were defiled with blood, their fingers with iniquity, their lips spoke lies, and their tongue muttered wickedness. He said, "**No man sues in righteousness, and no man pleads in truth**" (Isa. 59:4), which also describes many in this generation of Americans. He said they trusted in vanity and spoke lies. He said they conceived mischief and brought forth iniquity. He said they hatched adders' eggs and wove the spider's web. And with more words he described how wicked they were.

Isaiah said that justice was far from them. He said they looked for brightness, but walked in darkness and obscurity. He said their transgressions were multiplied against Jehovah. He said, "**And justice is turned away backward, and righteousness stands afar off. For truth has fallen in the street, and uprightness cannot enter. Yea, truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. And Jehovah saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice**" (Isa. 59:14-15). They were like a pack of vicious wolves.

Isaiah said Jehovah wondered that there was no intercessor. He said therefore his own arm brought salvation to him. Among other things he said he put on righteousness as a breastplate and garments of vengeance. He said he would repay his adversaries according to their deeds, and they would fear the

name of Jehovah. He also said that he who redeems would come to Zion. Jehovah said this was his covenant with them: His Spirit that is upon "thee" and his word which he put in "thy" mouth would never depart out of "thy" mouth or any of "thy" seed. All of that may also refer to Christ and his Church.

Then Jehovah appears to speak to Jerusalem as a person. He said to arise and shine, for thy light has come, and the glory of Jehovah had risen upon thee. He said darkness would cover the earth, but Jehovah would arise upon thee. And nations would come to thy light. He said thy sons and daughters would come from afar, and thy heart would thrill and be enlarged. He also said the wealth of the nations would come to thee, and he would glorify the house of his glory. He said foreigners would build up thy walls. He said he smote thee in his wrath, but would have mercy on thee in his favor. He said thy gates would be open continually, day and night, that men may bring thee the wealth of the nations. He said the nation that would not serve thee would perish. He said all those who despise thee would bow themselves down to thy feet. And they would call thee the city of Jehovah. He said he would make thee an eternal excellence, a joy of many generations. He said he would make thy officers peace, and thine overseers righteousness. He said violence would no more be heard in thy land, but thou would call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. He said, "**The sun shall no more be thy light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to thee, but Jehovah will be to thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory**" (Isa. 60:19). He said thy people would all be righteous, and would inherit the land forever, that he might be glorified. All of that sounds like the new Jerusalem spoken about in Revelation 21.

Then the book says, "**The Spirit of lord Jehovah is upon me, because Jehovah has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and the opening of bonds to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of Jehovah**" (Isa. 61:1-2). Jesus read that passage in a synagogue in Nazareth, and said it spoke of him (see Luke 4:18-19). The book says that "ye" would be named priests of Jehovah, and men would call "you" the ministers of our God. He said they would eat the wealth of nations. He said everlasting joy would be to them. Then it says, "**For I, Jehovah, love justice. I hate robbery with iniquity. And I**

will give them their recompense in truth. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them” (Isa. 61:8). All of that seems to apply to the disciples of Christ.

Jehovah said he would bless Jerusalem: “**For Zion’s sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. And the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory. And thou shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name**” (Isa. 62:1-2). Isaiah said Jehovah would rejoice over her as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride. Jehovah said he would no longer give her grain and wine to foreigners. He said Jehovah had proclaimed to the end of the earth, “**Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation comes. Behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. And they shall call them The holy people, The redeemed of Jehovah. And thou shall be called Sought out, A city not forsaken**” (Isa. 62:11-12). All of those things also sound like the new Jerusalem of heaven.

After that Isaiah spoke about Jehovah treading down the winepress of his wrath. Jehovah said the day of vengeance was in his heart, and the year of his redeemed had come. He said he looked, and he wondered that there was none to help. Therefore his own right arm brought salvation to him, and in his anger he poured out the lifeblood of the peoples on the earth.

However, Isaiah also said he would make mention of the loving kindness of Jehovah, and all the great goodness he had bestowed toward the house of Israel. Jehovah said they were his people, sons that would not deal falsely, therefore he was their Savior. Isaiah said, “**In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the agent of his presence saved them. In his love and in his pity he redeemed them. And he bore them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and grieved his holy Spirit. Therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them**” (Isa. 63:9-10).

Notice how that scripture says, “**In all their affliction he was afflicted.**” We all need to recognize that Jehovah is not an unfeeling God. His Spirit grieves with us in this world of tribulation. Some of our most bitter sorrows come from seeing our loved ones suffering or destroying their lives in sin. And our sorrow is but a drop in the ocean compared to what Jehovah has to experience. For he must con-

stantly observe and respond to the sins of billions of people, as well as the devil and his evil spirits that roam this earth.

We cannot stop our children from misbehaving without taking away all their freedom. And God cannot forcibly end sin and suffering without ending our opportunity to become his children. We who have reared children know the suffering and sorrow that goes with bringing new souls into the world and caring for them. Should we not, therefore, have the highest love and adoration for our beloved heavenly Father? Think about all that he does for us, and all that he endures for us, including the sorrow of having to punish us, and the greater sorrow of seeing so many destroy their lives in sin. Should we not strive to bring joy to him and not affliction?

Next Isaiah said that Jehovah remembered how Moses and his people sought him, and he said his Spirit led the people. Isaiah asked Jehovah to look down from heaven, and behold the habitation of his holiness and of his glory. He asked where was his zeal and mighty works. He said Jehovah was their father and their redeemer, and he asked him to return the tribes of his inheritance. He said their adversaries had trodden down his sanctuary. He said, “**We have become as those over whom thou never bore rule, as those who were not called by thy name**” (Isa. 63:19).

Isaiah longed for Jehovah to come down with power, and make his name known to his adversaries, that the nations would tremble at his presence. Isaiah said, “**For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he has prepared for him who waits for him**” (Isa. 64:4). Those are beautiful words of hope for us who trust him. Paul mentioned them to the Corinthian church (see 1Co. 2:9). And he added to them, saying we cannot even imagine how wonderful heaven will be for us.

Then Isaiah said Jehovah was angry, for they had all sinned and become unclean. He said even their righteous acts were like a polluted garment. He said there was none who called upon his name, because he had hidden his face and consumed them in their iniquities. That sounds something like the attitude toward God of many Jews in the Nazi extermination camps. In their affliction they quit appealing to God, and some even condemned him. Isaiah said, “**But now, O Jehovah, thou are our Father. We are the clay, and thou our potter, and we are all the work of thy hand. Be not angry very severely, O Jehovah, nor remember iniquity forever. Behold,**

look, we beseech thee, we are all thy people” (Isa. 64:8-9). He said their holy cities had become a wilderness, and their holy and beautiful house (the temple) was burned with fire.

Then Jehovah said he was manifested by those who did not ask for him. Paul said that referred to Gentile Christians (see Rom. 10:20-21). Jehovah said he had spread out his hands all the day to a disobedient and rebellious people, who provoked him to his face continually, and did abominable things. Jehovah said they told him, **“Stand by thyself, do not come near to me, for I am holier than thou”** (Isa. 65:5). That also sounds like many modern critics of Christianity. They claim to be more righteous than God himself. Jehovah said they were a smoke in his nose, and a fire that burned all the day. Jehovah said it was written that he would recompense, and he would recompense into their own bosom their own iniquities.

Jehovah said he would bring forth a seed out of Jacob. He said his chosen would inherit it, and his servants would dwell there in prosperity. He said, **“But ye who forsake Jehovah, who forget my holy mountain, who prepare a table for Fortune, and who fill up mingled wine to Destiny, I will destine you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter”** (Isa. 65:11-12). That sounds like those who glorify gambling (now euphemistically called gaming), which is another growing vice in the world. Jehovah said his servants would eat and drink, but they would go without. He said his servants would sing for joy of heart, but they would wail for vexation of spirit. And he said he would call his servants by another name, which no doubt refers to Christians.

Then Jehovah said, **“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create. For, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people. And there shall no more be heard in her the voice of weeping and the voice of crying. There shall be no more there an infant of days, nor an old man who has not filled his days. For the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed.”**

“And they shall build houses, and inhabit them. And they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit. They shall not plant, and another eat.

For as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for calamity. For they are the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says Jehovah” (Isa. 65:17-25).

That sounds much like the new heaven and the new earth described in Revelation 21. The only problem I see is the child dying at a hundred years old. The matter of the wolf and the lion are obviously figures of speech, meaning there will be no predators there. Hence, the child dying must also be a figure of speech, because having no weeping indicates there will be no death. But what it might mean is not as obvious. Perhaps it refers to some kind of developmental process, whereby maturity is attained after the equivalent of a hundred years of our time. In other words, personal development there will be manifold greater than in this world. And the “dying” of the child would refer to the end of the developmental period. Nevertheless, I am just speculating.

Jehovah said that heaven was his throne and the earth was his footstool. He said, **“For all these things my hand has made, and all these things came to be, says Jehovah. But to this man I will look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word”** (Isa. 66:2).

Then Jehovah described how abominable was their worship to him because of their rebelliousness. He said he would bring their fears upon them because they did evil in his eyes. He also said, **“Hear the word of Jehovah, ye who tremble at his word: Your brothers who hate you, who cast you out for my name’s sake, have said, Let Jehovah be glorified, that we may see your joy. But it is those who shall be put to shame”** (Isa. 66:5).

Next Jehovah spoke of a woman who was delivered of a man-child before her pain came. And he asked who had heard such a thing. Then he asked if a land would be born in one day. He said as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her sons. And he told all who love her to rejoice with Jerusalem, that they may be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations. Jehovah said he would extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an over-

flowing stream. He said, “**As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem**” (Isa. 66:13).

He also said he would have indignation against his enemies. He said he would come with fire to render his anger with fierceness. He said, “**For by fire Jehovah will execute judgment, and by his sword, upon all flesh, and the slain of Jehovah shall be many**” (Isa. 66:16). He said the time comes when he would gather all nations and tongues, and they would see his glory. He said he would send such as escape of them to the nations who had not heard of his fame nor seen his glory, and they would declare his glory among the nations. He said they would also bring all their brothers to his holy moun-

tain Jerusalem. All of that may refer to the spread of Christianity.

The book ends with these words: “**For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says Jehovah. And they shall go forth, and look upon the dead bodies of the men who have transgressed against me. For their worm shall not die, nor shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh.**”

A Description of **Jeremiah**

This book is the longest one in the Bible, excluding the collection of Psalms. It begins by saying it is the words of Jeremiah. He was a prophet of Jehovah who warned the people of Judah to repent (Ju or Jew is short for Judean). The northern tribes of Israel had been conquered and exiled by the Assyrians. And Jeremiah warned the Jews to repent lest they likewise suffer the wrath of God. However, instead of repenting they persecuted Jeremiah for his efforts. Therefore, destruction came upon them from the Babylonian army. The majority of the Jews died as a result of that war, and most of the survivors were carried away captive, leaving the land desolate. It should be noted that the events described in this book do not always follow a strict chronological order, which is true of some other books of the Bible as well.

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah of the priests who were in Anathoth, a town in Benjamin a couple of miles north of Jerusalem. The word of Jehovah first came to him in the thirteenth year of Josiah king of Judah. Jehovah said to him, “**Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou came forth out of the womb I sanctified thee. I have appointed thee a prophet to the nations**” (Jer. 1:5). Like Moses, however, Jeremiah did not think he was qualified. He said he knew not how to speak because he was a child. But that should not be interpreted literally; it was a figure of speech. Solomon referred to himself as a “little child” when Jehovah appeared to him after he became king (see 1Ki. 3:7), yet he was a grown

man. Moreover, Jehovah said to Jeremiah, “**Say not, I am a child. For to whomever I shall send thee thou shall go, and whatever I shall command thee thou shall speak. Be not afraid because of them, for I am with thee to deliver thee, says Jehovah**” (Jer. 1:7-8).

Jehovah often used figures of speech when he spoke with Jeremiah. For example, he caused Jeremiah to see a boiling caldron with the face of it from the north. Jehovah said that meant evil was going to break forth out of the north upon all the inhabitants of the land. He said he was going to utter his judgments against them concerning all their wickedness.

Jehovah told Jeremiah to speak to them all that he commanded him. He told him not to be dismayed at them, for he had made him a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land. He told Jeremiah that they would fight against him, but would not prevail. He told him to go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, “**Thus says Jehovah ...**” When Jehovah spoke to the people through Jeremiah, it was usually in the first person, very personal. Jehovah made many pleas to his people, urging them to repent of their sins and turn back to him. In this description of the Bible I have only given part of what he said. Remember therefore, I have omitted much from the book of Jeremiah, as with all the other books of the Bible.

Jehovah first reminded the people of his kindness to Israel at its youth, when Israel went after him in the wilderness. Israel was holiness to him, the first-fruits of his increase. Jehovah then asked

them, “**What unrighteousness have your fathers found in me, that they have gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and have become vain?**” (Jer. 2:5). He said they did not ask where was Jehovah who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, and led them through a terrible wilderness to a plentiful land. He gave it to them, yet when they entered it they defiled the land, and made his heritage an abomination. Jehovah said, “**The priests did not say, Where is Jehovah? And those who handle the law did not know me. The rulers also transgressed against me. And the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit**” (Jer. 2:8).

He said therefore he was going to contend with them and with their son’s sons. He said his people had committed two evils: “**They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water**” (Jer. 2:13). Jehovah asked them, “**Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave? Why has he become a prey?**” (Jer. 2:14). He said young lions had made his land waste, and they had brought it upon themselves. He told them, “**Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee. Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou have forsaken Jehovah thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, says the Lord, Jehovah of hosts**” (Jer. 2:19).

Jehovah reminded them it was long ago that he had broken their yoke and burst their bonds (in Egypt). Yet they would not serve him, but played the harlot under every green tree. He said much soap would not wash their iniquity from before him. Therefore, how could they say they were not defiled. He compared them to a wild donkey during her time of estrus, lusting after strange lovers. He said the house of Israel was shamed like a discovered thief, for they and their leaders called a block of wood their father, and said a stone brought them forth. Modern evolutionists are no less shameful; they call monkeys their forefathers, and say primordial slime brought them forth. Jehovah told his people they had turned their back to him, but in the time of trouble they would ask him to save them. Jehovah said, “**But where are thy gods that thou have made thee? Let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble. For according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah**” (Jer. 2:28).

Jehovah asked them why they contended with him. He said they had all transgressed against him. He asked if he had been a wilderness or a land of thick darkness to Israel. He asked why then did they say they had broken loose, and would come no more to him. Jehovah asked if a bride could forget her attire, yet his people had forgotten him, days without number. He told them of their guilt, yet they claimed they were innocent. Jehovah said he would enter into judgment with Judah because he said he had not sinned. Jehovah said, “**... thou have polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain. Yet thou have a harlot’s forehead; thou refused to be ashamed**” (Jer. 3:2-3). And he asked them if they would not henceforth cry to him, “**My Father, thou are the guide of my youth**” (Jer. 3:4).

Josiah was a righteous king. He promoted a return to Jehovah and his law. And he put away all the idols and other abominations from Judah. Yet the heart of the people did not return to God. Jehovah said they only pretended to return to him. Jehovah asked Jeremiah, in the days of Josiah, if he had seen what backsliding Israel (the northern ten tribes) had been doing, playing the harlot with idols everywhere. Jehovah said he divorced her because of it (referring to their destruction by the Assyrians a century earlier). Jehovah said, “**... yet treacherous Judah her sister feared not, but she also went and played the harlot**” (Jer. 3:8). Jeremiah said that Jehovah told him backsliding Israel had shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.

This next part seems to be a plea by Jehovah for the exiles of the northern tribes to return to him and reunite with Judah. Jehovah told Jeremiah to proclaim God’s plea towards the north, that if they would acknowledge their iniquity he would not look in anger upon them. He said, “**Return, O backsliding sons, says Jehovah, for I have rule over you. And I will take you, one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds according to my heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding**” (Jer. 3:14-15).

Jehovah said the time was coming, after they were multiplied in the land, that they would no longer remember nor miss the ark of the covenant of Jehovah. He said at that time Jerusalem would be called the throne of Jehovah, and all the nations would be gathered to it. He said they would no longer walk after the stubbornness of their evil heart.

He said the houses of Judah and Israel would walk together, and come out of the land of the north to the land he gave for an inheritance to their fathers. And Jehovah said, “**How I will put thee among the sons, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of the nations! And I said, Ye shall call me My Father, and shall not turn away from following me**” (Jer. 3:19). But Jehovah said the house of Israel had dealt treacherously with him like a treacherous wife departs from her husband. The above description may have been what God wanted to do, but they were too rebellious.

After that the book says there was heard a voice of weeping and supplications of the sons of Israel, because they had perverted their way and had forgotten Jehovah their God. Jehovah told them if they returned he would heal their backslidings. Then they confessed, saying among other things, “**Let us lie down in our shame, and let our confusion cover us, for we have sinned against Jehovah our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day, and we have not obeyed the voice of Jehovah our God**” (Jer. 3:25). Jehovah told Israel that if he would return to him, and put away all the abominations, then they would not be removed. He told him to swear, “**As Jehovah lives, in truth, in justice, and in righteousness**” (Jer. 4:2).

Then Jehovah told the men of Judah and Jerusalem to take away the foreskins of their heart, lest his wrath go forth like fire, because of the evil of their doings. The book says, “**Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem, and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land. Cry aloud and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the fortified cities**” (Jer. 4:5). Jehovah said he was bringing evil from the north, and a great destruction to make their land desolate and the cities waste, without inhabitant. Jehovah knew the people were not going not repent and thus escape destruction. However, Jeremiah must have thought they would, for he said, “**Ah, lord Jehovah! Surely thou have greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace, whereas the sword reaches to the life**” (Jer. 4:10). However, Jehovah spoke again of judgments against the people and Jerusalem, which would bring chariots and horses to ruin them. Jehovah did not want to destroy his people, but they kept refusing to repent. I will give an illustration. His people had become like a smoldering fire in a house that would not go out. It kept polluting everything inside of it and everything around it. The only solution left was to destroy the house.

Nevertheless, Jehovah kept warning them. He said, “**O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou may be saved. How long shall thine evil thoughts lodge within thee?**” (Jer. 4:14). He said evil was coming against Jerusalem and the cities of Judah because she was rebellious against him. He told her, “**Thy way and thy doings have procured these things to thee. This is thy wickedness, for it is bitter, for it reaches to thy heart**” (Jer. 4:18).

Next are words that seem to be from Judah in fear and distress, such as, “**My anguish, my anguish! I am pained at my very heart. My heart is disquieted in me. I cannot hold my peace, because thou have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war**” (Jer. 4:19). Jehovah then said his people were foolish, sottish sons. He said they were wise to do evil, but had no knowledge to do good.

After that Jeremiah said he saw destruction and emptiness everywhere. And he said, “**For thus says Jehovah: The whole land shall be a desolation, yet I will not make a full end**” (Jer. 4:27). Jehovah said the earth would mourn, and the heavens be black, because he had spoken it, purposed it, and had not relented, nor would he turn back from it. He told Judah that though she adorned herself lavishly her lovers would despise her and seek her life. Her lovers were the pagan nations that the Jews joined in sinning. And again he described her anguish.

Then Jehovah said, “**Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places of it, if ye can find a man, if there is any who does justly, who seeks truth, and I will pardon her**” (Jer. 5:1). The book mentions a few (very few) righteous men that were in Jerusalem at times during this period. The above scripture may refer to a time when not one was presently in it. It may refer to permanent residents, for Jeremiah was from Anathoth, or it may mean the righteous were so scarce that even in their crowded areas not one would likely be found. Nevertheless, it definitely shows how pervasive their corruption was.

Jeremiah said to Jehovah, “**Thou have stricken them, but they were not grieved. ... They have made their faces harder than a rock. They have refused to return**” (Jer. 5:3). Then he said those were the poor and foolish, ignorant of the way of Jehovah and his law. He said he would speak to the great men who knew the way of Jehovah and his law. But with one accord they broke the yoke. Then

he said therefore they would be torn in pieces by wild beasts because their transgressions were many.

Jehovah asked how he could pardon Jerusalem, for they had forsaken him. He said that when he fed them to the full, they committed adultery. They were like fed horses neighing after his neighbor's wife. Jehovah said, "**And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?**" (Jer. 5:9). He said the house of Israel and the house of Judah had dealt very treacherously against him. They denied Jehovah, and said no evil would come upon them. Therefore he said he was going to bring a mighty nation against them, which would devour them and beat down their fortified cities. However, Jehovah said he would not make a full end of them. And in time to come, when they asked why Jehovah had done all those things to them, Jeremiah was to say it was because they had forsaken him.

Jehovah told Jeremiah, "**Declare ye this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, Hear now this, O foolish people ...**" (Jer. 5:20-21). Jehovah asked if they would not fear him and tremble at his presence. Jehovah said he controlled the waves of the sea, but the people were rebels who did not say in their heart, "**Let us now fear Jehovah our God, who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season, who preserves to us the appointed weeks of the harvest**" (Jer. 5:24). Jehovah said their sins had withheld good from them, for there were wicked men among his people. He said they preyed upon men and their houses were full of deceit. Therefore they became great and grew rich. He said they overflowed in deeds of wickedness and ignored the needy. Then Jehovah said again, "**Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?**" (Jer. 5:29). He said that an astonishing and horrible thing had come to pass in the land. He said, "**The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means. And my people love to have it so**" (Jer. 5:31).

Jehovah again warned of evil and great destruction coming from the north. He said to prepare war against Jerusalem. He said, "**This is the city to be visited. She has oppression completely in the midst of her. As a well casts forth its waters, so she casts forth her wickedness**" (Jer. 6:6-7). He told Jerusalem to be instructed, lest he make her a desolation. Then he asked to whom he should speak, for their ear was uncircumcised, and they could not hear. He said they had no delight in the word of Jehovah. Therefore he was full of wrath, and was weary of holding in. He said, "**For from the least**

of them even to the greatest of them everyone is given to covetousness. And from the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely" (Jer. 6:13). And they were not ashamed when they committed abomination. Therefore Jehovah said they would be cast down when he visited them.

Then the book says, "**Thus says Jehovah, Stand ye in the ways and see. And ask for the old paths where is the good way. And walk in it, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk. And I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken**" (Jer. 6:16-17).

Therefore Jehovah told the earth to hear, for he would bring evil upon that people—a great nation from the north country. He said they were cruel, roaring like the sea, and set in battle array against the daughter of Zion. Jeremiah said they heard the report of it, and their hands grew feeble. He urged his people to gird themselves with sackcloth and mourn with a bitter lamentation. Jehovah told Jeremiah he had made him a reprover among the people. He said they were all grievous revolters, going about with slanders. He said they all dealt corruptly.

Jehovah told Jeremiah to stand in the gate of Jehovah's house, and proclaim the word of Jehovah, saying, "**Thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place**" (Jer. 7:3). Jehovah said if they amended their ways and did righteously, then he would preserve them in the land. Jehovah asked if they would trust in lying words, do evil, and walk after other gods, then come to his house and say they were delivered. He said, "**Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, says Jehovah**" (Jer. 7:11). Jesus quoted part of that scripture when he cast out the moneychangers from the temple (see Mat. 21:13).

Jehovah told them to go to Shiloh, where he first caused his name to dwell (the tabernacle had been at Shiloh), and see what he did to it for the wickedness of his people Israel. They had already been conquered and carried away captive. Jehovah said that because they would not listen to him he was going to do to the temple and to Jerusalem as he had to Shiloh. And he was going to do to them as he had to their brothers, the whole seed of Ephraim. He told Jeremiah, "**Therefore pray thou not for this people, nor lift up cry nor prayer for them. Neither make intercession to me, for I will not hear thee**"

(Jer. 7:16). Jehovah asked him if he saw what they were doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, serving other gods and provoking him to anger. He said therefore his wrath would be poured out upon them.

Regarding their burnt offerings, Jehovah said to them, “**I spoke not to your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices**” (Jer. 7:22). He said rather, that he commanded them to hearken to him, and walk in all the way he commanded them (such as the ten commandments), but they did not hearken. That was probably why those many laws about burnt offerings were imposed upon them later; it was part of their punishment. As Paul said, “**Why then the law [the entire legal system]? It was added on account of transgressions ...**” (Gal. 3:19).

Jehovah said that from the beginning he sent his servants the prophets to them. But they made their neck stiff, and did worse than their fathers. Jehovah told Jeremiah to speak all those words to them, but they would not hearken. Then Jehovah said for him to describe some of the evils that were coming upon them. He described many horrors, and said it would be so bad that “**death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue that remain of this evil family, that remain in all the places where I have driven them, says Jehovah of hosts**” (Jer. 8:3).

Jehovah wondered why they refused to return to him. He said the birds knew their appointed times, “**but my people know not the law of Jehovah**” (Jer. 8:7). In the Bible the word law generally refers to God’s commandments for righteousness. However, it sometimes refers to the Mosaic legal system. Legal systems are often perverted into legalism, which crooked lawyers then use to defeat justice and righteousness, as is happening in pagan America.

Jehovah said, “**The wise men are put to shame. They are dismayed and taken. Lo, they have rejected the word of Jehovah, and what manner of wisdom is in them?**” (Jer. 8:9). And again he said that everyone was given to covetousness, dealt falsely, and was not at all ashamed. And again he said they would be cast down. Jeremiah told them to enter into the fortified cities. He said they had sinned against Jehovah, and the snorting of horses was heard from Dan causing the whole land to tremble. Jehovah said he was going to send serpents to bite them.

Then Jeremiah mourned about them. Among other things he said, “**For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am hurt. I mourn. Dismay has taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?**” (Jer. 8:21-22). Jeremiah longed for a lodging-place in the wilderness that he might leave his people. He said, “**For they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men**” (Jer. 9:2). Jehovah said they proceeded from evil to evil, and did not know him. He said, “**Take ye heed each one of his neighbor, and trust ye not in any brother, for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbor will go about with slanders. And they will deceive each one his neighbor, and will not speak the truth**” (Jer. 9:4-5).

And again he said, “**Shall I not visit them for these things? says Jehovah. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?**” (Jer. 9:9). He said he would make Jerusalem heaps, all the cities of Judah a desolation, and he would scatter the people among the nations. Jeremiah said that Jehovah called for the mourning women. Jeremiah said, “**And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters**” (Jer. 9:18). He said it was because death had come up into their windows and entered into their palaces. Jehovah said the dead bodies of men would fall as dung upon the open field.

Then Jehovah said, “**Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor let the mighty man glory in his might. Let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he has understanding, and knows me, that I am Jehovah who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth. For in these things I delight, says Jehovah**” (Jer. 9:23-24). Dear reader, pay careful attention to that scripture. It is filled with wisdom for him who has eyes to see. If you want to please God, then pursue the things he desires: loving kindness, justice, and righteousness.

Jehovah spoke of punishing several nations, including the house of Israel for their guiltiness. He told the house of Israel not to learn the way of the nations. He said their customs were vanity. And he spoke derisively of their idols, which are helpless inanimate objects.

Jeremiah told Jehovah there was none like him. He said, “**Thou are great, and thy name is great in might. Who should not fear thee, O King of the nations?**” (Jer. 10:6-7). He said an idol was but

a block of wood, the work of skilful men. He said, **“But Jehovah is the true God. He is the living God, and an everlasting King. At his wrath the earth trembles, and the nations are not able to abide his indignation”** (Jer. 10:10). Jehovah told Jeremiah to tell them he made the earth, and established it with his wisdom. He said every man had become brutish, without knowledge. They worshiped dumb idols which are a work of delusion. Today men venerate the delusion of evolution. He said the portion of Jacob (which is Jehovah) was not like them.

Next are more words about the distress that was coming upon the cities of Judah. Some of the words seem to be metaphoric, as if the nation was a person, saying for example, **“Woe is me because of my hurt! My wound is grievous, but I said, Truly this is my grief, and I must bear it. My tent is destroyed, and all my cords are broken. My sons have gone forth from me, and they are not. ... O Jehovah, correct me, but in measure, not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing”** (Jer. 10:19-20, 24)

The book says that the word of Jehovah came again to Jeremiah. Jehovah told him to speak to the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, **“Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel ...”** (Jer. 11:3). Jehovah uttered a curse against the man who did not hear the words of the covenant that he made with their fathers when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, telling them to obey his voice, and he would be their God to give them the promised land. And Jeremiah said, **“Truly, O Jehovah”** (Jer. 11:5). Jehovah told Jeremiah to proclaim his words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. He was to remind them how much Jehovah urged their fathers to obey his voice, yet they did not obey.

Jehovah told Jeremiah that the house of Israel and the house of Judah had broken his covenant. Therefore, he was going to bring evil upon them. He said they would cry to him, but he would not hearken to them. He said they would cry to the gods to which they offered incense, but they would not save them. He told about how numerous were their gods and the altars they had set up to burn incense to Baal. On a recent trip to Asia I saw many idols and many people burning incense before them. And again Jehovah said, **“Therefore do not pray thou for this people, nor lift up cry nor prayer for them, for I will not hear them in the time that they cry to me because of their trouble”** (Jer.

11:14). Jehovah was more severe to his people for practicing idolatry because they knew better (see Acts 17:23-30).

Jeremiah said Jehovah had pronounced evil against the house of Israel and the house of Judah because of their evil. And he said that Jehovah had given him knowledge of it, and had shown him their doings. Then he said, **“But I was like a gentle lamb that is led to the slaughter. And I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit of it. And let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may no more be remembered”** (Jer. 11:19). Therefore Jehovah said he would punish the men of Anathoth who sought his life, telling him not to prophesy in the name of Jehovah. He was going to cause the death of their sons and their daughters, and they would have no remnant.

Then Jeremiah questioned Jehovah. He said, **“Thou are righteous, O Jehovah, when I contend with thee. Yet I would reason the case with thee. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are all those at ease who deal very treacherously?”** (Jer. 12:1). Jeremiah asked Jehovah to pull them out like sheep for the slaughter. He asked how long the land would mourn because of the wickedness of those who dwelt in it. Jehovah responded to Jeremiah by asking him if he ran with footmen and they wearied him, how could he contend with horses? Perhaps Jehovah was warning Jeremiah of worse things to come. For Jehovah told Jeremiah that even his brothers, and the house of his father, dealt treacherously with him (Jeremiah). Jehovah said, **“Believe them not, though they speak fair words to thee”** (Jer. 12:6).

Jehovah said he had forsaken his house (the temple) and cast off his heritage. He said, **“I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies”** (Jer. 12:7). He said, **“She has uttered her voice against me. Therefore I have hated her”** (Jer. 12:8). Notice he called the people of his heritage the dearly beloved of his soul. Yet he also said he hated her because she was against him. Then he spoke again of the devastation of the land. He said the sword of Jehovah devoured from the one end of the land to the other. He told them, **“And ye shall be ashamed of your fruits, because of the fierce anger of Jehovah”** (Jer. 12:13).

Next the book says, **“Thus says Jehovah against all my evil neighbors, who touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit ...”** (Jer. 12:14). Jehovah said he was

going to return his people to their land. And if their neighbors learned the ways of his people, and swore by his name, then they would be built up. Otherwise he would destroy that nation.

After that the book says Jehovah told Jeremiah to buy and wear a linen sash. Next he told him to go to the Euphrates, and hide it in a cleft of the rock. Then after many days Jehovah told him to go back and get it. Jeremiah said that when he dug it up, it was rotten and good for nothing. Jehovah said to him, **“After this manner I will mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, who refuse to hear my words … shall even be as this sash, which is good for nothing”** (Jer. 13:9-10). Jehovah said he caused the whole house of Israel to cling to him as the sash clings to the body of a man, to be for him a people and a glory, but they would not hear. Therefore Jehovah said he was going to destroy them.

Then Jeremiah told the people, **“Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud, for Jehovah has spoken. Give glory to Jehovah your God, before he causes darkness”** (Jer. 13:15-16). He said if they would not, his eye would run down with tears, because Jehovah’s flock was taken captive. Jehovah also told Jeremiah to tell the king and the queen-mother to humble themselves, for the crown of their glory had come down. And he described the captivity that was coming because of the greatness of their iniquity. Then Jehovah said, **“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then ye also may do good, who are accustomed to do evil”** (Jer. 13:23). They had done evil for so long it had become natural to them. He said therefore he was going to scatter them as stubble in the wind.

Next the book says, **“The word of Jehovah that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought”** (Jer. 14:1). And it describes the hardships of both the people and the animals caused by the lack of rain. Jeremiah prayed, confessing their guilt, and pleading, **“O thou hope of Israel, the Savior of it in the time of trouble, why should thou be as a sojourner in the land … . Yet thou, O Jehovah, are in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name. Do not leave us”** (Jer. 14:8-9). Jehovah told the people they loved to wander. Therefore he would not accept them, but would visit their sins. And he again told Jeremiah, **“Pray not for this people for good”** (Jer. 14:11). Jehovah said he would not hear their cry, nor would he accept their offerings, but would consume them by sword, famine, and pestilence.

Then Jeremiah said he told Jehovah that the prophets tell the people they would not see sword or famine, but would have peace. Jehovah told him the prophets prophesied lies in his name; he did not send them. Jehovah said sword and famine would come, for he was going to pour their wickedness upon them. And he told Jeremiah to say this to them: **“Let my eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease. For the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous wound”** (Jer. 14:17), plus other such words. Jeremiah asked Jehovah if he had utterly rejected Judah. Jeremiah confessed their wickedness, and said to him, **“Do not abhor us. For thy name’s sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory. Remember, do not break thy covenant with us”** (Jer. 14:21). However, Jehovah said to him, **“Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind would not be toward this people. Cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth”** (Jer. 15:1). And he described the kind of calamities he was going to bring upon them because they had rejected him. He said he was weary with relenting.

Then Jeremiah said, **“Woe is me, my mother, that thou have bore me, a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have not lent, nor have men lent to me, yet every one of them curses me”** (Jer. 15:10). They cursed him because he testified against them, as Jehovah had commanded him. That is why Jesus was persecuted, for he told his brothers, **“The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it, that its works are evil”** (John 7:7). Jehovah told Jeremiah he would strengthen him for good, and would cause the enemy to make supplication to him in the time of affliction. And he again told of the destruction of the land and the dispersion of the people.

Jeremiah spoke further about his persecution: **“O Jehovah, thou know. Remember me, and visit me, and avenge me of my persecutors. Take me not away in thy longsuffering. Know that for thy sake I have suffered reproach. Thy words were found, and I ate them. And thy words were to me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart. For I am called by thy name, O Jehovah, God of hosts. I did not sit in the assembly of those who make merry, nor did I rejoice. I sat alone because of thy hand, for thou have filled me with indignation. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuses to be healed? Will thou**

indeed be to me as a deceitful brook, as waters that fail?" (Jer. 15:15-18).

In the bitterness of his persecution, Jeremiah apparently began to doubt God's promise of protection. But Jehovah encouraged him further. He said he would make him a fortified brazen wall to the people. He said they would fight against him but would not prevail. For he was with him to save him, and would deliver him from the hand of the wicked and the terrible. However, he also told him not to take a wife, nor have sons or daughters in that place. He said they would all die grievous deaths. They would be neither lamented nor buried, but would be food for the birds and the beasts.

And Jehovah said to Jeremiah that when the people heard all those words, and asked why Jehovah had pronounced all that great evil against them, he was to tell them it was because their fathers forsook Jehovah and did not keep his law. And they had done more evil than their fathers. Jehovah said, "**Therefore, behold, the days come, says Jehovah, that it shall no more be said, As Jehovah lives who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but, As Jehovah lives who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the countries where he had driven them**" (Jer. 16:14-15). He said he would send and bring them back after their captivity. But first he would recompense their iniquity and their sin double, because they polluted his land with their abominations.

Next are various words about the power of God, and the sins of the people and their punishment. Then Jehovah said, "**Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from Jehovah**" (Jer. 17:5). He said he would be like a wasteland in the desert. He contrasted him with the righteous man, saying, "**Blessed is the man who trusts in Jehovah, and whose trust Jehovah is**" (Jer. 17:7). He said he would be like a fruitful tree planted by the waters, and not fearful of heat or drought.

Next Jehovah spoke a profound truth about human nature, one that few men realize, but that every man should learn: "**The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt. Who can know it? I, Jehovah, search the mind. I try the heart, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings**" (Jer. 17:9-10). How common it is for a man's mind to deceive him. Therefore be suspicious about many of your thoughts. Choose carefully among them,

accepting the good and rejecting the bad. If you are unsure about any, then use caution and verify their worth. And do not believe any "vision" you may see. All such things are hallucinations, for God no longer communicates that way. Choose your thoughts like gathering food in the wilderness, for every man's mind is a jungle full of corrupt things. Did not Jehovah say "**it is exceedingly corrupt?**" Do as Solomon said: "**Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life**" (Pro. 4:23).

After that Jeremiah said, "**Heal me, O Jehovah, and I shall be healed. Save me, and I shall be saved, for thou are my praise**" (Jer. 17:14). He told him how they scoffed at the word of Jehovah that he spoke. He told Jehovah that he had not hastened from being a shepherd after him, nor had he desired the woeful day (of God's wrath). However, Jeremiah's patience had apparently been exhausted, for he said, "**Let them be put to shame who persecute me, but let me not be put to shame. Let them be dismayed, but let me not be dismayed. Bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction**" (Jer. 17:18). Those who think men of God should never desire vengeance should read Revelation 6:10. An evil generation hates the justice of vengeance. Nevertheless, always remember, vengeance belongs to God (see Heb. 10:30) and legitimate authorities (see Rom. 13:1-4).

Then Jehovah said to Jeremiah, "**Go, and stand in the gate of the sons of the people, by which the kings of Judah come in, and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem. And say to them, Hear ye the word of Jehovah ...**" (Jer. 17:19-20). Jehovah told them not to bear burdens on the sabbath day nor do any kind of work. He said if they would do that then the city would remain forever. Otherwise he was going to devour its palaces with fire.

Again the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah. Jehovah told him to go to the potter's house. When Jeremiah went he saw how the potter dealt with the clay of a vessel that became marred. The potter would simply make another vessel with the clay as he saw fit. Then the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, saying, "**O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? says Jehovah. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel**" (Jer. 18:6). He said that if he were going to destroy a nation, but they repented of their evil, then he would relent of the evil he intended against them. And if he were going to build up a

nation, but they did evil in his sight, then he would relent of the good he intended for them.

Then he told Jeremiah, “**N**ow therefore, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, **T**hus says Jehovah ...” (Jer. 18:11). He said he was framing evil against them. He urged them to turn everyone from his evil ways, but they refused, and said they would walk after their own devices. Therefore, Jehovah said, “**A**ske ye now among the nations, Who has heard such things? The virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing” (Jer. 18:13). He asked if the snow of Lebanon would fail from the rock of the field, which apparently never did. Yet his people had forgotten him, and they burned incense to false gods, which caused them to stumble, and to make the land a perpetual hissing. And he was going to scatter them as the east wind before the enemy.

Then the Jews said to themselves, “**C**ome, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah. For the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words” (Jer. 18:18). Therefore, Jeremiah said, “**G**ive heed to me, O Jehovah, and hearken to the voice of those who contend with me. Shall evil be recompensed for good? For they have dug a pit for my soul. Remember how I stood before thee to speak good for them, to turn away thy wrath from them” (Jer. 18:19-20). And Jeremiah again asked Jehovah for vengeance. He asked that their sons be delivered to the famine, that the men be slain by the sword, and their wives be childless and widows. He said, “**J**ehovah, thou know all their counsel against me to kill me. Do not forgive their iniquity, nor blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee. Deal thou with them in the time of thine anger” (Jer. 18:23). Let no man condemn Jeremiah for wanting vengeance. Remember Revelation 6:10.

Nevertheless, many commentators dismiss those imprecations or curses. Perhaps it is because Paul said, “**B**less those who persecute you. Bless ye and do not curse” (Rom. 12:14). I suspect what Paul meant was not to curse any man simply for persecuting you, because there are many men who deserve a curse for their wickedness. For example, the book of Isaiah utters many curses against various sinners. I counted sixteen “woe to” statements in that book (for a few see Isaiah 5). And Jesus uttered many curses against the Pharisees (see Mat.

23). The Word of God does not condemn all cursing, nor does it teach being passive toward evil. However, like using a weapon, a curse should not be used casually or recklessly, lest he who uses it find himself cursed. Casual cursing has caused men to think ill of any use of it.

Jehovah next told Jeremiah to go and buy a potter’s earthen bottle. He was then to take some elders of the people and of the priests, and go to the valley of the son of Hinnom (also called Topheth), and there proclaim the words that Jehovah would tell him. When they got there Jehovah told them that because they burned incense to other gods there, and filled the place with the blood of innocents, burning their sons in sacrifice to Baal, the days were coming when it would be called the valley of slaughter. He then told of the death and destruction he was going to bring upon Jerusalem.

He even said, “**A**nd I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters. And they shall eat each one the flesh of his friend, in the siege and in the distress with which their enemies, and those who seek their life, shall distress them” (Jer. 19:9). Such a horrible prophecy should have shocked them to repent, but they did not believe it. Then he told Jeremiah to break the bottle in their sight, and tell them that was what Jehovah was going to do to the people and the city.

After Jeremiah came from Topheth, he stood in the court of Jehovah’s house, and spoke the word of Jehovah to the people. He told them of the evil Jehovah had pronounced against Jerusalem and all its towns because they would not hear his words.

Then the book says, “**N**ow Pashhur, the son of Immer the priest, who was chief officer in the house of Jehovah, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. Then Pashhur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the upper gate of Benjamin, which was in the house of Jehovah” (Jer. 20:1-2). Later, when Pashhur brought Jeremiah out of the stocks, Jeremiah told him of the punishment that Jehovah was going to bring upon him and his friends. They would be killed, and he, his household, and all the riches of the city, would be carried away to Babylon, where he and his friends (the remnant of them) would die.

Next Jeremiah tells of his struggle as a prophet. He said, “**I** have become a laughing-stock all the day; everyone mocks me. For as often as I speak, I cry out. I cry, Violence and destruction! Because the word of Jehovah is made a reproach to me, and a derision, all the day. And if I say, I

will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot. For I have heard the defaming of many, terror on every side. Denounce, and we will denounce him, say all my familiar friends ... and we shall take our revenge on him” (Jer. 20:7-10).

Jeremiah went on to express his trust in Jehovah and to praise him. After that however, the book quotes a bitter lamentation by Jeremiah about his birth. He said, “**Cursed be the day in which I was born. Let not the day in which my mother bore me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought news to my father, saying, A man-child is born to thee, making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which Jehovah overthrew, and did not relent. And let him hear a cry in the morning, and shouting at noontime, because he did not kill me from the womb, and so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb always great. Why did I come forth out of the womb to see labor and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?**” (Jer. 20:14-18).

Job also cursed the day he was born, but he did not curse any man associated with it. Of course, we cannot compare those two men and their different circumstances. However, I can think of no justification for Jeremiah cursing the man who brought news of his birth. I can only think of a possible explanation. For Solomon said, “**Surely oppression makes the wise man foolish**” (Ecc. 7:7). And the above curse by Jeremiah reveals how heavily his oppression weighed upon him. Indeed, except for a very few times he was rejected and persecuted by his people, including his family, for most if not all of his adult life. It is also quite possible that Jeremiah later regretted having said those words. Let no man criticize Jeremiah harshly who has not suffered as much as he had. Jeremiah never blamed God for his suffering, which is very commonly done, and a much worse thing to do.

Next is a description of events that occurred during the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. Remember, the things described in this book do not always follow a strict chronological order. King Zedekiah (the last king before the destruction) sent men to Jeremiah asking him to pray to Jehovah that they might be delivered from Nebuchadrezzar (also spelled Nebuchadnezzar) king of Babylon. Jehovah’s reply was that he himself would fight against the city, even in anger, wrath, and great indignation.

He said the inhabitants would die of a great pestilence. And afterward those who were left would be delivered to the sword of Nebuchadrezzar, who would then burn the city with fire. He said that whoever went out and surrendered to the Chaldeans who besieged them would save his life. And he warned the king of destruction if he did not do righteousness.

The book next goes back in time to tell of words that Jehovah spoke some time before the siege, perhaps early in the reign of Zedekiah. Jehovah told Jeremiah to go to the house of the king of Judah, and tell them to hear the word of Jehovah. Jehovah told them to execute justice and righteousness. He said if they did so, then the house of the kings would remain. Otherwise it would become a desolation. And many nations would see the ruined city, and would know it was destroyed because they forsook the covenant of Jehovah their God and worshiped other gods. Jehovah also told him that Shallum would never return. Shallum was king Jehoahaz, son of king Josiah, whom Pharaoh had earlier taken to Egypt.

Then Jehovah said, “**Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness ...**” (Jer. 22:13). Jehovah said to the king, “**Shall thou reign, because thou strive to excel in cedar? Did not thy father [his grandfather king Josiah, the last righteous king before the destruction] eat and drink, and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy man, then it was well. Was not this to know me?**” (Jer. 22:15-16).

Jehovah said further, “**But thine eyes and thy heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for shedding innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it**” (Jer. 22:17). Then he told him what was going to happen to Jehoiakim (the preceding king who was carried away to Babylon); he would be buried the burial of a donkey, drawn and cast forth.

Jehovah told him to go up to Lebanon and other high places, and cry out. Jehovah said, “**For all thy lovers [the pagan nations he was allied with] are destroyed**” (Jer. 22:20). Jehovah said, “**I spoke to thee in thy prosperity, but thou said, I will not hear**” (Jer. 22:21). Jehovah said the king was going to be ashamed and confounded for all his wickedness. He called him an inhabitant of Lebanon who made his nest in the cedars, which may allude to his cedar palace. Jehovah said he was going to be given into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon

and the Chaldeans. And both he and his mother would die in a foreign country. Jehovah also spoke against his brother Coniah (former king Jehoiachin) and their posterity.

Next Jehovah said, “**Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!**” (Jer. 23:1). He said he would bring evil upon them. The sheep were God’s people, and the shepherds were their rulers. Jehovah said he would gather the remnant of his flock out of all the countries where he had driven them and would bless them. And he would set shepherds over them who would feed them. He said, “**Behold, the days come, says Jehovah, that I will raise to David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land**” (Jer. 23:5). That refers to Jesus Christ.

After that Jeremiah said, “**Concerning the prophets: My heart within me is broken. All my bones shake. I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine has overcome, because of Jehovah, and because of his holy words. For the land is full of adulterers**” (Jer. 23:9-10). He said both prophet and priest were profane. Jehovah even said he had found their wickedness in his house (the temple).

Therefore he again said that he was going to bring evil upon them. Jehovah said the prophets of Samaria prophesied by Baal, and caused his people Israel to err. And the prophets of Jerusalem committed adultery and walked in lies. He said, “**And they strengthen the hands of evil-doers, so that none returns from his wickedness**” (Jer. 23:14). Jehovah said his wrath would be a whirling tempest that would burst upon the head of the wicked. He said the anger of Jehovah would not return until he had performed the intents of his heart. And he said, “**In the latter days ye shall understand it perfectly**” (Jer. 23:20), which is one reason why the book of Jeremiah is in the Bible. His warnings from Jehovah were rejected in his lifetime, but afterward they understood. Jehovah said he did not send those prophets. He said that if they had stood in his council, then they would have turned his people from their evil way. Jehovah said he heard the prophets claiming they had a dream, but prophesied lies in his name. He said he was against those prophets.

Then Jehovah rebuked the people for saying, “What is the burden of Jehovah?” Such a question revealed their disdain of Jehovah’s will for them. Jehovah said, “**Thus ye shall say each one to his neighbor, and each one to his brother: What has**

Jehovah answered? and, What has Jehovah spoken? And the burden of Jehovah ye shall mention no more, for every man’s own word shall be his burden. For ye have perverted the words of the living God, of Jehovah of hosts our God” (Jer. 23:35-36). He said, otherwise he would bring everlasting reproach upon them and a perpetual shame.

After king Nebuchadrezzar had carried away captive Jeconiah king of Judah, and the rulers and the skilled men, from Jerusalem to Babylon, Jehovah showed Jeremiah two baskets of figs set before the temple of Jehovah. One basket had very good figs, and the other basket had very bad figs which were unfit to eat. When Jehovah asked him what he saw, he told him. Then Jehovah said he would regard the captives taken to the land of the Chaldeans like the good figs. He would bring them back and build them up. He said he would give them a heart to know him, that he was Jehovah, and they would be his people. However, Zedekiah king of Judah, and his rulers, and the residue of Jerusalem, and those who dwelt in the land of Egypt would be like the bad figs (which we consider garbage). He said, “**I will even give them up to be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth for evil, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places where I shall drive them**” (Jer. 24:9).

Next the book tells what Jeremiah spoke to all the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the fourth year of king Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim was a son of Josiah who reigned before Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. Jeremiah told them he had spoken the word of Jehovah to them for twenty-three years, but they had not hearkened. And Jehovah had sent to them all his servants the prophets, urging them to turn from the evil of their doings, and not go after other gods. He said, “**Yet ye have not hearkened to me, says Jehovah, that ye may provoke me to anger with the work of your hands to your own hurt**” (Jer. 25:7). Therefore Jehovah told them about the destruction that was coming from Nebuchadrezzar. Then he said that the king of Babylon would rule for seventy years, after which the king of Babylon would be punished, and the land of the Chaldeans would be a desolation forever.

Then Jeremiah said, “**For thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, to me: Take this cup of the wine of wrath at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it**” (Jer. 25:15). He said they would drink, and reel to and fro, and be mad because of the sword he was going

to sent among them. Therefore, Jeremiah took the cup, and made all the nations to whom Jehovah had sent him drink: Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, and the kings of Egypt, the Philistines, Edom, Arabia, and many others. Indeed he said, “**... and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth**” (Jer. 25:26). However, Jeremiah must have done so in the spirit, perhaps in a special vision that he had. There are many unexplained things in the Bible.

Jehovah said he was calling for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, and he told Jeremiah to prophesy those words against them. Jehovah said, “**Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest shall be raised up from the outermost parts of the earth**” (Jer. 25:32). And he told the shepherds and principal men of the flock (the general populous) to wail and cry. That prophecy was about 2500 years ago. Distant kingdoms like China existed then, which were beyond the reach of Nebuchadrezzar and the Chaldeans. Perhaps Jehovah stirred up other forces in such places to create the worldwide time of warfare and bloodshed that Jeremiah prophesied about. However, all of those words may be figurative, indicating an extremely large area would be stricken.

Next the book says, “**In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word from Jehovah came, saying ...**” (Jer. 26:1). Jehovah told Jeremiah to stand in the court of Jehovah’s house, and speak his words to all the cities that came to worship there. Jehovah said, “**It may be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may relent of the evil which I purpose to do to them because of the evil of their doings**” (Jer. 26:3). However, after Jeremiah had finished speaking all that Jehovah commanded him, the book says, “**... the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shall surely die**” (Jer. 26:8). They did not like his prophecy that the temple and the city would be destroyed. Therefore, they brought Jeremiah to the rulers of Judah, and made their accusations. Jeremiah said that Jehovah sent him and they should repent. He also said that if they put him to death they would bring innocent blood upon themselves and the city. He said Jehovah had truly sent him to speak those words to them.

Then the rulers and all the people told the priests and the prophets that Jeremiah was not worthy of death, for he had spoken to them in the name of Jehovah. And certain of the rulers rose up and told

the assembly about Micah who prophesied against the city in the days of king Hezekiah. They said, “**Did Hezekiah king of Judah, and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear Jehovah, and entreat the favor of Jehovah. And Jehovah relented of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we commit great evil against our own souls**” (Jer. 26:19).

The book also mentions another man who prophesied against the city and the land according to all the words of Jeremiah. When king Jehoiakim and all the rulers heard, they sought his life, but he was afraid and fled to Egypt. Then Jehoiakim sent men to bring him back and he killed him. However, the book says that Ahikam the son of Shaphan (a scribe during the time of king Josiah) was with Jeremiah that he not be given over to the people to put him to death.

Again the book says, “**In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying ...**” (Jer. 27:1). Jehovah told Jeremiah to make bonds and bars, and put them upon his neck. Then he was to send them to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon, by the hand of the messengers who came to Zedekiah king of Judah. And he was to command them to tell their masters that Jehovah made the earth, and the men and the beasts upon it. And he gives it to whomever it seems right to him. And now he has given all those lands into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon his servant. He said the nation that will not serve him would be punished with sword, famine, and pestilence, until they were consumed.

He also told them not to listen to their prophets and diviners who said they would not serve the king of Babylon, for they lie. And he said, “**But the nation that shall bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, that nation I will let remain in their own land, says Jehovah, and they shall till it, and dwell therein**” (Jer. 27:11).

Later Jeremiah said he told Zedekiah king of Judah all those words. And he urged him to submit to the king of Babylon, and not hearken to the words of the prophets who said he would not serve him. Jeremiah also spoke to the priests and all the people warning them against the lies of the prophets who said the vessels of Jehovah’s house would soon be brought again from Babylon. For Jehovah said the pillars, the sea, the stands, and all the vessels that

remained in the house of Jehovah would be carried to Babylon until the time he brings them back.

Jeremiah said that in the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, Hananiah the prophet spoke to him in the house of Jehovah, in the presence of the priests and all the people. He claimed that Jehovah said he had broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. He said that in two years all the vessels of Jehovah's house would be brought back again. Then Jeremiah said, "**Truly! Jehovah do so**" (Jer. 28:6). He said he hoped Jehovah would do that. However, he also said that if the word of a prophet comes to pass, then it shows Jehovah had truly sent him. Then Hananiah took the bar from Jeremiah's neck and broke it, saying Jehovah would break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar within two full years. And Jeremiah went his way.

Then Jehovah spoke to Jeremiah, and told him to tell Hananiah that he had broken the bars of wood, but he had made bars of iron instead, that all those nations would serve Nebuchadnezzar. Then Jeremiah told Hananiah that Jehovah had not sent him (Hananiah); he had made the people trust in a lie. Therefore, he would die that year. So Hananiah died in the seventh month of that year.

Next the book tells the words of the letter that Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to those who were carried away captive to Babylon. Jeremiah told them that Jehovah wanted them to settle there and live for the long term. He told them to seek the peace of the city, and pray to Jehovah for it. He said not to listen to the prophets among them, for it would be seventy years before Jehovah would bring them back to Jerusalem, gathering them from all the nations. And apparently to discourage them from expecting an early return Jehovah told them he was sending the sword, the famine, and the pestilence against the king and all the people who remained in Jerusalem. And they would be tossed to and fro among the nations, to be a hissing and a reproach, because they refused to hearken to his words. Jehovah then named two false prophets, Zedekiah and Ahab, who were lying to them, and he said they would be killed by Nebuchadrezzar. He said, "**And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captives of Judah that are in Babylon, saying, Jehovah make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire ...**" (Jer. 29:22).

Jehovah also told Jeremiah to speak to another man named Shemaiah in Babylon who had sent letters to Jerusalem against Jeremiah. Shemaiah told

Zephaniah the priest, and all the priests, to put Jeremiah in the stocks and shackles because he made himself to be a prophet and sent to those in Babylon telling them to prepare for a long stay. The book says that Zephaniah the priest read the letter to Jeremiah. Then the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, saying that Shemaiah had prophesied falsely to them. Therefore, Jehovah was going to punish him and his seed.

Next the book says that Jehovah told Jeremiah to write all the words he had spoken to him in a book. Jehovah told him that the days were coming when he would return his people Israel and Judah to the land he gave to their fathers. Then the book says, "**And these are the words that Jehovah spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah**" (Jer. 30:4). Jehovah said Jacob was going to experience great pain, but he would be saved out of it. Jehovah said the day was coming when he would break his yoke and burst his bonds. Jehovah said, "**And strangers shall no more make him their bondman, but they shall serve Jehovah their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up to them**" (Jer. 30:8-9). That new king David is Jesus Christ. Jehovah told Jacob not to fear, nor be dismayed, for he would return him, and he would have quiet and ease. Jehovah said, "**For I will make a full end of all the nations where I have scattered thee, but I will not make a full end of thee. But I will correct thee in measure, and will in no way leave thee unpunished**" (Jer. 30:11).

Jehovah told Jacob that all who devoured him would be devoured, but Jehovah would restore his health. Jehovah said he would again have compassion on his dwelling-places, and out of them would proceed thanksgiving and the voice of those who make merry. Jehovah said, "**And their prince shall be of themselves, and their ruler shall proceed from the midst of them. And I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach to me. For who is he who has had boldness to approach to me? says Jehovah**" (Jer. 30:21). That prince must refer to Jesus Christ, who alone is worthy to approach God.

Then the book mentions the tempest of Jehovah—his wrath that was going to burst upon the head of the wicked. Jehovah said he would execute his fierce anger, and perform the intents of his heart. And he said, "**In the latter days ye shall understand it. At that time, says Jehovah, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people**" (Jer. 30:24-31:1). And he spoke more

words of comfort for the remnant of his people whom he was going to return and bless. Among other things, he said, “**Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them . . . And they shall come and sing in the height of Zion . . . and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, says Jehovah**” (Jer. 31:8, 12, 14).

Jeremiah then spoke the words that prophesied the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem after the birth of Jesus. Those words are quoted in the New Testament (see Mat. 2:18). He said, “**Thus says Jehovah: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping. Rachel weeping for her children, she refused to be comforted for her children, because they are not**” (Jer. 31:15). However, those words may have a double meaning, and also refer to the emptiness of the land caused by the Babylonian captivity. For Jehovah followed them by saying, “**Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded, says Jehovah, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy**” (Jer. 31:16). Jehovah said he heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, saying he repented and was ashamed. Then Jehovah said, “**Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, says Jehovah**” (Jer. 31:20). And he spoke more words of encouragement for them, saying he would bring them back from captivity, and would watch over them to build and to plant.

After that the book says, “**Behold, the days come, says Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not continue in my covenant, and I disregarded them, says Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says Jehovah: I will give my laws in their inward parts, and I will write them in their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says Jehovah. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more**” (Jer. 31:31-34). The New Testament says

those words refer to the disciples of Christ (see Heb. 8:8-12).

Then Jehovah spoke of the ordinances of the heavens, and said if they ever ceased, then the seed of Israel would cease being a nation before him. He also said the city would be rebuilt, and “**It shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more forever**” (Jer. 31:40). That must mean it would never become extinct (destroyed forever), as places like Babylon have.

Next the book says the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah. The king of Babylon’s army was besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah was in the palace prison. Zedekiah had placed him there, wanting to know why he prophesied that Jehovah said the city would be defeated, and Zedekiah would be taken to Babylon.

After that the word of Jehovah came again to Jeremiah, and told him that Hanamel the son of his uncle was going to come and ask him to buy his field, for he had the right of redemption. So Jeremiah bought the field, and gave the deed to a scribe named Baruch before the witnesses and all the Jews who sat in the court of the guard. He told Baruch to store the deed in a vessel. He said, “**For thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall yet again be bought in this land**” (Jer. 32:15).

After the purchase Jeremiah prayed to Jehovah. He first praised him for his great might and loving kindness. Among other things he said Jehovah was “**great in counsel, and mighty in work, whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings**” (Jer. 32:19). He told how God had brought his people Israel out of the land of Egypt with great power, and gave them the promised land. He said however they disobeyed him, and therefore all that evil came upon them. Then he said, “**And thou have said to me, O lord Jehovah, Buy thee the field for money, and call witnesses, whereas the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans**” (Jer. 32:25).

But Jehovah asked Jeremiah if there was anything too hard for him (God). He said he was going to give the city to the Chaldeans, who would burn it with fire, because the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah had done so much evil in his sight, provoking him to anger. Jehovah said he taught them, but they refused to hearken. They even set their abominations in the house which was called by his name,

and burned their sons and daughters in sacrifice to idols. Then he told Jeremiah he would later bring his people back from where he had driven them in his anger. Jehovah said, “**Just as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good that I have promised them**” (Jer. 32:42). He said men would again buy fields in the cities of Judah.

Then the book says the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the second time while he was still shut up in the court of the guard. Jehovah described some of the horrors of the siege brought on because of his anger over the wickedness of the city. However, he also said, “**Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them. And I will reveal to them abundance of peace and truth. And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first**” (Jer. 33:6-7). And he said he would pardon all their iniquities against him.

Jehovah went on to contrast the total destruction of the cities of Judah that Jeremiah saw, with their future development and prosperity. And he said, “**In those days, and at that time, I will cause a Branch of righteousness to grow up to David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land**” (Jer. 33:15). Jehovah also said, “**David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel, neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to burn meal offerings, and to do sacrifice continually**” (Jer. 33:17-18). Jesus is the son of David, and we his disciples are priests (see for example 1Pe. 2:9). And we ourselves are continual offerings, as living sacrifices (see Rom. 12:1).

Next the book says, “**The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army and all the kingdoms of the earth that were under his dominion, and all the peoples, were fighting against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof, saying ...**” (Jer. 34:1). Jehovah told Jeremiah to go to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him that Jehovah said the city would be conquered and burned with fire, but he would not die by the sword. Zedekiah would speak with the king of Babylon mouth to mouth, and would die in peace at Babylon. And Jeremiah did so.

After that the book says, “**The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, after the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people who were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty to**

them” (Jer. 34:8), meaning to free all their fellow Hebrews from bond service. They obeyed and let them go, but afterward brought them back into subjection. Therefore Jehovah spoke to them through Jeremiah, reminding them of his covenant with them, and the seventh-year release, which they continued to violate. He said, therefore, “**Behold, I proclaim to you a liberty, says Jehovah—to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine. And I will make you to be tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth**” (Jer. 34:17). He said he was going to command the army of the king of Babylon, which had departed, to return, burn the city with fire, and make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant.

Next the book says, “**The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, Go to the house of the Rechabites, and speak to them, and bring them into the house of Jehovah, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink**” (Jer. 35:1-2). Jeremiah did so, but the Rechabites refused, saying that Jonadab their father commanded them to never drink wine, nor settle anywhere, but dwell in tents. They said they were in Jerusalem for fear of the Chaldean and Syrian armies.

Then Jehovah told Jeremiah to go to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and tell them about the sons of Jonadab, who were obeying their father. And he rebuked the Jews for not obeying him as the sons of Jonadab had obeyed their father. He said therefore he was going to bring all the evil he had pronounced against them. As for the sons of Jonadab, Jehovah said they would never lack a man to stand before him.

After that the book says the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim king of Judah, saying, “**Take thee a roll of a book, and write in it all the words that I have spoken to thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to thee, from the days of Josiah, even to this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do to them, that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin**” (Jer. 36:2-3).

Then Jeremiah called for Baruch, who wrote, from the mouth of Jeremiah, on a roll of a book all the words of Jehovah. Afterward Jeremiah told Baruch he was shut up, and unable to go into the house of Jehovah. Therefore, he commanded

Baruch to read the roll in the ears of the people there upon the fast-day, and also to all Judah who came out of their cities. He said they might turn each one from his evil way, for great was the anger of Jehovah that he had pronounced against the people. Therefore, Baruch did so.

After that, in the fifth year of Jehoiakim king of Judah, all the people proclaimed a fast before Jehovah. Then Baruch read Jeremiah's words to all the people in the chamber of Gemariah the scribe in the house of Jehovah. And when Micaiah the son of Gemariah heard all the words of Jehovah from the book, he went into the scribe's chamber in the king's house. All the rulers were sitting there, and he told them the words. Therefore they sent a man named Jehudi to bring the roll to them. So Baruch brought it to the rulers, and he read it to them. And when they had heard it "**they turned in fear one toward another, and said to Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words**" (Jer. 36:16).

The rulers told Baruch that he and Jeremiah should hide. Then they went to the king, and told him the words of the roll. The king sent for the roll, and Jehudi read it to him and all the rulers with him. However, after three or four leaves had been read, the king cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire in the brazier. The text says, "**And they were not afraid, nor tore their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants who heard all these words**" (Jer. 36:24). Although three of the rulers urged him not to burn the roll, he would not listen. Instead he commanded to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah, but Jehovah hid them.

Then the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah. He told him to take another roll, and write the same words in it. Moreover, Jeremiah was to tell Jehoiakim king of Judah that Jehovah said he would have no heir for the throne, and his dead body would be cast out in the weather. Jehovah also told again of the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah. Therefore, Jeremiah gave Baruch another roll, and he wrote the previous words in it. The record also says, "**... and there were added besides to them many like words**" (Jer. 36:32).

Next the record says, "**And Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned as king, instead of Coniah [Jehoiachin] the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah**" (Jer. 37:1), but neither did he listen to the words of Jehovah from the prophet Jeremiah. Nevertheless, he sent men to Jeremiah, telling him to

pray to Jehovah for them. Jeremiah was able to go about freely because they had not yet put him in prison. The Chaldeans had been besieging Jerusalem, but they withdrew when they heard that Pharaoh's army came forth out of Egypt. Then the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, telling him what to reply to the king of Judah. Jehovah told the king not to think the Chaldeans were gone, for they were going to return against the city. And even if Zedekiah smote their whole army, the wounded of them who remained would rise up and burn it with fire.

When the army of the Chaldeans had broken away from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, Jeremiah went out to go into the land of Benjamin to receive his portion there. When he reached the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward named Irijah, grandson of the false prophet Hananiah (who broke Jeremiah's wooden yoke), seized him, and accused him of deserting to the Chaldeans. Jeremiah denied it, but Irijah took him to the rulers, who became angry, struck him, and put him in prison. The book says he remained in the dungeon-house many days.

Then Zedekiah the king brought him secretly to his house, and asked him if there was any word from Jehovah. Jeremiah said there was. He told him he was going to be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. Then Jeremiah asked him how he had sinned against anyone so that he was put in prison. And he asked him where were the prophets who said the king of Babylon would not come against the land. Jeremiah pleaded that he not be sent back to the prison lest he die there. So Zedekiah commanded that Jeremiah be committed into the court of the guard. And they gave him a loaf of bread each day until there was no more in the city.

Then some of the rulers heard that Jeremiah told the people Jehovah said only those who surrendered to the Chaldeans would survive. So they said to the king, "**Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death, inasmuch as he weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words to them. For this man seeks not the welfare of this people, but the hurt**" (Jer. 38:4). Zedekiah said he could not oppose them. Therefore, they let Jeremiah down with cords in a dungeon, and he sank in the mire.

When Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch in the king's house, heard they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon, he went to the king. He told him those men had done evil by so doing, for Jeremiah was

going to die there. Therefore, the king commanded him to take thirty men and take Jeremiah out. Then Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard. Afterward Zedekiah the king sent for Jeremiah, and said to him, "**I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me**" (Jer. 38:14). Jeremiah replied, "**If I declare it to thee, will thou not surely put me to death? And if I give thee counsel, thou will not hearken to me**" (Jer. 38:15). But Zedekiah swore secretly to him that he would neither put him to death, nor deliver him to the men who sought his life.

Then Jeremiah told him Jehovah said that only if he surrendered to the king of Babylon's rulers would he live, and the city not be burned. Zedekiah said he was afraid of being abused by the Jews who had fallen away to the Chaldeans. Jeremiah assured him he would not be delivered to them, and he urged him to obey the voice of Jehovah. Jeremiah said that he, his family, and the city would not escape disaster by the Chaldeans if he refused. Then Zedekiah told Jeremiah to tell no man about their words. He said to him that if the rulers ask what was said, he was to tell them he asked not to be returned to the dungeon. So when the rulers asked, Jeremiah answered as the king commanded. And he remained in the court of the guard until the day Jerusalem was taken.

The army of Nebuchadrezzar besieged Jerusalem in the ninth year of king Zedekiah. In the eleventh year they made a breach in the city, and all the princes of the king of Babylon sat in the middle gate. When Zedekiah and all the men of war saw them, they fled out of the city by night. However, the Chaldean army overtook them in the plains of Jericho. Then they brought Zedekiah to the king of Babylon in Riblah (which may have been in Syria). He killed his sons in his sight, put out his eyes, and sent him bound to Babylon. He also killed all the nobles of Judah, burned all the houses of Jerusalem, and broke down its walls. Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard also carried away the residue of the people to Babylon, but he left of the poor people, and gave them vineyards and fields.

Then the book says, "**Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying, Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm, but do to him even as he shall say to thee**" (Jer. 39:11-12). Therefore, they took Jeremiah out of the court of the guard, and he went among the people. The book also says that while Jeremiah was shut up, the word of Jehovah had

come to him about Ebed-melech the Ethiopian. Jehovah said he would save his life because he trusted in him.

The next part of the book tells about the word of Jehovah which came to Jeremiah after Jerusalem had been conquered. But first it tells what happened to Jeremiah and the remnant of the Jews. Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from being bound in chains with the other captives of Jerusalem and Judah. The captain of the guard said to Jeremiah, "**Jehovah thy God pronounced this evil upon this place, and Jehovah has brought it, and done according as he spoke. Because ye have sinned against Jehovah, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing has come upon you**" (Jer. 40:2-3). Then he told Jeremiah he was free to go wherever he desired. So Jeremiah went to Gedaliah (the governor appointed by the Chaldeans), and dwelt with him among the people who remained.

When all the captains of the (Jewish) forces who were in the fields (among whom were Ishmael and Johanan), they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor over the remnant who remained, they came to him. And he swore to them that it would be well with them if they served the Chaldeans. He said, "**As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to stand before the Chaldeans who shall come to us. But ye, gather ye wine and summer fruits and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken**" (Jer. 40:10). Also all the Jews who were in the neighboring countries heard about Gedaliah, and they returned to the land of Judah and to him.

Then Johanan, and all the captains of the forces who were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, and told him that the king of the sons of Ammon had sent Ishmael to take his life. However, Gedaliah did not believe them. Later, Johanan spoke to him secretly, and asked to go kill Ishmael where no man would know it. He asked why he should take his life, and cause the remnant of Judah to perish. But Gedaliah refused, and accused him of speaking falsely of Ishmael. Nevertheless, sometime later, Ishmael, who was of the royal seed, with one of the chief officers of the king and ten other men, came to Gedaliah and killed him. They also killed all the Jews who were with him, as well as the Chaldean men of war who were there.

The second day after Gedaliah was killed eighty men came, dressed in mourning, with offerings to bring to the house of Jehovah. Ishmael went forth

from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went. He told them to come to Gedaliah, and when they were in the midst of the city he killed them and cast them into a pit. However, ten men were spared because they offered to bring them to stores of grain, oil, and honey they had hidden in the field.

After that Ishmael carried away captive the residue of the people who were in Mizpah, and went to go to the sons of Ammon. But when Johanan, and all the captains of the forces who were with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael had done, they went to fight him. When the captives saw Johanan coming they were glad, and turned about and came back. However Ishmael escaped with eight men, and went to the sons of Ammon.

Then Johanan, and all the captains of the forces who were with him, took the remnant from Mizpah, and dwelt in a place near Bethlehem to go to Egypt. They feared the Chaldeans because of what Ishmael had done to Gedaliah the governor. After that Johanan and all the others came to Jeremiah, and asked him to pray to Jehovah for guidance. Jeremiah said he would, and he would tell them whatever Jehovah said. Therefore, they approached Jeremiah and said to him, **“Jehovah be a true and faithful witness amongst us, if we do not according to all the word with which Jehovah thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of Jehovah our God, to whom we send thee, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of Jehovah our God”** (Jer. 42:5-6).

After ten days the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, and he called Johanan and all the others. Jehovah said to them that if they remained in the land he would build them up, for he relented of the evil he had done to them. He told them not to fear the king of Babylon. Jehovah said he would grant them mercy, and cause them to return to their own land. He told them, however, if they disobeyed him and entered into Egypt, then the sword and the famine would follow them, and they would die there. And with many other words Jehovah warned them not to go to Egypt. Then Jeremiah told them he had done as they requested, and declared the words of Jehovah to them. He added, **“But ye have not obeyed the voice of Jehovah your God in anything for which he has sent me to you”** (Jer. 42:21). And he warned again about going.

However, the book says that a man named Azariah, with Johanan and “all the proud men,” accused Jeremiah of speaking falsely. They said Jehovah had

not sent him, rather it was Baruch, in order to deliver them to the Chaldeans for death and for captivity to Babylon. Therefore Johanan and all the captains of the forces took all the remnant of Judah, including Jeremiah and Baruch, and came to Tahpanhes a city of Egypt.

Then the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah. Jehovah told him to take great stones, and hide them in mortar in the brickwork at the entry of Pharaoh’s house there. He was to do it in the sight of the men of Judah, and say to them, **“Thus says Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid, and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them”** (Jer. 43:10). Jehovah said he was going to smite the land of Egypt, to bring death and destruction, including burning the houses of the gods of Egypt with fire.

Next the book says, **“The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews who dwelt in the land of Egypt, who dwelt at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Memphis, and in the country of Pathros, saying ...”** (Jer. 44:1). Jehovah said they had seen all the evil he brought upon Jerusalem and the cities of Judah because of their wickedness. He said he sent his servants the prophets to warn them, but they would not hearken. Therefore his wrath was poured forth. And he asked them why they were committing a great evil against their own souls by burning incense to other gods in the land of Egypt to provoke him to wrath. He said therefore he was going to consume the remnant of Judah in Egypt by the sword and the famine. He said none would return except such as escape.

The book says, **“Then all the men who knew that their wives burned incense to other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great assembly, even all the people who dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah”** (Jer. 44:15). They said they would not hearken to the word he had spoken to them in the name of Jehovah. They said, **“But we will certainly perform every word that has gone forth out of our mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our rulers, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off burning incense to the queen of heaven, and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked all things,**

and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her, without our husbands?" (Jer. 44:17-19).

Jeremiah told them their land had become a desolation because they did evil and committed abominations. He said that evil had happened to them because they had burned incense, sinned against Jehovah, disobeyed his voice, and had not walked in his law, statutes, and testimonies. Then Jehovah said that because they and their wives vowed to burn incense to the queen of heaven, all the men of Judah in the land of Egypt were going to be consumed by sword and by famine. And those who escaped into the land of Judah would be few in number. And he gave them a sign that he was going to punish them there. He said, "**Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of those who seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, who was his enemy, and sought his life**" (Jer. 44:30).

Next the book tells about the word from Jehovah that Jeremiah spoke to Baruch when he wrote Jeremiah's words in a book in the fourth year of king Jehoiakim. Baruch had said that Jehovah added sorrow to his pain. He had said he was weary with his groaning and found no rest. Jehovah told Baruch that he was going to break down the whole land. And he said to him, "**And do thou seek great things for thyself? Seek them not, for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, says Jehovah, but thy life I will give to thee for a prey in all places where thou go**" (Jer. 45:5).

Next the book says, "**The word of Jehovah which came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations**" (Jer. 46:1). First he spoke of the army of Pharaoh-neco king of Egypt, which was smitten by Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon by the river Euphrates in the fourth year of Josiah king of Judah. Jehovah told soldiers to prepare for battle. He told of defeat by the river Euphrates. He compared the Egyptian army to proud waters, rising to cover the earth with destruction. And he told the horses, chariots, and mighty men to go forth. He said it was a day of Jehovah, a day of vengeance that he might avenge him of his adversaries, a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates. He said there would be no healing for the virgin daughter of Egypt. Virgin may refer to Egypt never having come

under a foreign yoke. He said the nations had heard of her shame, and the earth was full of her cry.

Next the word of Jehovah told Jeremiah how Nebuchadrezzar was going to come and smite the land of Egypt. He said they should declare in Egypt and its cities, "**Say ye, Stand forth, and prepare thee, for the sword has devoured round about thee. Why are thy strong ones swept away? They stood not, because Jehovah drove them**" (Jer. 46:14-15). He told the daughter who dwells in Egypt to prepare to go into captivity. He said Memphis (their capital city) would be a desolation, burned up, without inhabitant. He said the daughter of Egypt would be put to shame, defeated by the people of the north. Jehovah said, "**Behold, I will punish Amon [a god] of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with her gods, and her kings, even Pharaoh, and those who trust in him**" (Jer. 46:25). However, Jehovah said that afterwards it would be inhabited as in former days.

Then Jehovah told Israel not to be dismayed. He said he would return in peace, for he was with him. He said he would make a full end of all the nations where he had driven him, but he would not make a full end of him.

Next the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah concerning the Philistines before Pharaoh smote Gaza (one of their cities). Jehovah spoke of a conquering army coming out of the north, like an overflowing stream, against all the Philistines. He said Jehovah was going to destroy the Philistines.

Then he spoke of Moab. Jehovah described the destruction of that nation and its cities. He said, "**For, because thou have trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou also shall be taken. And Chemosh [their chief god] shall go forth into captivity, his priests and his rulers together**" (Jer. 48:7). He said her cities would become a desolation, without any to dwell therein. And he said, "**Cursed be he who does the work of Jehovah negligently, and cursed be he who keeps back his sword from blood**" (Jer. 48:10).

Jehovah said Moab would be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel their confidence (one of Jeroboam's golden calves was there). He said Moab was laid waste. Then he named several of their cities, and said that judgment had come upon them. He said, "**Make ye him drunken, for he magnified himself against Jehovah**" (Jer. 48:26). Jehovah said they would be a derision because Israel was a derision to them. Jehovah said, "**We have heard of the pride of**

Moab, that he is very proud, his loftiness, and his pride, and his arrogance, and the haughtiness of his heart” (Jer. 48:29).

Then Jehovah said, “**Therefore I will wail for Moab, yea, I will cry out for all Moab. For they shall mourn the men of Kir-heres. With more than the weeping of Jazer I will weep for thee, O vine of Sibmah. Thy branches passed over the sea. They reached even to the sea of Jazer. The destroyer has fallen upon thy summer fruits and upon thy vintage. And gladness and joy is taken away from the fruitful field and from the land of Moab. And I have caused wine to cease from the winepresses. None shall tread with shouting. The shouting shall be no shouting” (Jer. 48:31-33).**

Many claim those were the words of Jeremiah and not of Jehovah. They admit Jehovah expresses emotions of anger, but they seem unable to believe that he would express emotions of sorrow. Could Jeremiah weep for Moab but not Jehovah? Sorrow over someone’s calamity is caused by love for them. They gave God no other alternative than to bring evil upon them, which caused him to sorrow over them, because he had once loved them (see Hos. 9:15). Jesus wept when he described the coming destruction of Jerusalem (see Luke 19:41-44) because he did not want it to happen to them. God is not unfeeling. He grieves over his offspring when they fail, especially when the innocent must suffer with the guilty, which is an inexorable aspect of this sinful world.

Jehovah continued to tell how he was going to punish Moab. When describing their future sorrows, he said that every head was bald and every beard was clipped. He said there was lamentation everywhere, on the housetops and in the streets. Jehovah said Moab was going to be destroyed from being a people because Moab had magnified himself against him. He said, “**Woe to thee, O Moab! The people of Chemosh is undone, for thy sons are taken away captive, and thy daughters into captivity. Yet I will bring back the captivity of Moab in the latter days, says Jehovah. Thus far is the judgment of Moab” (Jer. 48:46-47).**

Next Jehovah spoke concerning the sons of Ammon. Jehovah brought an accusation against them, saying, “**Has Israel no sons? Has he no heir? Why then does Malcam [the chief god of the Ammonites] possess Gad, and his people dwell in the cities thereof?” (Jer. 49:1).** Therefore Jehovah said that war was coming, and Rabbah (their capital city) would become a desolate heap, and her daugh-

ters would be burned with fire. Jehovah also said that Malcam would go into captivity, his priests and his rulers together. He said every man would be driven out, but afterward he would also bring back the captivity of the sons of Ammon.

After that Jehovah spoke about Edom. He asked if wisdom had vanished in Teman (of Edom). He told the inhabitants of Dedan (also of Edom) to flee, for he was going to bring the calamity of Esau (their forefather) upon him. Jehovah said, “**If grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some gleanings grapes?” (Jer. 49:9).** But Jehovah said he had made Esau bare. Jehovah said the pride of the heart of Edom had deceived him. Jehovah said he was going to bring them down from their height, “**And Edom shall become an astonishment. Everyone who passes by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues of it. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor cities thereof, says Jehovah, no man shall dwell there, nor shall any son of man sojourn in it” (Jer. 49:17-18).** And so it remains today.

Next Jehovah spoke of the sorrows of Damascus. He said, “**Damascus has grown feeble. She turns herself to flee, and trembling has seized on her. Anguish and sorrows have taken hold of her, as of a woman in travail” (Jer. 49:24).** Jehovah said he was going to kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it would devour the palaces of Ben-hadad (a former king there).

After that the book says, “**Of Kedar, and of the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote. Thus says Jehovah: Arise ye. Go up to Kedar, and destroy the sons of the east” (Jer. 49:28).** Kedar was one of the sons of Ishmael. Jehovah said he was going to bring their calamity from every side of them. And he said that Hazor would be a dwelling-place of jackals, a desolation forever.

Then the book says, “**The word of Jehovah that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning Elam, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying ...” (Jer. 49:34).** Some think Elam refers to Persia but nobody is sure. Jehovah said he was going to break the bow of Elam, and scatter them by the four winds of heaven. He said, however, that he would also bring back the captivity of Elam in the latter days.

Next Jehovah spoke by Jeremiah concerning Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans. This part of the book is a lengthy description of their future

destruction, with reasons why. It also contains many words of comfort for God's people. Jehovah first said, "**Declare ye among the nations and publish, and set up a standard, publish, and conceal not. Say, Babylon is taken. Bel is put to shame. Merodach is dismayed. Her images are put to shame; her idols are dismayed**" (Jer. 50:2). Bel and Merodach were Babylonian gods. Jehovah said a nation was coming out of the north against Babylon to make her land desolate, and none would dwell there.

Jehovah said that in those days the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah would come, weeping together, and seek Jehovah their God. And he compared them to lost sheep, led astray by their shepherds and preyed upon. Then he told them to flee the midst of Babylon. Jehovah said he was going to stir up a company of great nations from the north country against her. He said Babylon would become wholly desolate because they had rejoiced and were wanton. Jehovah commanded soldiers to attack her, for she had sinned against him. He said, "**Take vengeance upon her. As she has done, do to her**" (Jer. 50:15).

Jehovah referred to Israel as a hunted sheep. He said the king of Assyria devoured him, and Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had broken his bones. Jehovah said therefore he was going to punish the king of Babylon as he had punished the king of Assyria. And he said he was going to bring Israel again to his pasture, and he was going to pardon those whom he left as a remnant.

Jehovah commanded to kill and utterly destroy the land of Merathaim (a controversial word which must refer to Babylon). The book says, "**Jehovah has opened his armory, and has brought forth the weapons of his indignation, for the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, has a work in the land of the Chaldeans**" (Jer. 50:25). He commanded her to be utterly destroyed. He said woe to them, for their day had come.

Next the book says, "**The voice of those who flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of Jehovah our God, the vengeance of his temple**" (Jer. 50:28). It was a call for the defeat of Babylon. Jehovah called her "proud one," and he said he was against her. Jehovah said both the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah were oppressed, but he would give them rest, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.

Jehovah said a sword was upon the Chaldeans, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, her rulers, and her wise men. He said, "**A sword is upon the**

boasters, and they shall become fools. A sword is upon her mighty men, and they shall be dismayed" (Jer. 50:36). Jehovah said Babylon would be like Sodom and Gomorrah, uninhabited forever. And Jehovah again spoke of a people coming from the north, cruel, roaring like the sea, against the daughter of Babylon, to make their habitation desolate and destroy all her host.

Then the book says, "**For Israel is not forsaken, nor Judah, of his God, of Jehovah of hosts, though their land is full of guilt against the Holy One of Israel**" (Jer. 51:5). And again there was a warning to flee out of the midst of Babylon, and not be cut off in her iniquity. The book says, "**Jehovah has brought forth our righteousness. Come, and let us declare in Zion the work of Jehovah our God**" (Jer. 51:10). Then it says that Jehovah had stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes to destroy Babylon. It says, "**For it is the vengeance of Jehovah, the vengeance of his temple**" (Jer. 51:11). It says Jehovah made the earth by his power, and idols were vanity, a work of delusion. Jehovah spoke further about bringing death and destruction. And with many more words he described the fear and panic of Babylon when it was conquered. The book says, "**The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, the inhabitant of Zion shall say. ... Therefore thus says Jehovah: Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee**" (Jer. 51:35-36). Jehovah said Babylon would become heaps, a dwelling-place for jackals.

Then Jehovah again told his people to go out of the midst of Babylon, and save themselves from the fierce anger of Jehovah. He said that when he executes judgment upon the graven images of Babylon, and all her slain fall in the midst of her, then the heavens and the earth and all therein would sing for joy over Babylon. And with many more words he described its destruction.

Next the book says, "**The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign**" (Jer. 51:59). It says Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that would come upon Babylon. Then Jeremiah told Seraiah, the chief chamberlain, that when he came to Babylon he was to read all those words. Then he was to bind a stone to the book, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates. And he was to say, "**Thus Babylon shall sink, and shall not rise again because of the evil**

that I will bring upon her, and they shall be weary” (Jer. 51:64). After that the book says, **“Thus far are the words of Jeremiah”** (Jer. 51:64).

The remainder of the book gives historical information very similar to the last part of Second Kings, which describes the siege and conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar. Zedekiah was king, and he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. The book says, **“For it [the conquest] came to pass through the anger of Jehovah, in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon”** (Jer. 52:3). The siege began in the ninth year of the reign of Zedekiah. In the eleventh year a breach was made, and all the men of war fled out of the city by night. However, the army of the Chaldeans overtook Zedekiah, and all his army scattered. They took him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and killed his sons before his eyes. They also killed all the rulers of Judah. Then they put out Zedekiah’s eyes, and carried him bound to Babylon where he was imprisoned until he died.

After that the book says Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, who stood before the king of Babylon, came into Jerusalem with his army. He burned the temple and all the houses of Jerusalem, and broke down the walls of the city. Then he carried away captive the residue of the people. However, he left of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen. The Chaldeans also carried away every-

thing of gold, silver, and bronze that was in the house of Jehovah. Next the captain of the guard took Saraiah the chief priest and seventy-two other men found in the city, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah, where Zedekiah had been taken earlier. And the king of Babylon put them to death there.

After that the book gives figures for the number of people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive. It says there were 3,023 in his seventh year, 832 in his eighteenth year, and 745 in his twenty-third year. That totals 4,600. We know from other scriptures that there were others besides those. For example Second Kings 24:14 mentions a time when 10,000 were carried away captive. Nevertheless remember, the census of David four hundred years earlier counted half a million men in the tribe of Judah. Since most of the surviving Jews were carried away by Nebuchadrezzar, those relatively small numbers illustrate how much bloodshed occurred when they were conquered.

The book concludes by describing the release of Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. It says that in the thirty-seventh year of his captivity, in the first year of the reign of Evil-merodach king of Babylon, Jehoiachin was brought out of prison. Evil-merodach spoke kindly to him, set his throne above the other kings in Babylon, and gave him a daily allowance. And he ate bread before Evil-merodach all the days of his life.

A Description of **Lamentations**

It is commonly believed that Jeremiah wrote this book, for it is a bitter lamentation over the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened in 586 BC. The author often refers to the city as a grieving woman. It begins with these words: **“How the city sits solitary, that was full of people! She has become as a widow, who was great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become tributary! She weeps bitterly in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. Among all her loved ones she has none to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies.”** The book describes many of her sorrows, such as captivity, great servitude, persecution, desolate gates, sighing priests, afflicted virgins, subjection to adversaries. When her people fell into the hand of the adversary, none helped her. Indeed, the adversaries mocked at her desolations. It says Jerusalem had sinned grievously. That was why she became as an unclean thing. It says the adversary had spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things. It says, **“For she has seen that the nations have entered into her sanctuary, concerning whom thou commanded that they should not enter into thine assembly”** (Lam. 1:10). And all her people sighed and sought bread.

Next the city herself seems to speak. She said to look and see if there was any sorrow like her sorrow. She said Jehovah had afflicted her in the day of his fierce anger, and **“From on high he has sent fire into my bones, and it prevails against them. He has spread a net for my feet. He has turned me back. He has made me desolate and faint all the day”** (Lam. 1:13). She said that Jehovah had trodden down all her mighty men, and crushed her young men. She said for those things her eye ran down with water, and there was none to comfort her. But she also confessed, saying that Jehovah was righteous, because she had rebelled against his commandment. And again she lamented her afflictions. She said all her enemies were glad. Therefore, she said to Jehovah, **“Let all their wickedness come before thee, and do to them, as thou have done to me for all my transgressions. For my sighs are many, and my heart is faint”** (Lam. 1:22).

Then the book tells how Jehovah had brought destruction against his people. Among other things it says, **“The Lord has become as an enemy. He has swallowed up Israel. He has swallowed up all**

her palaces. He has destroyed his strongholds. And he has multiplied mourning and lamentation in the daughter of Judah” (Lam. 2:5). Remember, sometimes cities and nations are called daughters. She said her eyes failed with tears, because of the destruction, and because the children fainted in the streets from starvation, and died in their mother’s bosom.

Then Jehovah appears to speak. He asked what he could testify to her, or compare to her, that he might comfort her. He said her breach was great like the sea, and he asked who could heal her. He said all her prophets had led her astray. He said all who passed by hissed and wagged their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem, and said, **“Is this the city that men called The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?”** (Lam. 2:15). He said all her enemies opened their mouth wide against her.

The book says Jehovah had done what he purposed, and had fulfilled his word. It says he threw down and had not pitied. Then the book told the daughter of Zion to weep night and day, pour out her heart like water before the face of Jehovah, and lift up her hands toward him for the life of her young sons who faint for hunger. Then it says, **“See, O Jehovah, and behold to whom thou have done thus! Shall the women eat their fruit, the sons who are dandled in the hands? Shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord? The youth and the old man lie on the ground in the streets. My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword. Thou have slain them in the day of thine anger. Thou have slaughtered, and not pitied”** (Lam. 2:20-21).

After that the author said he was a man who had seen affliction by the rod of Jehovah’s wrath. And he spoke of many afflictions that Jehovah had brought upon him. He said Jehovah caused him to walk in darkness, broke his bones, walled him around, shut out his prayer, made his paths crooked, made him desolate, and other such things. He said, **“I have become a derision to all my people, and their song all the day”** (Lam. 3:14), which was certainly true of Jeremiah. He said Jehovah had filled him with bitterness, broken his teeth with gravel, and covered him with ashes. Like Job, he asked that his affliction and misery be remembered. And so it is by all who read his book.

Then he spoke these beautiful words of encouragement: “**This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope: It is of Jehovah’s loving kindnesses that we are not consumed, because his compassions do not fail. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness. Jehovah is my portion, says my soul, therefore I will hope in him. Jehovah is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.**

“It is good that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of Jehovah. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and keep silence, because he has laid it upon him. Let him put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. Let him give his cheek to him who smites him. Let him be filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever. For though he causes grief, yet he will have compassion according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses. For he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the sons of men. To crush under foot all the prisoners of the earth, to turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High, to subvert a man in his cause, the Lord does not approve” (Lam. 3:21-36). Jehovah does not want to afflict us, but there are times when he must.

Then the author asked who it was that says something, and it comes to pass when Jehovah does not command it. Nothing can happen without Jehovah’s permission, although he certainly does not approve all that happens. He allows sin and evil in this world for many reasons, all of which work for good to those who love him (see Rom. 8:28). The author asked why a living man complains about the punishment of his sins. He said, “**Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to Jehovah. Let us lift up our heart with our hands to God in the heavens**” (Lam. 3:40-41).

And the author prayed again about the plight of his people. He told Jehovah they had transgressed, and he had not pardoned. He said he had covered himself with a cloud so that no prayer could pass through. And he described how bad things were for them. He said his eye ran down with streams of water, for the destruction of his people.

After that he told about the persecution against him. He said they had cut off his life in the dungeon. He said, “**I called upon thy name, O Jehovah, out of the lowest dungeon. Thou heard my voice.**

Hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry” (Lam. 3:55-56). He said Jehovah told him to fear not. Then he asked Jehovah to judge his cause. He told Jehovah he had seen all their persecutions against him. He said, “**Thou will render to them a recompense, O Jehovah, according to the work of their hands**” (Lam. 3:64). He said Jehovah would destroy them.

And he again described many of the horrors of the destruction. For example, the stones of the beautiful temple were scattered; the women became cruel, not even suckling their babies; the skin of the ranking men, formerly whiter than milk, became withered and black; compassionate women boiled their own children. He said Jehovah had accomplished his wrath, and devoured the foundations of Zion. He said, “**The kings of the earth did not believe, nor all the inhabitants of the world, that the adversary and the enemy would enter into the gates of Jerusalem**” (Lam. 4:12). They thought it was impregnable, but Jehovah caused it to be conquered. He said it was because of the sins of her prophets and priests, who shed the blood of the just in the midst of her. Now they wandered among the nations and were treated as lepers.

Then he spoke of Edom, saying, “**Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, who dwells in the land of Uz. Yet the cup shall pass through to thee also. Thou shall be drunken, and shall make thyself naked**” (Lam. 4:21). Edom had rejoiced at the fall of Judah.

He again asked Jehovah to remember what had come upon them. And he described more about their affliction. He said, among other things, that their heritage was turned to strangers, they were orphans and widows, they had to pay for their own water, they had no rest, servants ruled over them, they got their bread at the peril of their lives, their skin was blackened, their women were ravished, rulers were hanged up by their hand, joy had ceased, dancing turned into mourning, their heart was faint, and the mount of Zion was desolate.

He ended the book, “**Thou, O Jehovah, abide forever. Thy throne is from generation to generation. Why do thou forget us forever, and forsake us so long time? Turn thou us back to thee, O Jehovah, and we shall be turned back. Renew our days as of old. But thou have utterly rejected us. Thou are very angry against us.**

A Description of **Ezekiel**

Ezekiel was a prophet of Jehovah, who wrote about his ministry in a very personal style. For example, the expression “the word of Jehovah came to me” is found fifty-five times in the entire Bible, and Ezekiel used it forty-three of those times. The contents of the book can be divided into three general parts. The first part (about half the book) contains warnings to the house of Israel. The second part contains judgments against some of their neighboring nations, and more criticisms of Israel, as well as words of hope for their future. The third part, which is also the most mysterious part, describes what was to be their renewed nation and temple.

Ezekiel began by saying that in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin’s captivity he saw visions of God. The Chaldeans had carried away Jehoiachin king of Judah, and some other captives, about eleven years before eventually destroying Jerusalem. Ezekiel said he was among the captives by their river Chebar when the heavens opened and the word of Jehovah came to him. He said, **“And I looked, and, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud, with a fire enfolding itself, and a brightness round about it, and out of the midst of it, as it were glowing metal, out of the midst of the fire. And out of the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures”** (Eze. 1:4-5).

He said the creatures appeared like men. However, each one had three other faces: that of a lion on the right, an ox on the left, and an eagle, which must have been on the back. Each one also had four wings. He said their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and their movements appeared like flashes of lightning. He described other things about them that are very difficult to understand or to visualize, including the strange wheels that went with them. He said the noise of their wings was like the noise of great waters, perhaps like the sound of Niagara Falls. And the firmament above them was like awesome crystal to look upon.

He said, **“And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone. And upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above”** (Eze. 1:26). He said the figure had the appearance of glowing metal, as of fire, and there was brightness round about him. He said he fell on his face when he saw

him. And he heard a voice speaking, which told him to stand up.

The voice called him “son of man.” Jesus often called himself the son of man. That expression is used 197 times in the Bible. It is used 109 times in the Old Testament, 93 of which refer to Ezekiel in this book.

The voice said to Ezekiel, **“Son of man, I send thee to the sons of Israel, to nations that are rebellious, which have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me even to this very day. And the sons are impudent and stiff hearted. I send thee to them, and thou shall say to them, Thus says lord Jehovah. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there has been a prophet among them”** (Eze. 2:3-5).

The expression “lord Jehovah” is used 292 times in the Old Testament, 217 of which are in the book of Ezekiel. Jehovah said not to fear them nor their words, though briars and thorns were with him, and though he dwelt among scorpions. He said not to fear their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they were a rebellious house. He told Ezekiel to speak his words to them, whether they heard or not, for they were most rebellious. He told Ezekiel not to be rebellious like that rebellious house.

Then he told him to open his mouth and eat what he gave him. Ezekiel said he saw a hand come forth with a roll of a book in it. The book was opened, and there were in it writings of lamentations and mourning and woe. So he ate the roll, and it tasted to him like honey for sweetness.

The voice told him to go speak to the house of Israel, which was not a people of a foreign language that he could not understand. He said that if he had sent him to them, they would hearken to him. He said, **“But the house of Israel will not hearken to thee, for they will not hearken to me. For all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stiff heart”** (Eze. 3:7). He told Ezekiel he had made his face hard against their faces, harder than flint. And again he said to fear them not, though they were a rebellious house. He called them a rebellious house thirteen times in this book. He told Ezekiel to go to those of the (Babylonian) captivity, and speak to them whether they heard or not.

Ezekiel then said the Spirit lifted him up, and he heard a voice behind him praising Jehovah. He also heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures and the wheels beside them. He said the voice and the noise was “of a great rushing,” perhaps like the sound of a jet engine. He said he went in the heat of his spirit, with the hand of Jehovah strong upon him. He said he came to those of the captivity who dwelt by the river Chebar, and sat there overwhelmed among them seven days. Such an awesome vision must have been emotionally traumatic, and Jehovah knew he needed time to recover.

He said that after seven days the word of Jehovah came to him. Jehovah said he had made him a watchman to the house of Israel. Therefore, he was to give them warning from him. Jehovah told Ezekiel that if he did not warn a wicked man to save his life, the wicked man would die in his iniquity, but Jehovah would require his blood at the hand of Ezekiel. That means Ezekiel would be charged with the wicked man’s death, not that the wicked man would escape judgment. Jehovah said Ezekiel would be clear if he warned him. And the same applied to him if a righteous man turned from his righteousness and committed iniquity. He too would die (unless he stopped sinning), but Ezekiel would be clear of guilt if he warned him.

Then Ezekiel said the hand of Jehovah was upon him, and he told him to rise and go into the plain, where he would talk with him. So he went, and he saw the glory of Jehovah there as by the river Chebar. He again fell on his face, but the Spirit entered into him and set him on his feet. Then Jehovah told him to shut himself within his house. He said they were going to bind him with bands, and Jehovah would cause him to be mute, unable to be a reproof to them. Then Jehovah said, **“But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shall say to them, Thus says lord Jehovah. He who hears, let him hear, and he who forbears, let him forbear, for they are a rebellious house”** (Eze. 3:27).

Next Jehovah told him to take a tile, lay it before him, and portray upon it the city of Jerusalem. He was also to lay siege against it, with forts, a mound, camps, and battering rams all around it. He also said to take an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between him and the city. He was to set his face toward the city and lay siege against it. Jehovah said it was to be a sign to the house of Israel.

Then Jehovah told him to lie upon his left side. He was to bear the iniquity of the house of Israel

lying on his side for 390 days, a day for each of the years of their iniquity. After that was done he was to lie on his right side to bear the iniquity of the house of Judah 40 days, each day for a year. What those years mean is not clear; there are many theories. He was to face toward the siege of Jerusalem and prophesy against it. And Jehovah said he was going to lay bands upon him, and he was not to turn from one side to the other until the days of his siege were accomplished.

Moreover, he was to take grain and other things in one vessel to make bread for himself. He was to eat twenty shekels of it per day, and also drink water by measure. And he was to eat it as barley cakes baked with human dung. Jehovah said, **“Even thus shall the sons of Israel eat their bread unclean among the nations where I will drive them”** (Eze. 4:13). Upon hearing that, Ezekiel responded and said he had never eaten anything abominable. So Jehovah told him he could use cow’s dung to prepare his bread. Jehovah said the people of Jerusalem were going to eat and drink by measure, with fearfulness and in dismay, **“and pine away in their iniquity”** (Eze. 4:17).

Next Jehovah told Ezekiel to use a sharp sword as a barber’s razor on his head and his beard. And during his siege he was to burn a third part, and smite a third part with the sword, and scatter a third part to the wind. He was also to take a few in number, bind them in his skirts, and then burn them. Jehovah said that was Jerusalem. Jehovah said he had set her in the midst of the nations, but she had rebelled against his ordinances in doing wickedness more than the nations. He said that because of all her abominations he was against her, and he would have no pity. A third part would die with pestilence and be consumed with famine, a third part would fall by the sword, and a third part he would scatter to all the winds. Jehovah said, **“Thus my anger shall be accomplished, and I will cause my wrath toward them to rest, and I shall be comforted. And they shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken in my zeal, when I have accomplished my wrath upon them”** (Eze. 5:13). Jehovah said, **“Moreover I will make thee a desolation and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all who pass by”** (Eze. 5:14). And after describing some other horrors that he would bring upon them, he said, **“I, Jehovah, have spoken it”** (Eze. 5:17).

Then Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him, and told him to prophesy toward the mountains

of Israel. He was to prophesy destruction to their altars and idols, and death to the sons of Israel who worshiped them. But Jehovah said he would leave a remnant: “**And those of you who escape shall remember me among the nations where they shall be carried captive, how I have broken with their lewd heart, which has departed from me, and with their eyes, which play the harlot after their idols. And they shall loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations. And they shall know that I am Jehovah. I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them**” (Eze. 6:9-10). The expression “shall know that I am Jehovah” occurs 69 times in the Bible, 58 of which are in the book of Ezekiel.

Then with many words and in vivid detail Jehovah described how he was going to bring an end to the land of Israel. There would be much tribulation, destruction, and death. They would even cast out their gold and silver because it would not be able to deliver them. He said the land was full of bloody crimes, and the city was full of violence. Therefore he was bringing destruction to it. Jehovah ended by saying, “**I will do to them according to their way, and according to their deserts I will judge them. And they shall know that I am Jehovah**” (Eze. 7:27).

Ezekiel said he saw another vision in the sixth year (probably of the reign of Zedekiah). He said he was sitting in his house with the elders of Judah sitting before him. He said the hand of Jehovah fell upon him, and “**Then I beheld, and, lo, a likeness as the appearance of fire, from the appearance of his loins and downward, fire, and from his loins and upward, as the appearance of brightness, as it were glowing metal**” (Eze. 8:2).

He said the Spirit took him by a lock of his head, lifted him up (whether in the body or out of the body is not stated), and brought him in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the northern gate (of the temple). He said the image of jealousy was there which provoked to jealousy. Which must refer to some idol. Ezekiel said that Jehovah told him to look toward the north. And when he did he saw the image of jealousy at the entry of the gate. Then Jehovah said to him, “**Son of man, see thou what they do, even the great abominations that the house of Israel commit here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? But thou shall again see yet other great abominations**” (Eze. 8:6).

Then Jehovah showed him pictures of every kind of creeping thing, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, on the walls of an inner chamber in the temple. And seventy men of the elders of Israel stood before the pictures, offering incense in worship. Then Jehovah asked Ezekiel if he had seen what the elders did in the dark. They did not think Jehovah could see them. Ezekiel said that Jehovah told him he would see yet other abominations which they did.

Then Jehovah brought him again to the north gate, and there were women weeping for Tammuz (a false god). Jehovah asked Ezekiel if he saw it, and he told him he would see yet greater abominations than those. Ezekiel said Jehovah then brought him between the porch and the altar. There were twenty-five men facing the east and worshiping the sun. Jehovah said to him, “**Have thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence, and have turned again to provoke me to anger**” (Eze. 8:17). Jehovah said he would deal with them in wrath, and would have no pity. He said he would not hear even if they cried with a loud voice to him.

Then Jehovah called out for those who had charge over the city, with their destroying weapons. Six men came with their weapons. There was also one in the midst of them clothed in linen having a writer’s case by his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar. Then Jehovah commanded the man with the writer’s case to go through the city of Jerusalem, and mark the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that were done in it. And he told the others to go after him and, “**Kill utterly the old man, the young man, and the virgin, and little sons, and women, but come not near any man upon whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary**” (Eze. 9:6).

Ezekiel said that as they were smiting, he fell upon his face, and asked Jehovah if he would destroy all who remained of Israel. Jehovah said to him, “**The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness. For they say, Jehovah has forsaken the land, and Jehovah does not see**” (Eze. 9:9). Jehovah said he would have no pity. Then the man with the writing case told Jehovah that he had done as he commanded him.

Next Ezekiel said, “**Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was over the head of the cherubim there appeared above them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne**” (Eze. 10:1). Ezekiel said he (probably meaning him on the throne) commanded the man clothed in linen to go under the cherub, between the whirling wheels, fill his hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city. The man clothed in linen went in and stood beside a wheel. Then the cherub stretched forth his hand to the fire, and put it in the hands of him who was clothed in linen, who then took it and went out.

Then Ezekiel again described in detail the appearance and movements of the cherubim and the wheels, which is difficult to understand or to visualize. He said the glory of the God of Israel went forth and stood over the cherubim. He said they were the same ones he saw at the river Chebar.

After that he said the Spirit lifted him up and brought him to the east gate of Jehovah’s house. There he saw twenty-five men, including two rulers whom he named. He told Ezekiel they were the men who devised iniquity, and gave wicked counsel in the city, and who said the city was the caldron and they were the flesh. That may mean they thought the city walls were like a metal pot that shielded the flesh from the fire. Nevertheless, Jehovah told Ezekiel to prophesy against them, saying he would bring the sword against them. He said the city would not be their caldron, nor would they be the flesh in the midst of it, because they had not walked in his statutes, but had done according to the ordinances of the surrounding nations.

Ezekiel said that when he prophesied, one of the two rulers died. Then he fell upon his face and cried out, asking Jehovah if he was going to make a full end of the remnant of Israel. Jehovah told him that he was going to bring them back from the nations where he had scattered them. He said they would take away from the land of Israel all the detestable things and abominations of it. He said, “**And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you [Israel] ... that they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinances, and do them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God**” (Eze. 11:19-20). Jehovah said, however, that for those whose heart walked according to their detestable things and abominations he would bring their way upon their own heads.

Then Ezekiel said that the glory of Jehovah went up and stood upon the mountain on the eastern side of the city. And the Spirit lifted him up and brought him in the vision into Chaldea (a land at the Persian Gulf) to those of the captivity. Then he spoke to them all the things that Jehovah had shown him.

After that the word of Jehovah came to him again, saying, “**Son of man, thou dwell in the midst of the rebellious house, that have eyes to see, and see not, that have ears to hear, and hear not, for they are a rebellious house**” (Eze. 12:2). Ezekiel must have been back in Jerusalem. For Jehovah told him to bring out all of his stuff for moving, in their sight, by day and by night. He was to dig through the wall (probably of his house), and carry it out that way. Therefore, he did, carrying it upon his shoulder by night.

In the morning the word of Jehovah came to him, saying, “**Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to thee, What are thou doing?**” (Eze. 12:9). He was to say it concerned the ruler of Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel among whom they were. He was to tell them he was their sign. As he had done, so it would be done to them. They would go into exile, into captivity the same way. Their ruler would carry his stuff upon his shoulder in the dark, dig through the wall, and go forth. And Jehovah would bring him to Babylon and he would die there. And Jehovah would scatter all his helpers toward every wind, dispersing them among the nations. Jehovah said, “**But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the nations where they come. And they shall know that I am Jehovah**” (Eze. 12:16).

The word of Jehovah again came to Ezekiel. He told him to eat and drink with trembling and fearfulness, and tell the people Jehovah said they would also do that. He said their cities would be laid waste, and the land made a desolation.

The word of Jehovah again came to him, saying, “**Son of man, what is this proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision fails?**” (Eze. 12:22). Jehovah said to tell them he would make that proverb to cease. They also said Ezekiel’s vision was for many days to come, and his prophesies were for times that were far off. Jehovah said to tell them the word that he speaks would be performed, and would no more be deferred. He said he would perform it in their days.

The word of Jehovah came again to Ezekiel. This time he uttered a curse against the false prophets. He said, "**Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!**" (Eze. 13:3). He said they had given men false hope. He said his hand would be against the prophets who saw false visions and divined lies. They would not be in any part of his people. Jehovah said they had seduced his people, saying, Peace, when there was no peace.

Then he used an illustration. He said that when a man builds up a wall, they daubed it with untempered mortar. Jehovah told Ezekiel to tell them it would fall. Jehovah said he would rend it with a stormy wind in his wrath, and break down the wall they had daubed with untempered mortar. He said they would be consumed in the midst of it, and they would know that he was Jehovah. He said, "**And I will say to you, The wall is no more, nor those who daubed it, namely, the prophets of Israel who prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, says lord Jehovah**" (Eze. 13:15-16).

Then he told the son of man (Ezekiel) to set his face against the daughters of his people, who prophesied out of their own heart, and prophesy against them. Jehovah uttered a woe to them. And he said, "**And ye have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to kill the souls who should not die, and to save the souls alive who should not live, by your lying to my people who listen to lies**" (Eze. 13:19). Many modern Americans do that very thing. For a fee many doctors will murder innocent babies by abortion. And for a fee many lawyers will use every legal trick to defeat punishment for heinous criminals. And they use deceit to justify what they do. It grieves my heart and makes me sad.

Jehovah said to them, "**Because with lies ye have grieved the heart of the righteous, whom I have not made sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, and be saved alive. Therefore ye shall no more see false visions, nor divine intuitions. And I will deliver my people out of your hand. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah**" (Eze. 13:22-23).

Then Ezekiel said that certain of the elders of Israel came and sat before him. And the word of Jehovah came to him, saying, "**Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before**

their face. Should I be inquired of at all by them?" (Eze. 14:3). Jehovah said to tell every such man that he would answer him in it according to the multitude of his idols.

He told Ezekiel therefore to tell them Jehovah said for them to return, and turn from their idols and all their abominations. Jehovah said he would answer everyone in Israel who separated from him, and who put his idols into his heart, and then came to the prophet to inquire of him. He said, "**I will set my face against that man, and will make him an astonishment, for a sign and a proverb. And I will cut him off from the midst of my people. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah**" (Eze. 14:8). Jehovah said they would bear their iniquity. He said the iniquity of the false prophet would be even as the iniquity of him who seeks him. He said that seeing their punishment would encourage the house of Israel to no more go astray from him, or defile themselves with all their transgressions, but that they would be his people, and he would be their God.

Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came again to him. Jehovah spoke of stretching out his hand upon a land when it sins against him. He spoke of sending a famine, or evil beasts, or sword, or a pestilence, to cut off man and beast. Each time he mentioned one of those four plagues, he said that even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only their own souls by their righteousness. Then he said, "**How much more when I send my four severe judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the evil beasts, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast!**" (Eze. 14:21). Yet he said there would be a remnant in it that would be carried forth to them, which would bring them comfort when they saw their way and their doings. Perhaps that meant they would come in genuine repentance. For Jehovah said, "**And ye shall know that I have not done all that I have done in it without cause, says lord Jehovah**" (Eze. 14:23).

Again Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him. Jehovah asked him what the vine branch was more than any other kind. Vine branches are small, crooked, and very flexible. Jehovah said it was useless for anything, even as a peg. He said it was only used for fuel. And after it was burned, it was even more useless. Jehovah then said as with the vine tree, which he had given to the fire for fuel, so he was giving the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He said the

fire would devour them because they had trespassed.

Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him again. Jehovah said to him, “**Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, Thus says lord Jehovah to Jerusalem ...”** (Eze. 16:2). Then Jehovah spoke to the city as if it were a woman. He said, “**Thy birth and thy nativity is from the land of the Canaanite. The Amorite was thy father, and thy mother was a Hittite**” (Eze. 16:3). The city of Jerusalem was created by Gentiles. Jehovah told her she was an abandoned baby at her birth, cast out in the open field and unwashed. He told her that nobody had compassion upon her, for she was abhorred in the day she was born. Apparently the city was quickly rejected by its creators, although it continued to exist in a primitive condition.

Jehovah told her that he brought life to her, and caused her to multiply and become great. He told her that she grew mature, yet she was naked and bare. So he entered into a covenant with her, and she became his. Jehovah chose that city to put his name there. He told her that he washed her, anointed her with oil, and clothed her with fine apparel. And he told her that he decked her with ornaments and jewelry. He said to her that she was very beautiful, and prospered to royalty (it became the capital of Israel). He told her that she became renowned among the nations for her beauty, for it was perfect, through Jehovah’s majesty which he had put upon her.

Then he said, “**But thou trusted in thy beauty, and played the harlot because of thy renown, and poured out thy whoredoms on everyone who passed by; his it was**” (Eze. 16:15). He told her of the many ways she had corrupted herself and the gifts he had given her. And he said, “**Moreover thou have taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou have borne to me, and thou have sacrificed these to them [her idols] to be devoured. Were thy whoredoms a small matter, that thou have slain my children, and delivered them up, in causing them to pass through the fire to them?”** (Eze. 16:20-21).

Jehovah continued to rebuke her for all her abominations and her whoredoms. He told her she opened her feet to everyone who passed by, and multiplied her whoredom. He told her she had committed fornication with the Egyptians, and played the harlot with the Assyrians, because she was insatiable. He said, “**They give gifts to all harlots, but thou give thy gifts to all thy lovers, and bribe**

them, that they may come to thee on every side for thy whoredoms” (Eze. 16:33). All that may mean the citizens of Jerusalem sought for and joined with all the abominable practices of the pagan nations. That is happening more and more in modern America.

Jehovah told Jerusalem that because of all her filthiness and abominations he was going to judge her as women who break wedlock and shed blood are judged. He said all her lovers would strip her naked, stone her with stones, thrust her through with their swords, and burn all her houses with fire. Jehovah told her he would cause her to cease from playing the harlot. And he said, “**So I will cause my wrath toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will no more be angry**” (Eze. 16:42).

Then Jehovah said, “**Behold, everyone who uses proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter. Thou are the daughter of thy mother, who loathes her husband and her sons. And thou are the sister of thy sisters, who loathed their husbands and their sons. Your mother was a Hittite, and your father an Amorite. And thine elder sister is Samaria, who dwells at thy left hand, she and her daughters. And thy younger sister, who dwells at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters**” (Eze. 16:44-46).

Jehovah told her she was more corrupt than her sisters. He even said Sodom had not done as she had done, and Samaria had not committed half of her sins. He said she had multiplied her abominations more than they. Jehovah told her she had borne her lewdness and her abominations. And he said, “**I will also deal with thee as thou have done, who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant**” (Eze. 16:60).

However, he also said, “**Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish to thee an everlasting covenant**” (Eze. 16:59). That must mean the New Covenant of Christ. He told her she would then remember his ways and would be ashamed. And he said he would establish his covenant with her, and she would know that he was Jehovah.

Again Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him. Jehovah said, “**Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel**” (Eze. 17:2). Then he told about a great eagle that came to Lebanon and took the top of the cedar. The eagle cropped off the topmost of the young twigs

and set it in a city of merchants. He also took of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful soil beside many waters. Jehovah said it grew and became a spreading vine.

Then another great eagle came, and the vine bent its roots toward him that he might water it. Jehovah then said to Ezekiel, “**Say thou, Thus says lord Jehovah: Shall it flourish? Shall he not pull up the roots of it, and cut off the fruit of it, that it may wither? It shall wither in all its fresh springing leaves, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots of it?**” (Eze. 17:9).

Then Jehovah told Ezekiel to explain the parable to the rebellious house of Israel. The first eagle was the king of Babylon, who took the king of Jerusalem and brought him under an oath. But he rebelled, and sent ambassadors into Egypt (the second eagle) for military support. Jehovah said, “**As I live, says lord Jehovah, surely in the place where the king dwells who made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he broke, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die**” (Eze. 17:16). Jehovah rebuked the king for breaking the covenant he made by oath (more is said about that later). And he told how he would be brought to Babylon, and his army would be destroyed. Then, using the same tree parable, Jehovah told how he brings low and makes high.

Ezekiel said that the word of Jehovah came to him again. Jehovah said, “**What do ye mean, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the son's teeth are set on edge? As I live, says lord Jehovah, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine. The soul that sins, it shall die**” (Eze. 18:2-4).

Jehovah described various characteristics of a righteous man, and he said such a man would surely live. Jehovah then described various characteristics of a wicked man, and said if the righteous man begot such a man, then the wicked man would surely die. Jehovah said his blood would be upon him. And he said if that wicked man begot a son who did none of his evil deeds, but lived righteously, then he would not die with his father; he would surely live. Jehovah said to them, “**Yet ye say, Why does not the son bear the iniquity of the father?**” (Eze. 18:19). Jehovah said the soul that sins, it shall die. The people must have misinter-

preted Jehovah’s statement in the ten commandments that he would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. Yes, children suffer in this life when fathers sin, but that does not make them guilty. Their earthly lives suffer when their father sins, but their eternal souls are not harmed.

Jehovah also said that if a wicked man turned from all his sin, and kept all his statutes, he would surely live and not die. Jehovah said, “**Have I any pleasure in the death of a wicked man? says lord Jehovah, and not rather that he should return from his way, and live?**” (Eze. 18:23). Jehovah said to the house of Israel that if a righteous man turned from his righteousness and committed iniquity, then he would die. Also if a wicked man turned from his wickedness and did right, he would save his soul alive. Jehovah was not saying such a wicked man should escape all earthly punishment. He was speaking of a man’s spiritual salvation.

Then he said, “**Yet the house of Israel says, The way of the Lord is not equitable. O house of Israel, are not my ways equitable? Are not your ways inequitable?**” (Eze. 18:29). Jehovah said therefore he would judge them, each one according to his ways. And he urged them to make a new heart and a new spirit. He said, “**For why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him who dies, says lord Jehovah, therefore turn yourselves back, and live**” (Eze. 18:31-32).

Jehovah next told Ezekiel to take up a lamentation for the rulers of Israel. Then he told a parable about a lioness that brought up two young lions, one after the other, to catch prey. Both were eventually captured and carried away, the first to Egypt and the second to Babylon. The lioness was probably Jerusalem or perhaps Judah. The two young lions were probably the kings Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim. After that he told a parable about a vine that grew large and fruitful. But it was violently plucked up and cast down. It was replanted in the dry wilderness, and fire from its twigs devoured its fruit. That also probably refers to Jerusalem and/or Judah. Then Jehovah said, “**This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation**” (Eze. 19:14).

In the seventh year (probably of the reign of Zedekiah) Ezekiel said certain of the elders of Judah came and sat before him to inquire of Jehovah. He said the word of Jehovah told him, “**Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel, and say to them, Thus says lord Jehovah: Is it to inquire of me**

that ye have come? As I live, says lord Jehovah, I will not be inquired of by you” (Eze. 20:3).

Then Jehovah said to Ezekiel, “**Will thou judge them, son of man. Will thou judge them? Cause them to know the abominations of their fathers ...**” (Eze. 20:4). He told Ezekiel to say he made himself known to them in the land of Egypt, and swore to bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey. He told them to cast their idols away, but they would not listen. He said he would have poured out his wrath upon them in the land of Egypt, but he spared them for his name’s sake, that it not be profaned in the sight of the nations. He said he gave them his laws and his sabbaths, but they rebelled against him in the wilderness. And again he said he spared them for his name’s sake. He said he warned their sons, but they also rebelled against him. Yet he spared them for his name’s sake, that it not be profaned in the sight of the nations.

Then he said, “**Moreover also I gave them statutes that were not good, and ordinances in which they will not live**” (Eze. 20:25). They had been so rebellious that Jehovah gave them many laws about sacrifices and other rituals that were a burden to them, so much so that they never kept them all. Peter admitted that when the apostles and elders in Jerusalem were debating whether Gentile Christians should keep the law of Moses. He said to those who were assembled about the question, “**Now therefore why do ye challenge God, to place a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?**” (Acts 15:10).

Jehovah said when he brought them into the land that he swore to give them, their fathers blasphemed him, trespassed against him, and offered evil sacrifices. Then he said to Ezekiel, “**Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says lord Jehovah: Do ye pollute yourselves according to the manner of your fathers, and play ye the harlot according to their abominations? And when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, do ye pollute yourselves with all your idols to this day? And shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, says lord Jehovah, I will not be inquired of by you. And that which comes into your mind shall not be at all, in that ye say, We will be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone**” (Eze. 20:30-32).

Then he said he would be king over them with a mighty hand and with wrath poured out. He said he would gather them out of the countries in which

they were scattered. And he said he would bring them into the wilderness of the peoples, but what that means is controversial. Perhaps he meant the Gentile world. He said he would enter into judgment with them as he did with their fathers in the wilderness of Egypt. He said he would purge out from them the rebels, and they would not enter into the land of Israel.

He said, “**As for you, O house of Israel, thus says lord Jehovah: Go ye. Serve each one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken to me. But ye shall no more profane my holy name with your gifts, and with your idols**” (Eze. 20:39). Jehovah said that all the house of Israel would serve him on his holy mountain, and they would know that he is Jehovah. He said he would gather them out of the countries in which they had been scattered. He said, “**And there ye shall remember your ways, and all your doings, by which ye have polluted yourselves. And ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed**” (Eze. 20:43).

Again Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him. Jehovah told him to set his face toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the field there. Jehovah said he was going to kindle a fire and devour every green tree in it, and all flesh would see that he, Jehovah, had kindled it. Then Ezekiel said, “**Ah lord Jehovah! They say of me, Is he not a speaker of parables?**” (Eze. 20:49). Jehovah told him to set his face toward Jerusalem, and prophesy against the land of Israel. He was to say Jehovah was against it. Jehovah was going to draw forth his sword, and cut off from it the righteous and the wicked. Then Jehovah said to him, “**Sigh therefore, thou son of man. With the breaking of thy loins and with bitterness thou shall sigh before their eyes**” (Eze. 21:6). And he said when they asked him why he sighed, he was to say it was because of the news. For every heart would melt, all hands would be feeble, every spirit would faint, and all knees would be weak as water. Jehovah said, “**Behold, it comes, and it shall be done, says lord Jehovah**” (Eze. 21:7).

Again Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him. He said, “**Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says Jehovah: Say, A sword, a sword. It is sharpened, and also furbished. It is sharpened that it may make a slaughter**” (Eze. 21:9-10). Jehovah told him to cry and wail, for it was upon his people.

Again the word of Jehovah came to Ezekiel. He told how the king of Babylon (of the Chaldeans) consulted divination by his gods about assaulting Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, and Judah in Jerusalem. He said they (probably the Jews) would think it was a false divination, but they had sworn a oath to them. Zedekiah king of Judah had sworn by Jehovah to submit to the Chaldeans, but he violated that oath. Hence, Jehovah called him a "**deadly wounded wicked man, the ruler of Israel, whose day has come**" (Eze. 21:25). Jehovah said, "**I will overturn, overturn, overturn it. This also shall be no more, until he comes whose right it is. And I will give it**" (Eze. 21:27). The king of Babylon later conquered Jerusalem and carried Zedekiah away captive. God punishes men who swear by his name and then break the oath, for it brings reproach upon his name.

Then Jehovah told Ezekiel to prophesy against the sons of Ammon. He said a sword polished for slaughter was drawn against them also. Jehovah said to the nation of Ammon, "**And I will pour out my indignation upon thee. I will blow upon thee with the fire of my wrath, and I will deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, skilful to destroy**" (Eze. 21:31). He said they would no more be remembered.

Again Ezekiel said that the word of Jehovah came to him. He said, "**And thou, son of man, will thou judge, will thou judge the bloody city? Then cause her to know all her abominations**" (Eze. 22:2). And he mentioned many of her sins, such as shedding blood, making light of father and mother, treating sojourners by oppression, wronging the fatherless and widows, committing adultery, taking bribes, and so forth. Jehovah said they had forgotten him. He rebuked them, and said, "**And I will scatter thee among the nations, and disperse thee through the countries, and I will consume thy filthiness out of thee. And thou shall be profaned in thyself, in the sight of the nations. And thou shall know that I am Jehovah**" (Eze. 22:15-16).

Again Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him. He told him that the house of Israel had become dross to him. Therefore in his anger and in his wrath he was going to melt them with fire as silver is melted in a furnace. And he said they would know that Jehovah had poured out his wrath upon them.

Again Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him. Jehovah told him to speak to the land. And he described how evil it was. He said her prophets

were like roaring lions, her priests did violence to his law, her rulers were like ravening wolves, the people used oppression and exercised robbery. He said therefore he consumed them with the fire of his wrath, and brought their own way upon their heads.

Again Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him. Jehovah told him a parable of two women, the daughters of one mother. He said they played the harlot in their youth in Egypt. Their names were Oholah the elder and Oholibah her sister. Jehovah said they became his, and bore sons and daughters. He said Samaria was Oholah and Jerusalem Oholibah. He said Oholah played the harlot when she was his, and she doted on her lovers the Assyrians. Therefore he delivered her into the hand of the Assyrians, and they made her naked, took her sons and daughters, and killed her with a sword.

Jehovah said that her sister Oholibah saw it, yet she was more corrupt in her whoredoms than her sister. She also doted upon the Assyrians, and was defiled in the bed of love with the Babylonians. Jehovah said, "**Then my soul was alienated from her, just as my soul was alienated from her sister**" (Eze. 23:18). Therefore Jehovah said he would raise up her lovers against her, the Babylonians, Chaldeans, and all the Assyrians with them. He said they would deal with her in fury, and he described her destruction. Among other things he said she would be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of her sister Samaria, because she had forgotten him and cast him behind her back.

Then Jehovah said to Ezekiel, "**Son of man, will thou judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominations**" (Eze. 23:36). Jehovah said they had committed adultery, and blood was on their hands. He said they had slain their sons to their idols, and came the same day into his sanctuary to profane it. He said Oholah and Oholibah were adulterous lewd women. He said, "**And righteous men, they shall judge them with the judgment of women who shed blood, because they are adulteresses, and blood is on their hands**" (Eze. 23:45). He said he would bring a company against them, who would kill their sons and their daughters, and burn their houses with fire. He said he would recompense their lewdness, and cause it to cease out of the land.

Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him in the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year (of Zedekiah's reign). Jehovah said, "**Son of man,**

write thee the name of the day, even of this self-same day; the king of Babylon drew close to Jerusalem this selfsame day” (Eze. 24:2). He told him to utter a parable to the rebellious house. Then he told about a boiling caldron with meat and bones in it. Jehovah said he was going to do that to the bloody city. Moreover, he was going to burn the empty caldron to consume the scum of it, which represented the filthiness of her lewdness. Jehovah said, “**According to thy ways, and according to thy doings, they shall judge thee, says lord Jehovah**” (Eze. 24:14).

Ezekiel again said the word of Jehovah came to him. Jehovah told him he was going to take the desire of his eyes away from him, but he was not to show any mourning for the dead. Therefore, Ezekiel said that after speaking to the people in the morning, at evening his wife died. And he did in the morning as he was commanded. When the people asked him why, he said the word of Jehovah came to him, and told him to speak to the house of Israel. Jehovah said he was going to profane his sanctuary, the pride of their power and the desire of their eyes, their sons and daughters would die by the sword, and they would do as Ezekiel had done. They would not mourn nor weep, but would pine away in their iniquities. He said Ezekiel would be a sign to them. Then Jehovah told Ezekiel that when it happens, and he who escapes reports it to him, that he would no more be mute (see Eze. 3:26). He said, “**So thou shall be a sign to them, and they shall know that I am Jehovah**” (Eze. 24:27).

Again Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him. Jehovah told him to set his face toward the sons of Ammon, and prophesy against them. Jehovah rebuked them for rejoicing when his sanctuary was profaned, and the land of Israel was made desolate, and the house of Judah went into captivity. Among other things he said, “**Because thou have clapped thy hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced with all the spite of thy soul against the land of Israel, therefore, behold, I have stretched out my hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the nations. And I will cut thee off from the peoples, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries. I will destroy thee, and thou shall know that I am Jehovah**” (Eze. 25:6-7). Jehovah also condemned Moab, Edom, and the Philistines for being vindictive toward the house of Judah. He said he was going to destroy them.

Ezekiel said that in the eleventh year the word of Jehovah came to him about Tyre. That was probably the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, the year that Jerusalem fell. Jehovah said, “**Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken, the gate of the peoples. She has turned around to me. I shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste, therefore thus says lord Jehovah: Behold, I am against thee, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causes its waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down her towers. I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her a bare rock. She shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken it, says lord Jehovah**” (Eze. 26:2-5).

The city of Tyre was later destroyed by Nebuchadrezzar, and made a bare rock by Alexander of Macedonia. It happened this way. A couple of centuries after its destruction, Alexander used the rubble of the old city to make a causeway into the sea to attack the nearby island where the survivors had built a city. Hence, the land was eventually scraped clean of the old city, and its rubble cast into the sea. Sometimes it takes centuries before Jehovah’s prophesies are fulfilled, but they always are.

Jehovah went on to describe in some detail about Nebuchadrezzar’s conquest of Tyre: the forts, the mound, the battering engines, and other weapons of war he used. He also told how the rulers of the sea would take up a lamentation over her. Tyre was a famous ancient mercantile seaport, like Hong Kong of modern times. Jehovah said he was going to make her a horror, and she would never be found again.

Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came again to him. He told him to take up a lamentation over Tyre, and speak to her the word of Jehovah. Jehovah said, “**Thou, O Tyre, have said, I am perfect in beauty**” (Eze. 27:3). And he went on to describe in much detail the material glory of the city and her merchandise. After which he described in detail the bitter cries and mourning of the mariners who had transported her merchandise.

Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came again to him. Jehovah told him to say “**Thus says lord Jehovah**” to the ruler of Tyre, who claimed he was a god and sat in the seat of God. Jehovah told him that because of his great pride in his wisdom and riches, he was going to bring the terrible of the nations with their drawn swords against him, and he

was going to die. And he asked him if he would still say he was God to him who slays him. Jehovah said he was a man and not God.

Again Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him, and he said, “**Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says lord Jehovah: Thou seal up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was thy covering ...**” (Eze. 28:12-13). And he went on to describe some of his glory. Jehovah said, “**Thou were the anointed cherub who covers. And I set thee, so that thou were upon the holy mountain of God. Thou have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou were perfect in thy ways from the day that thou were created, till unrighteousness was found in thee**” (Eze. 28:14-15).

Some men claim those words describe Satan. And he may very well have been like that. However, God said this was a lamentation over the king of Tyre. Remember, Jehovah spoke several parables to Ezekiel about different things. It is more likely the above description is also a parable used to illustrate the great material glory of Tyre. Jehovah said of him that his heart was lifted up, and he had corrupted his wisdom. Therefore, he cast him to the ground, turned him to ashes, and made him a horror. Jehovah said he would nevermore have any being. Which is certainly not true of Satan (see Rev. 20:10).

Again Ezekiel said that the word of Jehovah came to him. Jehovah told him to set his face toward Sidon and prophesy against it. Jehovah told Sidon he was against her. He said he was going to send pestilence into her, and blood in her streets with the sword upon her on every side. He said, “**And there shall no more be a pricking brier to the house of Israel, nor a hurting thorn of any who are round about them, who did spite to them. And they shall know that I am lord Jehovah**” (Eze. 28:24). Then he said that when he gathered the house of Israel from the peoples where they were scattered, then they would dwell securely in their own land.

Next Ezekiel said, “**In the tenth year [probably of their captivity], in the tenth month, in the twelfth day of the month, the word of Jehovah came to me, saying ...**” (Eze. 29:1). Jehovah told him to set his face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and all Egypt. Jehovah compared Pharaoh to a great monster in the midst of his rivers, who claimed the river was his own. Jeho-

vah said he would drag him out with hooks in his jaws, and cast him into the wilderness. Jehovah also said he was going to make the land of Egypt a desolation and a waste. He said it would be uninhabited forty years. After that he would bring them back from their captivity, but they would then be the basest of kingdoms. He said they would never again rule over other kingdoms, and thus it has been.

Then Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him in the twenty-seventh year, in the first (month), in the first (day) of the month. Jehovah said, “**Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyre. Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was worn, yet he had no wages, nor his army, from Tyre, for the service that he had served against it**” (Eze. 29:18). In other words, Nebuchadrezzar served Jehovah against Tyre, and his army worked very hard doing it. Yet they found little spoil for their effort. Therefore, Jehovah was going to give him the spoil of the land of Egypt to be the wages for his army. Nebuchadrezzar would conquer Egypt.

Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came again to him. Jehovah told him to prophesy and say, “**Thus says lord Jehovah: Wail ye, Alas for the day!**” (Eze. 30:2). He said a sword was coming upon Egypt, and anguish would be in Ethiopia. He said he was going to make the multitude of Egypt cease by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and his people with him, which he called the terrible of the nations. He described the destruction of the land, and said among other things he was going to fill the land with the slain, make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of evil men. He said he would make the land desolate by the hand of strangers, and they would go into captivity. He said, “**Thus I will execute judgments upon Egypt, and they shall know that I am Jehovah**” (Eze. 30:19).

Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came again to him in the eleventh year, the first month, seventh day. Jehovah told him he was going to break the arms of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon. He said he was going to scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and they would know that he is Jehovah.

In the first day of the third month of the same year the word of Jehovah came again to Ezekiel. He said, “**Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude, Whom are thou like in thy greatness?**” (Eze. 31:2). Then he told a parable in which he compared the Assyrian to a mighty cedar

in Lebanon. After describing the beauty of its greatness, he said, "**I made it beautiful by the multitude of its branches, so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied it**" (Eze. 31:9). Then Jehovah said that because his heart was lifted up, the terrible of the nations had cut him off, and his branches were fallen. Jehovah said that all who dwelt in his shadow in the midst of the nations went down into Sheol with him to those who are slain by the sword. Then Jehovah asked to whom he was thus like in glory and greatness among the trees of Eden. He said he would be brought down with them to the nether parts of the earth. He ended, "**This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, says lord Jehovah**" (Eze. 31:18).

In the first day of the last month of the twelfth year the word of Jehovah came again to Ezekiel. Jehovah told him to take up a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt. Jehovah again compared Pharaoh to a monster in the seas. He said he was going to drag him out with a net, and leave him on the land for the vultures and the beasts. Jehovah also said he was going to set darkness upon his land. Jehovah said he was going to vex the hearts of many peoples, and they would tremble for their lives in the day of his fall. That probably means they were horribly astonished at the great destruction of Egypt which had seemed unconquerable. Jehovah said he was bringing the sword of the king of Babylon upon him, and he was going to make the land of Egypt desolate and waste.

Then on the fifteenth day Jehovah said to Ezekiel, "**Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, to the nether parts of the earth, with those who go down into the pit**" (Eze. 32:18). He said they would be slain by the sword. Then Jehovah spoke of other lands, and six times he said they had fallen because of the terror they had caused. For example, he said, "**In the terror which they caused by their might they are put to shame. And they lie uncircumcised with those who are slain by the sword, and bear their shame with those who go down to the pit**" (Eze. 32:30). Then, in his seventh use of the word terror in this discourse he mentioned the terror of Pharaoh, who would also be slain with all his army.

After that Jehovah told Ezekiel to speak to the sons of his people and tell them about a watchman. Jehovah said that when he brings a sword upon a land, and they appoint a watchman to blow the warning trumpet, if any man takes no warning, his

blood would be on his own head. However, if the watchman does not blow the trumpet, then Jehovah will require any bloodshed at the watchman's hand. Then Jehovah said, "**So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman to the house of Israel. Therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me**" (Eze. 33:7). And he told him that if he did not warn the wicked man, the wicked man would die in his iniquity, but he would require his blood at Ezekiel's hand. However, if he warned him, then Ezekiel would be free of any responsibility.

Then Jehovah said, "**And thou, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus ye speak, saying, Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them. How then can we live?**" (Eze. 33:10). Jehovah told Ezekiel to say to the people that he had no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, but that he would turn from his way and live. And he said again that a righteous man would not be spared if he turned from his righteousness; none of his righteous deeds would be remembered. However, a wicked man would be spared if he turned from his wickedness, and did what was righteous; none of his sins would be remembered. Remember, however, that does not mean being exempt from earthly punishment, as numerous Bible examples testify. And Jehovah again said, "**Yet the sons of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equitable. But as for them, their way is not equitable**" (Eze. 33:17).

Then Ezekiel said that in the twelfth year of their captivity, in the fifth day of the tenth month, a man who had escaped from Jerusalem came and reported to him that the city had been smitten. Ezekiel also said that Jehovah had opened his mouth and he was no more mute. Remember, when his wife had died Jehovah said he would be a sign to the house of Israel. Jehovah said his mouth would be opened to the man who escaped, and he would no more be mute. Therefore it happened.

Again the word of Jehovah came to him. Those who inhabited the waste places of the land of Israel had been saying that Abraham was one and he inherited the land. So they thought that because they were many the land would be given to them for inheritance. But Jehovah said to Ezekiel, "**Therefore say to them, Thus says lord Jehovah: Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes to your idols, and shed blood. And shall ye possess the land? Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every man his neighbor's**

wife. And shall ye possess the land?" (Eze. 33:25-26).

Jehovah said those who were in the waste places would fall by the sword, he who was in the open field Jehovah would give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who were in the strongholds and caves would die of the pestilence. Jehovah said they would know that he was Jehovah when he made the land desolate because of all their abominations.

Then Jehovah told Ezekiel that the people talked about him, and come to hear him, but they do not hearken to what he says. Jehovah said, "**And, lo, thou are to them as a very lovely song of he who has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument. For they hear thy words, but they do not do them**" (Eze. 33:32). Jehovah said when it comes to pass (the great destruction), then they would know that a prophet had been among them.

Next Jehovah told Ezekiel to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. He said, "**Thus says lord Jehovah: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the sheep?" (Eze. 34:2).** Jehovah told how they had preyed upon the sheep, and had not helped them. As a result the sheep were scattered and became food for the beasts because there was no shepherd. Therefore Jehovah said he was against the shepherds, and would deliver his sheep from their mouth. Jehovah said he himself would search for them, and would deliver them from where they had been scattered. He said he would bring them into their own land, and would feed them with good pasture. He said, "**I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, says lord Jehovah**" (Eze. 34:15). He said he would care for the sick, but would destroy the fat and the strong. He said he would feed them in justice.

He said he would judge between sheep and sheep, the rams and the he-goats. He rebuked them (probably the rulers) not only for partaking of the good pasture and the clear waters, but for treading down the residue and fouling the waters. He also said they had pushed away all the sick till they were scattered abroad. Jehovah said he would save his sheep, and they would no more be a prey. He said, "**And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David. He shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and my servant David ruler among them. I, Jehovah, have spoken it**" (Eze. 34:23-24). He said he would make

a covenant of peace with them, and they would dwell secure. And he said there would be showers of blessing. He said they would know that Jehovah their God was with them, and that they, the house of Israel, were his people. Then he said, "**And ye my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, says lord Jehovah**" (Eze. 34:31). Those things obviously refer to the Christ and his church, which is the spiritual house of Israel. For Jesus referred to himself as the good shepherd (see John 10:14).

Next Jehovah told Ezekiel to set his face against mount Seir (of Edom), and prophesy against it. He was to tell them that Jehovah was against it, and would make it a desolation and an astonishment. Jehovah said that because "**thou have had a perpetual enmity, and have given over the sons of Israel to the power of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time of the iniquity of the end**" (Eze. 35:5), therefore he was going to fill its mountains with its slain, and make it a perpetual desolation. Jehovah said he had heard all the revilings which (mount Seir) had spoken against the mountains of Israel, and they had magnified themselves against Jehovah, and had multiplied their words against him. Jehovah said he was going to make the place desolate.

Then Jehovah told Ezekiel to prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, "**Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of Jehovah**" (Eze. 36:1). Because the enemy had made them desolate and a prey and a derision to the residue of the nations around them, Jehovah said, "**Surely in the fire of my jealousy I have spoken against the residue of the nations, and against all Edom, who have appointed my land to themselves for a possession with the joy of all their heart, with spite of soul, to cast it out for a prey**" (Eze. 36:5). Jehovah said those nations would bear their shame, and the mountains of Israel would again be possessed by his people Israel, and both man and beast would increase and be fruitful.

Ezekiel again said the word of Jehovah came to him. Jehovah told him the house of Israel had defiled their land by their way and their doings when they dwelt in it. He said they were unclean before him. Therefore, he poured out his wrath upon them because they defiled the land with bloodshed and with idols. He scattered them among the nations, and there they profaned his holy name. Nevertheless, he had regard for them. He told Ezekiel, "**Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus**

says lord Jehovah: I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for my holy name, which ye have profaned among the nations where ye went” (Eze. 36:22).

Jehovah said he was going to sanctify his great name, which they had profaned among the nations. He was going to gather them, and bring them back to their own land. He said he would sprinkle them clean of their filthiness, and give them a new heart and a new spirit within them. He said they would be his people and he would be their God. He said they would loathe themselves for their iniquities and their abominations. And he said, “**I do *this* not for your sake, says lord Jehovah; be it known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel**” (Eze. 36:32). Jehovah said the cities would be inhabited and the waste places built. Men would say the desolate land had become like the garden of Eden. Then the nations around them would know that he was Jehovah.

Next Ezekiel said the hand of Jehovah was upon him, and brought him in the Spirit of Jehovah, and set him down in the midst of a valley full of very dry bones. Jehovah asked him if they could live. Ezekiel answered and said, “**O lord Jehovah, thou know**” (Eze. 37:3). Then the book says, “**Again he said to me, Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of Jehovah. Thus says lord Jehovah to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah. So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a noise, and, behold, an earthquake, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I beheld, and, lo, there were sinews upon them, and flesh came up, and skin covered them above, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, Prophesy to the wind. Prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus says lord Jehovah: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceedingly great army**” (Eze. 37:4-10).

Then he told Ezekiel those bones were the whole house of Israel, who said their bones were dried up and their hope was lost. Jehovah told him to prophesy to them. He was to say that Jehovah was going

to open their graves, and cause them to come out of them (in a figurative sense). And he was going to bring them into the land of Israel. He said he would put his spirit in them and they would live. And they would know that Jehovah had spoken it and performed it.

Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came again to him, saying, “**And thou, son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the sons of Israel his companions. Then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions**” (Eze. 37:16). Then he was to join them together to make one stick. And when the people asked him what it meant, he was to say Jehovah was going to make them one nation again, and one king would be king to them. And they would not defile themselves any more with idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions. Jehovah said they would be his people and he would be their God. His servant David would be king over them, and they would walk in his ordinances. He said those things would be forever, so they must symbolize the spiritual Israel, Christ’s church. Especially since he said David would rule over them forever. Christ was called the son of David. Hence he could be called the new David who would rule over them forever.

Again Ezekiel said the word of Jehovah came to him. And Jehovah said, “**Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the ruler of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him**” (Eze. 38:2). Jehovah said he was against Gog, and he was going to bring him forth with all his great army, and many peoples with him. He said that in the latter years Gog would come into the land of Israel that had recovered from its destruction. And he and all his hordes would come like a storm, like a cloud to cover the land.

Lord Jehovah said of Gog, “**It shall come to pass in that day, that things shall come into thy mind, and thou shall devise an evil plan**” (Eze. 38:10). Jehovah said Gog was going to plunder the land of unwalled villages, the waste places that were now inhabited, and the people who were gathered out of the nations. Jehovah said that Gog, his mighty army, and the many peoples with him were going to come against his people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. Jehovah said he was going to bring him against his land, that the nations would know him, and he would be sanctified in him.

Then with many words Jehovah described how he was going to destroy Gog and the many peoples with him. He said, “**And the nations shall know that I am Jehovah, the Holy One in Israel**” (Eze. 39:7). Jehovah said those who dwell in the cities of Israel would go forth and plunder those who plundered them. And they would make fires of the weapons. He said it would take seven years before they were all burned. And it would take seven months to bury all the dead bodies. Then Jehovah told Ezekiel to speak to the birds and beasts for them to assemble to his sacrifice. He said they would eat the flesh of the mighty and drink the blood of rulers. He said, “**And ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, says lord Jehovah**” (Eze. 39:20).

Jehovah said the house of Israel would know that he was Jehovah. And the nations would know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity. Then he said he would now bring back the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and they would dwell securely in their own land. He said, “**For I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, says lord Jehovah**” (Eze. 39:29).

The last twenty percent of this book is one of the most mysterious and controversial in the Bible. It contains a detailed description of a temple complex which a heavenly agent showed him in a vision. It also tells about sacrifices that were to be made there, the priests who were to be involved, and a description of the land allotment assigned to the Israelites. The appearance and dimensions of that temple, the geographic nature of its location, and the allotment of the land, are very different from what had been before. And what it describes has never come to pass. There are, of course, many theories about it. The only one that makes sense to me says those things were to be done by the exiles who returned from the dispersion after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. However, what they eventually built was much less grand. Indeed, the prophet Haggai (see that book) was sent by Jehovah to rebuke them for neglecting to rebuild any temple for him at all, much less the glorious one Ezekiel described.

Ezekiel said that in the twenty-fifth year of their captivity, in the fourteenth year after the city was smitten, the hand of Jehovah was upon him and brought him there. He said, “**He brought me in the visions of God into the land of Israel, and set me**

down upon a very high mountain, upon which was as it were the frame of a city on the south” (Eze. 40:2). Then Ezekiel said he saw a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measure reed, standing in the gate. And the man said to him, “**Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thy heart upon all that I shall show thee. For thou are brought here to the intent that I may show them to thee. Declare all that thou see to the house of Israel**” (Eze. 40:4).

The heavenly agent then began to take Ezekiel around the temple complex of the vision, measuring many of the parts as he went. His description included such parts as the main wall and its gates; the outer court and its gates; the inner court and its gates, chambers, side rooms, and furnishing; the temple and its rooms, walls, side chambers, decorations, and furnishings; and the altar for burnt offerings.

The description begins as follows: “**And, behold, a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man’s hand a measuring reed six cubits long, of a cubit and a handbreadth each. So he measured the thickness of the building, one reed, and the height, one reed.**

“**Then he came to the gate which looks toward the east, and went up the steps of it. And he measured the threshold of the gate, one reed broad, and the other threshold, one reed broad. And every little chamber was one reed long, and one reed broad, and the space between the little chambers was five cubits. And the threshold of the gate by the porch of the gate toward the house was one reed. He also measured the porch of the gate toward the house, one reed.**

“**Then he measured the porch of the gate, eight cubits, and the posts thereof, two cubits. And the porch of the gate was toward the house. And the little chambers of the gate eastward were three on this side, and three on that side; those three were of one measure. And the posts had one measure on this side and on that side. And he measured the breadth of the opening of the gate, ten cubits, and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits, and a border before the little chambers, one cubit on this side, and a border, one cubit on that side, and the little chambers, six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side**” (Eze. 40:5-12).

It goes on like that for several pages in a modern Bible. Some drawings and models of what he

described have been created, and can be seen on the internet. You can also find maps there showing the distribution of the land as Ezekiel described it.

After that Ezekiel said he saw the glory of Jehovah come into the house. Jehovah spoke to him out of the house, and told him that would be the place of his throne. He said the house of Israel would no more defile his holy name by their whoredom, and by the dead bodies of their kings. He told them to put away those things far from him, and he would dwell in the midst of them forever. And he said, **“Thou, son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities, and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the form of the house, and the fashion of it, and the exits of it, and the entrances of it, and all the forms of it, and all the ordinances of it, and all the forms of it, and all the laws of it. And write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form of it, and all the ordinances of it, and do them”** (Eze. 43:10-11).

Then he described the altar and gave its measurements. And he told him the ordinances of it when it was to be dedicated. After that Jehovah described the ordinances of the house and all the laws of it. And he rebuked the house of Israel for profaning his sanctuary. He said only the priests the Levites could enter into it. Then he gave laws about the priests that were also given in the law of Moses. After which he described the land that was to be allotted to them at the temple area.

Next he spoke of their rulers. He said, **“Thus says lord Jehovah: Let it suffice you, O rulers of**

Israel. Remove violence and spoil, and execute justice and righteousness. Take away your exactions from my people, says lord Jehovah” (Eze. 45:9). He told them to have just measures. And he gave details about the oblations they were to offer, and how they were to be done. Then he took him to the places where the priests boiled the meat offerings and baked the meal offerings.

After that he brought him to the outer gate that faced east. Ezekiel said he saw waters running out on the right side. He said a man was there who measured the waters flowing east for a thousand cubits, and he made Ezekiel pass through the waters. Ezekiel said they were ankle deep. After another thousand cubits it was to his knees, a thousand more and it was to his loins, another thousand and it was a river too deep to pass through. He said the banks were lined with many trees. He said when the river reached the sea it would heal the waters, and would have abundant fish in it. He said the trees would be for food and the leaves for healing. All of that is very mysterious. Perhaps the river symbolizes the church of Christ that spread out from Jerusalem, and the sea was the population of the world.

Then he described the boundaries of the nation, and the boundaries of each of the twelve tribes. He also described the boundaries of the sanctuary area, the land for the Levites, and the land for those who labored in the city. Finally, he described the gates of the city: one gate for each of the twelve tribes, three at each of the four geographic directions. The last words in the book say, **“And the name of the city from that day shall be, Jehovah is there.”**

A Description of **Daniel**

This book begins, “**In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and besieged it.**” And Jehovah gave Jehoiakim into his hand. Nebuchadnezzar then plundered some of the vessels of the house of God to bring to his own god. He also commanded the master of his eunuchs to bring some of the talented sons of the higher ranking men of Israel to serve in his palace. And after three years preparation they were to stand before the king.

Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, whom the ruler of the eunuchs called Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were appointed a daily portion of the king’s food and wine, but Daniel purposed not to defile himself with it. The book says that God made Daniel find kindness and compassion in the sight of the ruler of the eunuchs. However, he told Daniel he did not want to endanger his head with the king if Daniel and his friends looked worse than the other youths. Daniel told the steward, whom the ruler of the eunuchs had appointed over them, to test them for ten days with vegetables and water. Then let him compare their countenances with those of the other youths that ate the king’s food, and deal with them as he saw fit. He did so, and the countenances of Daniel and his friends were finer and fuller in flesh than all the youths who ate of the king’s dainties. Hence, he gave them vegetables instead.

Then the book says, “**Now as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams**” (Dan. 1:17). After the appointed time they were brought before Nebuchadnezzar. When he conversed with them, he found them ten times better in wisdom and understanding than all the magicians and enchanters in all his realm. The book says that Daniel continued until the first year of king Cyrus.

In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (the second year of his independent reign, for apparently he first reigned jointly with his father) he dreamed dreams, and his spirit was troubled. Therefore, he called the magicians, and the enchanters, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans (probably the scholars of them) about the dream. They asked him what the dream was, and he said he could not remember. He demanded they tell him both what the

dream was, and the interpretation of it as well. They protested, saying there was not a man on earth who could do that, only the gods, who did not dwell with flesh. At that response the king became furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel was included. Therefore, when he heard about it he went to his house, and told Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, so they would desire the mercies of God concerning the secret. The book says, “**Then the secret was shown to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven**” (Dan. 2:19). He praised God, and thanked him for giving him wisdom, and revealing the king’s matter to him.

Then he went to the man whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men. He told him not to destroy them, for he would show the king the interpretation. Therefore, the man quickly brought Daniel to the king, and told him he had found a man of the sons of the captivity of Judah, who would make known the interpretation. The king asked Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, if he was able to reveal the dream and the interpretation. Daniel replied, “**The secret which the king has demanded, neither wise men, enchanters, magicians, nor soothsayers, can show to the king, but there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets. And he has made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days**” (Dan. 2:27-28). Daniel was a humble man, for he said to the king that the secret was revealed to him not for any wisdom he had more than any living man, but to the intent that the king would know the interpretation.

He said the king saw a great image standing before him. He said, “**As for this image, its head was of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet part of iron, and part of clay**” (Dan. 2:32-33). And he saw a stone cut out without hands. The stone destroyed the image, and became a great mountain that filled the whole earth. That was the dream.

Then Daniel said he would give the interpretation of it. He said, “**Thou, O king, are a king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory. ... Thou are the head of gold**” (Dan. 2:37-38). He said the kingdoms that came after him would be inferior: one of silver, one of bronze, and

one of iron mixed with clay. He said the last kingdom would be strong as iron, to break in pieces, but being mixed with clay it would be a divided kingdom. He said that in the days of those kings the God of heaven would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed, but would break in pieces all those kingdoms, and would stand forever. Most commentators believe the silver kingdom was the empire of the Medes and Persians, the bronze kingdom was the Grecian empire of Alexander, and the iron and clay kingdom was the Roman empire. The kingdom that destroyed the others, and would stand forever, is the church of Christ.

The book says that king Nebuchadnezzar then fell upon his face and worshiped Daniel. He commanded that they offer an oblation and sweet odors to him. And he said, “**Of a truth your God is the God of gods, and Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since thou have been able to reveal this secret**” (Dan. 2:47). Then he made Daniel great, gave him many gifts, and made him ruler over the province of Babylon, and chief governor of all the wise men there. Daniel requested of the king that he appoint Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon, but Daniel was in the gate of the king, which was apparently where the king managed his kingdom.

Sometime later Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold ninety feet high. He gathered together all the rulers to come to the dedication of it. When they were there the herald cried aloud to them a command to fall down and worship the golden image whenever they heard the sound of all kinds of music. And whoever did not would be cast into a burning fiery furnace. Therefore, all the peoples of the various nations fell down and worshiped the golden image.

Then certain of the Chaldeans brought an accusation to king Nebuchadnezzar against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, saying they did not serve his gods nor worship the golden image. So in his rage he commanded to bring those three men, and he spoke to them about it. He said it would be well if they fell down and worshiped the image, but if they did not then they would be cast into the burning fiery furnace. And he asked them who would deliver them out of his hands. They said to him, “**If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known to thee, O king, that we will not serve**

thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou have set up” (Dan. 3:17-18).

The book says Nebuchadnezzar became full of fury, and he commanded the furnace be heated seven times more than usual. And he commanded certain mighty men of his army to bind the three men, and cast them into the furnace. The furnace was so hot, the flame killed the men who cast them in. Then Nebuchadnezzar was astonished, and asked his counselors if they had not cast three men bound into the fire. When they said yes, he said he saw four men walking freely and without harm. He said the fourth looked like a son of the gods.

Then he came near the mouth of the furnace, and told Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to come forth. When they came forth all who were with the king saw them unharmed; they even had no smell of fire on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “**Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his agent, and delivered his servants who trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word, and have yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God**” (Dan. 3:28). He therefore made a decree that every people that spoke anything amiss against their God should be cut in pieces, and their houses made a dunghill. Then he promoted the three men in the province of Babylon.

Sometime afterward Nebuchadnezzar sent a message to all the peoples. He said, “**It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has wrought toward me. How great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation**” (Dan. 4:2-3).

Then he told how he had been at rest in his house, and had a dream that made him afraid. Therefore, he made a decree to bring all the wise men of Babylon before him to tell the interpretation of the dream. However, they could not make it known to him. Then he said that Daniel came to him, in whom was the spirit of the holy gods, and he told him to give the interpretation of it.

Nebuchadnezzar said the vision he saw upon his bed was of a great tree with fine leaves and much fruit and food for all. He said the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the birds dwelt in its branches. And he said all flesh was fed from it. Then a watcher and holy one came down from heaven, and cried aloud to hew down the tree, cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, and scatter its

fruit. However, the stump was to remain, bound with a band of iron and bronze, with its roots in the ground. He commanded his heart to be changed from a man's heart to a beast's heart, and seven times were to pass over him. And he said, "**The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever he will, and sets up over it the lowest of men**" (Dan. 4:17).

Nebuchadnezzar said that Belteshazzar (Daniel) could interpret the dream because the spirit of the holy gods was in him. However, Daniel was mute for a while, and his thoughts troubled him. Nebuchadnezzar told him not to be troubled about it. Then Belteshazzar said the dream and its interpretation should be for his enemies. He told Nebuchadnezzar that he, the king, was the tree. And he said the decree of the Most High was that he be driven from men, and dwell with the beasts of the field. He would be made to eat grass as oxen, and be wet with the dew of heaven. He said, "**And seven times shall pass over thee till thou know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever he will**" (Dan. 4:25). The seven times probably meant either seven years or seven months. Daniel said the meaning of the stump surviving was that his kingdom would be sure to him after he knew that the heavens do rule. Daniel then urged the king to accept his counsel, and break off his sins by righteousness so there might be a lengthening of his tranquility.

At the end of twelve months Nebuchadnezzar was walking in the royal palace of Babylon, and he boasted about how he had built the place by his power and for the glory of his majesty. As he spoke a voice from heaven fell, and told him the kingdom was departed from him. It said he would be driven from men to live like a beast. It said that seven times would pass over him, until he knew that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever he will. And it began that same hour. The book says that his hair eventually grew like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws.

Nebuchadnezzar said that at the end of the days, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and his understanding returned to him. Then he blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever. He said he was established in his kingdom, and excellent greatness was added to him. He ended his message, saying, "**Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise**

and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are truth, and his ways justice. And he is able to abase those who walk in pride" (Dan. 4:37).

Next the book tells about an event that happened after Nebuchadnezzar expired. His grandson Belshazzar, who appears to have earlier reigned jointly with his father, made a great feast for a thousand of his lords. At which time he commanded to bring the gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem, so that those who were assembled could drink from them. Therefore, they drank wine and praised the gods of metal, wood, and stone.

In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand wrote opposite the lampstand upon the plaster of the wall. When the king saw it, his countenance was changed, his thoughts troubled him, the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees trembled against each other. Then he cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. He told the wise men that whoever read the writing, and showed him the interpretation, would be clothed with purple (a color of luxury), have a chain of gold about his neck, and be the third ruler in the kingdom. However, none of them were able, which greatly troubled Belshazzar and perplexed his lords. Then the queen came into the banquet house and told him about Daniel.

When Daniel was brought in, the king told him of his reputation, and he said he would give him the rewards if he could read the writing, and make him know the interpretation. Daniel replied, "**Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another. Nevertheless I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation**" (Dan. 5:17). He reminded him how the Most High God had humbled the pride of Nebuchadnezzar by making him live like a beast for a while. He then said Belshazzar had not humbled himself even though he knew all that, but had drunk wine from the vessels of God's house. He said he had also praised the gods of metal, wood, and stone, which are lifeless, but not the God in whose hand his breath was.

Then he read the four words—MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN—and he interpreted their meaning. He said God had weighed him in the balances and he was found wanting; his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Belshazzar gave him the rewards, but that night the king was slain, and Darius the Mede received the kingdom.

Darius set a hundred twenty satraps over his kingdom, with three presidents over them, one of whom was Daniel. The book says, “**Then this Daniel was distinguished above the presidents and the satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him, and the king thought to set him over the whole realm**” (Dan. 6:3). However, the other men sought to find occasion against Daniel, but they were unable because he was faithful. Then they told themselves they would have to find it against him concerning the law of his God. Therefore, they persuaded king Darius to establish a royal statute, that whoever made a petition of any god or man for thirty days, except of him, should be cast into the den of lions. And according to the law of the Medes and Persians it could not be changed.

When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went to his house, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, and knelt upon his knees three times a day. He prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his practice. Laws against God and his righteousness are not to be obeyed. Every man is to fear and obey God above all others. Those men must have known about his custom, and so when he continued they reported it to the king. When the king heard their words, he was very displeased, and set his heart to deliver Daniel. He labored until sunset, but those men assembled to him, and reminded him that the statute could not be changed.

Therefore, the king commanded Daniel be brought and cast into the den of lions. He said to Daniel, “**Thy God whom thou serve continually, he will deliver thee**” (Dan. 6:16). After casting Daniel in they laid a stone upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and those of his lords. Then he went to his palace, fasted, and passed a sleepless night. Early in the morning he went quickly to the den, and cried out to Daniel, saying, “**O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou serve continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?**” (Dan. 6:20). Daniel replied, “**O king, live forever. My God has sent his agent, and has shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me, inasmuch as before him innocence was found in me. And also before thee, O king, I have done no harm**” (Dan. 6:21-22).

The king was exceedingly glad, and commanded Daniel be brought up out of the den. Then he gave command to cast those men who had accused Daniel into the den, they, their sons, and their wives. And the lions broke all their bones in pieces, even

before they came to the bottom of the den. What they wanted to happen to Daniel happened to them, a just recompense. Then king Darius wrote to all peoples, telling them of a decree for all men to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, saying he is the living God. And he went on to praise the dominion of God and his wonders. The book says that Daniel prospered in the reigns of Darius and Cyrus.

The last half of the book of Daniel tells about several visions he had. The first one happened in the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon. Daniel had a dream and visions upon his bed. The book says, “**Then he wrote the dream and told the sum of the matters**” (Dan. 7:1). He said he saw the four winds of heaven break forth upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of it, different from each other. They were all fierce beasts, one like a lion, one like a bear, and one like a leopard. The fourth was different from the others but even fiercer. And he told about its horns, one of which had eyes like a man and a mouth speaking great things.

He then said, “**I beheld till thrones were placed, and one who was ancient of days sat. His raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool. His throne was fiery flames, and the wheels of it burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him. Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The judgment was set, and the books were opened**” (Dan. 7:9-10). That sounds much like the description in the book of Revelation of Jesus and other things in heaven. Daniel said he looked till the (fourth) beast was slain and its body destroyed by fire. He said the dominion of the other beasts was taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

Then he described more things like those in the book of Revelation about Jesus: “**I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven someone like a son of man. And he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed**” (Dan. 7:13-14). Daniel said the visions troubled him, and he came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth about all of it. The man he spoke with said the great beasts were four kings, but

the sanctified of the Most High would receive the kingdom and possess it forever and ever. Then Daniel wanted to know about the fourth beast, which was exceedingly fearful, and its horns, one of which spoke and made war against the sanctified. It prevailed against them until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to them of the Most High, and the time came that they would possess the kingdom.

The man he spoke with told him the fourth beast would be a fourth kingdom, different from all the kingdoms. And it would devour the whole earth. He said the horns were kings, one of which would speak words against the Most High. But the judgment would be set, and his dominion would be taken away and destroyed. Then he said, "**And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the sanctified of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him**" (Dan. 7:27). He said that was the end of the matter. Those four beasts probably represent the same kingdoms (or empires) as those of Nebuchadnezzar's image in his dream: Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman. And the everlasting kingdom is the Church.

Daniel said he had another vision in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar. He said he was in Shushan the palace, and he saw himself by the river Ulai (in Persia). There he saw a ram, a he-goat that attacked the ram, and horns that grew from the he-goat. About the last horn, he said, "**And the host was given over to it together with the continual burnt offering through transgression. And it cast down truth to the ground, and it did its pleasure and prospered**" (Dan. 8:12). Daniel said he heard two holy ones speaking. One asked the other how long would be the vision of giving the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot. And he told Daniel to 2300 evenings and mornings. He said then the temple would be cleansed.

Daniel said he sought to understand the vision, and someone as the appearance of a man stood before him. Then he heard a man's voice saying, "**Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision**" (Dan. 8:16). Daniel said he was frightened and fell on his face when he came to him. He told Daniel he would make him know what would be in the latter time of indignation. He said the two horns of the ram were the kings of Media and Persia, the rough he-goat was the king of Greece, and the great

horn between his eyes was the first king (Alexander). The other horns were other kingdoms, the last of which was very fierce, destructive, and evil. That may represent the Roman empire, which persecuted the Church, for he said, "**He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes, but he shall be broken without a hand**" (Dan. 8:25).

Then he told Daniel to shut up the vision, for it belongs to many days (to come). Daniel said he fainted and was sick certain days, no doubt because of the emotional trauma of the vision. But then he rose up and did the king's business. He said he wondered about the vision but none understood it.

In the first year of king Darius, of the Medes, Daniel said he understood from the writing of Jeremiah about the seventy years allotted for the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah had prophesied that Jerusalem would lay waste for seventy years (see Jer. 25:11 and 29:10). Daniel must have been very old, perhaps ninety years or older. He said he set his face to Jehovah God, and sought by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. He said he prayed to Jehovah his God, and made confession.

He began, "**Oh, Lord, the great and fearful God, who keeps covenant and loving kindness with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned, and have dealt perversely, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even turning aside from thy precepts and from thine ordinances, nor have we hearkened to thy servants the prophets, who spoke in thy name to our kings, our rulers, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land**" (Dan. 9:4-6). He continued to confess their guilt, which he said deserved punishment. And he praised God for his righteousness. Then he besought Jehovah about Jerusalem, his people, and his sanctuary. He concluded, "**O my God, incline thine ear, and hear. Open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name. For we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies' sake. O Jehovah, hear. O Jehovah, forgive. O Jehovah, hearken and do. Defer not, for thine own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name**" (Dan. 9:18-19).

Daniel said that while he was praying, the man Gabriel, whom he had seen in the first vision, flew swiftly and touched him about the time of the evening oblation. He told him he had come to give him wisdom and understanding. He said to him, "**At the**

beginning of thy supplications the commandment went forth, and I have come to tell thee, for thou are greatly beloved. Therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision” (Dan. 9:23).

Then Gabriel told a remarkable prophecy, which I quote in full. Because of its length I have inserted in brackets some interpretations, which were made by many other men before me. He said, “**Seventy weeks** [A day is taken to symbolize a year. Hence 70 times 7 equals 490 years] **are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity** [the atoning death of Christ], **and to bring in everlasting righteousness** [the Church], **and to seal up vision and prophecy** [which ended with the written New Testament], **and to anoint the most holy** [Christ, which means anointed]. **Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem to the anointed one, the Prince** [Jesus Christ], **shall be seven weeks** [those 49 years may refer to the time taken to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple], **and sixty-two weeks** [434 years]. [Those two figures total 483 years. Since the return to Jerusalem was in the middle of the fifth century BC, then 483 years after that would be the time of Jesus’ ministry.]

“It shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks the anointed one [Christ] shall be cut off, and shall have nothing [he was crucified]. **And the people of the prince who shall come** [the Roman army led by Titus] **shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end of it shall be with a flood** [symbolizing an invading army]. **And even to the end shall be war; desolations are determined.** **And he** [Christ] **shall make a firm covenant** [the New Covenant] **with many for one week** [seven years, which apparently began with John the imermer, and included the ministry of Christ]. **And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease** [the Mosaic sacrificial system was superseded by the good news or gospel]. **And upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate** [the Roman general Titus, or perhaps the army itself]. **And even to the full end, and that determined, wrath shall be poured out upon the desolate** [the Jews were probably called desolate because they rejected Christ]” (Dan. 9:24-27).

Next the book says that in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed to Daniel. He

said he was mourning in those days for three whole weeks. He said he ate no pleasant bread or flesh, nor did he drink wine, nor did he anoint himself at all during the three weeks. He was by the side of the great river Hiddekel, and he said, “**I lifted up my eyes, and looked. And, behold, a man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz. Also his body was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as flaming torches, and his arms and his feet like burnished bronze, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude**” (Dan. 10:5-6).

He said the men who were with him did not see the vision, but a great quaking fell upon them. Therefore, they fled away to hide, and he was left alone. He said no strength remained in him, and after he heard the voice he fell into a deep sleep on the ground. Then a hand touched him, and set him upon his knees and the palms of his hands. The man told him he was greatly beloved. He told him to understand the words he spoke to him, and stand upright, for he was sent to him.

Then he said, “**Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that thou set thy heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard. And I have come for thy words’ sake. But the ruler of the kingdom of Persia withheld me twenty-one days, but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me. And I remained there with the kings of Persia. I have come now to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days, for the vision is yet for many days**” (Dan. 10:12-14).

Daniel said he was mute, but someone like the sons of men touched his lips. Then he spoke to him who stood before him, and said he had no strength because of the vision. So someone like the appearance of a man touched him again. He strengthened him and said, “**O man greatly beloved, fear not. Peace be to thee. Be strong, yea, be strong**” (Dan. 10:19). Then he asked Daniel if he knew why he came to him. He said he was going to return to fight with the ruler of Persia. He also said the ruler of Greece was coming. And he told Daniel there was none who held with him against those, but Michael his prince (“his” most likely meaning the Israelite people). Those words give us a glimpse of the great spiritual struggles occurring in our world between the forces of God, and those of his adversaries, that are unseen to us, and about which we know virtually nothing, except from passages like these that they exist.

The agent of God went on to tell at length (a couple of pages in a modern Bible) about some of the conflicts between mostly unnamed kingdoms and rulers that were to come in the future, almost all of which is very difficult to understand. One of the things he said concerned the temple: **“And forces shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the fortress, and shall take away the continual *burnt offering*, and they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate”** (Dan. 11:31). Jesus warned his disciples about that when he said, **“When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation that was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him who reads understand), then let those in Judea flee to the mountains”** (Mat. 24:15-16). He was referring to the Roman army that came and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70.

The agent's last words in that discourse with Daniel are as follows: **“And at that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands for the sons of thy people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time. And at that time thy people shall be delivered, everyone who shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased”** (Dan. 12:1-4).

The time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, may be the same thing that Jesus warned about when he foretold the destruction of the temple. For Jesus said, **“... then there will be great tribulation, such as not has happened from the beginning of the world until now, nor, no, it will not happen”** (Mat. 24:21). The “time” the agent mentioned may refer to the span of time from

the ministry of Christ till the end of the Jewish nation. The part about those written in the book probably refers to the chosen of Christ spoken about in the New Testament, whose names were written in the book of life (see, for example, Revelation 3:5).

The words about those who awoke from the dust may refer to the time when some were actually bodily resurrected at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, as well as the spirits of those who arose to be judged, which the agent mentioned. Here is that description from the New Testament: **“And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks split, and the sepulchers were opened, and many bodies of the sanctified who have been asleep arose. And having come forth out of the sepulchers after his resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared to many”** (Mat. 27:51-53).

At the river Daniel heard another two of those men speaking. One asked the other how long it would be to the end of those wonders. The other replied it would be for a time, times, and a half. He said that when they had made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all those things would be finished. Then Daniel wrote, **“And I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?”** (Dan. 12:8). He told Daniel to go his way, for the words were shut up and sealed till the time of the end. And he said, **“Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand”** (Dan. 12:10).

Perhaps we will understand it all when the time of the end comes, which probably means the end of the world. After mentioning some mysterious time spans, he finished his words to Daniel, saying, **“But go thou thy way till the end is. For thou shall rest, and shall stand in thy lot at the end of the days”** (Dan. 12:13), which means in heaven.

A Description of Hosea

This book tells about the word of Jehovah that came to Hosea during the times of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and the second Jeroboam king of Israel. Hosea prophesied for some years before and after the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel. When Jehovah first spoke to him, he said, **“Go, take to thee a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom, departing from Jehovah”** (Hos. 1:2). The woman of whoredom probably symbolized the nation of Israel, and her children symbolized its citizens.

Therefore, Hosea married a woman named Gomer, and she bore him a son. Jehovah said to him, **“Call his name Jezreel, for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease”** (Hos. 1:4). Jezreel means “God will scatter,” so it may refer to God causing the people of Israel to be scattered. However, Jezreel is also the name of the city where Jehu exterminated the evil house of Ahab, which pleased God. So that part of the scripture is hard to understand. For after killing all the house of Ahab and the worshippers of Baal, Jehu continued the worship of the golden calf that Jeroboam had made. Hence, he encouraged disobedience to God in Jezreel, which eventually led to their downfall. Perhaps that is what Jehovah meant by the blood of Jezreel.

Gomer again conceived and bore a daughter. Jehovah said, **“Call her name Lo-ruhamah, for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, that I should in any way pardon them”** (Hos. 1:6). Lo means “not” and ruhamah means “an object of mercy.” Jehovah said, however, he would save the house of Judah, but not with weapons of war.

After Lo-ruhamah was weaned Gomer conceived and bore another son. And Jehovah said, **“Call his name Lo-ammi, for ye are not my people, and I will not be yours”** (Hos. 1:9). Lo-ammi means “not my people.” But he went on to say that the number of the sons of Israel would be as the sand of the sea. Then he spoke words that the apostle Paul applied to the disciples of Christ (see Rom. 9:25-26). Jehovah said, **“And it shall come to pass that, in the place where it was said to them, Ye are not my people, it shall be said to them, The sons of the living God”** (Hos. 1:10).

Then Jehovah told them to speak to their brothers, Ammi (my people), and to their sisters, Ruhamah (an object of mercy). He said they were to contend with their mother (the nation), for she was not his wife. And she was to put away her whoredoms and her adulteries, lest he strip her naked and kill her with thirst. He said he would have no mercy upon her sons, for they were the sons of whoredom. Jehovah said he would hedge her way with thorns and build a wall against her. He said, **“For she did not know that I gave her the grain, and the new wine, and the oil, and multiplied to her silver and gold, which they used for Baal”** (Hos. 2:8). And Jehovah described all the destruction that he was going to bring against her because she forgot him.

Then Jehovah said he would allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak soothingly to her. He said, **“And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope”** (Hos. 2:15). Jehovah spoke many words of compassion and affection toward her. He said he would betroth her to him forever, in righteousness, and in justice, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. He said he would have mercy upon her who had not obtained mercy. And again he said, **“And I will say to those who were not my people, Thou are my people, and they shall say, My God”** (Hos. 2:23). It must be remembered that Jehovah was not talking about an individual, an adulterous woman. He was talking about a race of people who had been unfaithful to him. And the historical record tells that it was only after most of them had been killed in his wrath that he showed compassion to the repentant survivors.

Then Hosea said, **“And Jehovah said to me, Go again, love a woman beloved of her friend, and an adulteress, even as Jehovah loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods, and love cakes of raisins”** (Hos. 3:1). Jehovah said that after the sons of Israel had lived “many days” without king and sacrifice they would return and seek him and David their king. He said in the latter days they would come with fear to Jehovah and to his goodness. That may prophesy their eventual conversion to Christianity.

After that Hosea said, **“Hear the word of Jehovah, ye sons of Israel, for Jehovah has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of**

God in the land" (Hos. 4:1). He said there was nothing but evil deeds, some of which he named. He said therefore the land mourns. They were so morally calloused that he even said not to contend with them. He said they would stumble day and night, and he would destroy their mother (meaning their nation).

Jehovah said, "**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because thou have rejected knowledge, I also will reject thee, that thou shall be no priest to me. Since thou have forgotten the law of thy God, I also will forget thy sons**" (Hos. 4:6). He said they (probably the priests) fed on the sins of his people, and set their heart on their iniquity. And that is exactly what the modern American entertainment industry does. It has grown rich and fat by pandering to the lusts of the people, especially the younger ones. They sell them music, movies, and other things that glorify folly, sin, and wickedness. Jehovah said, "**And I will punish them for their ways, and will requite them their doings**" (Hos. 4:9).

Jehovah said, "**Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the understanding**" (Hos. 4:11). He also said his people asked counsel of pieces of wood (idols), for the spirit of whoredom had caused them to err. He said that because of it their daughters played the harlot, and their brides committed adultery. Jehovah said he would not punish their daughters and their brides, because they themselves went after harlots. He said, "**And the people who do not understand shall be overthrown**" (Hos. 4:14).

Jehovah continued to rebuke Israel. He said Israel acted like a stubborn heifer. He said they joined to idols, and played the harlot continually. He said Israel was defiled. He said their doings would not allow them to turn to their God, for the spirit of whoredom was within them. He said Israel and Ephraim would stumble in their iniquity, and Judah with them. Jehovah was especially critical of their rulers, including those of Judah. He said, "**The rulers of Judah are like those who remove the landmark. I will pour out my wrath upon them like water**" (Hos. 5:10). Jehovah said he would be as a lion to Ephraim and to the house of Judah; he would tear and carry off. Then he said, "**I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face. In their affliction they will seek me earnestly**" (Hos. 5:15).

Jehovah wanted to spare them, but they frustrated his efforts by continual backsliding. He said,

"O Ephraim, what shall I do to thee? O Judah, what shall I do to thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goes away early" (Hos. 6:4). He said, "**For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings**" (Hos. 6:6). Nevertheless, they transgressed his covenant and dealt treacherously against him. He said that even the priests were like troops of robbers stalking a man. Jehovah said he saw a horrible thing in the house of Israel, for they were defiled. He said they made the king glad with their wickedness. He said they were all adulterers. He said, "**They are all hot as an oven, and devour their judges. All their kings are fallen. There is none among those who call to me**" (Hos. 7:7).

Jehovah said, "**Woe to them! For they have wandered from me. Destruction to them! For they have trespassed against me. Though I would redeem them, yet they have spoken lies against me**" (Hos. 7:13). He said they sowed to the wind, and they would reap the whirlwind. He said that Israel had built palaces, and Judah had multiplied fortified cities, but he was going to send a fire to devour them. Jehovah said, "**The days of recompence have come. Israel shall know it. The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the abundance of thine iniquity, and because the enmity is great**" (Hos. 9:7). He said they had deeply corrupted themselves. Regarding Ephraim, Jehovah said, "**All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them. Because of the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more. All their rulers are rebels**" (Hos. 9:15). Hosea said his God was going to cast them away because they did not hearken to him. He said they would be wanderers among the nations. That is just a small sample of the many words of rebuke Jehovah spoke to them, which is recorded in this book.

Jehovah continued to admonish them, saying, "**Sow to yourselves in righteousness. Reap according to kindness. Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek Jehovah, till he comes and rains righteousness upon you**" (Hos. 10:12). But he said they had plowed to wickedness and reaped iniquity. He said they had trusted in their way, and in the multitude of their mighty men. Therefore, they would be destroyed.

Jehovah said, "**When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son**" (Hos. 11:1). He said that the more the prophets

called them, they more they went from them. Yet he taught Ephraim to walk, and took them on his arms. He said he drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love, and he laid food before them. Consequently, he said because they refused to return to him a sword would fall upon their cities and devour them. He said his people were bent on backsliding from him.

Yet because of his compassion he was reluctant to destroy them utterly. Therefore he said, “**How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I cast thee off, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboiim?** [Admah and Zeboiim were cities that were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah.] **My heart is turned within me. My compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of my anger. I will not return to destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee, and I will not come in wrath**” (Hos. 11:8-9). Can you not see the great love he had for them, and how he agonized about punishing them, just as a loving father on earth does about his children?

Jehovah said his people would come back out of Egypt and Assyria where they were driven, and he would make them dwell in their houses. When Hosea wrote those things Israel was doomed, but Judah had not yet been condemned. For Jehovah said, “**Ephraim encompasses me around with falsehood, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the Holy One**” (Hos. 11:12). Yet Judah was far from perfect. For Jehovah also said he had a controversy with Judah, and he would punish him according to

his ways. And he said, “**Therefore turn thou to thy God. Keep kindness and justice, and wait for thy God continually**” (Hos. 12:6).

Jehovah continued to rebuke Ephraim, saying among other things, “**Ephraim has provoked to anger most bitterly. Therefore his blood shall be left upon him, and his reproach his Lord shall return to him**” (Hos. 12:14). Jehovah said they sinned more and more. Therefore they would be as the morning cloud that passes away early, and as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind. He said they were filled, and their heart was exalted. Therefore they forgot him, and therefore he would meet them as a bear that was bereaved of her whelps. He said that being against him was their destruction. He said, “**Samaria shall bear her guilt, for she has rebelled against her God. They shall fall by the sword. Their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up**” (Hos. 13:16).

Then he called out to them, saying, “**O Israel, return to Jehovah thy God, for thou have fallen by thine iniquity**” (Hos. 14:1). He told them to take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good. Jehovah said he would heal their backsliding and love them freely. He said they would blossom as the lily.

The book concludes, “**Who is wise, that he may understand these things, prudent, that he may know them? For the ways of Jehovah are right, and the just shall walk in them. But transgressors shall fall therein.**”

A Description of **Joel**

This book tells the word of Jehovah that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. Most of what Jehovah said is a description of destruction to come. First would be plagues of insects, including the locust. Jehovah warned the people, saying, "**Awake, ye drunkards, and weep, and wail, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth**" (Joel 1:5). He likened the swarms of insects to a foreign army. And he told them to lament and be confounded because of the destruction. He told the priests to gird themselves with sackcloth, and wail, and sanctify a fast, and call a solemn assembly, and cry to Jehovah, saying, "**Alas for the day! For the day of Jehovah is at hand, and it shall come as destruction from the Almighty**" (Joel 1:15). And he described the destruction.

Jehovah said to blow the trumpet and sound the alarm in his holy mountain. Then he described the overwhelming power of the swarms, and the great devastation they would create. He said there had not ever been the like, nor would there be any more like them in future generations. Then the book says, "**And Jehovah utters his voice before his army, for his camp is very great. For he is strong who executes his word. For the day of Jehovah is great and very fearful, and who can abide it?**" (Joel 2:11).

Then Jehovah appealed for the people to repent. He said, "**Yet even now, says Jehovah, turn ye to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn to Jehovah your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and relents of the evil**" (Joel 2:12-13).

He told them again to blow the trumpet in Zion, and sanctify a fast, and call a solemn assembly. He told the priests to weep between the porch (of the temple) and the altar, and plead with Jehovah to spare his people.

Then the book says that Jehovah was jealous for his land, and had pity on his people. He told them he would send them grain and new wine and oil. And he would no more make them a reproach among the nations. He said, "**Fear not, O land. Be glad and rejoice, for Jehovah has done great things**" (Joel 2:21). He said he would restore to them what the insects had eaten. He said they would praise the

name of Jehovah their God, and would know that he was in the midst of Israel.

Then he spoke words that Peter quoted (see Acts 2:17-21) on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles after Jesus' resurrection: "**And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams. Your young men shall see visions. And also I will pour out my Spirit upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and wonderful day of Jehovah comes. And it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved**" (Joel 2:28-32).

Jehovah also said he would gather all nations, and would execute judgment upon them for his people and for his heritage Israel. And he told how the nations had mistreated his people. He said they had cast lots for them, and had given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine to drink. In other words they treated them like cheap merchandise to buy and sell. He said he would sell their sons and daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they would sell them to a nation far off.

Then he told the nations to prepare for war. He reversed the famous words of Isaiah that proclaimed peace (see Isa. 2:4). Instead he said, "**Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears. Let the weak say, I am strong**" (Joel 3:10). He told the nations to come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there he would sit to judge all the nations round about. He called it the valley of decision.

Jehovah said he would be a refuge to his people. He said they would know that he was Jehovah their God, and he would bless them. He said Egypt would be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the sons of Israel, because they shed innocent blood in their land. He said, "**But Judah shall abide forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation**" (Joel 3:20).

A Description of **Amos**

Amos was a herdsman who spoke the words of Jehovah in the days of king Uzziah of Judah, and the second king Jeroboam of Israel. However, he prophesied primarily about Israel. For the word Israel occurs thirty times in the book, while the word Judah only occurs four times.

He first told of God's wrath against eight nations: Damascus (Syria), Gaza (the Philistines), Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah, and Israel. Each time he rebuked one of them he began by saying, "**Thus says Jehovah: For three transgressions of [the nation], yea, for four, I will not turn away the punishment of it, because ...**" (Amos 1 and 2). Jehovah was going to punish the six Gentile nations because they committed cruelty in one way or another, especially against his people. And he was going to punish Judah because they rejected his law. His words were brief to those seven (the six Gentile nations and Judah), and he told each one he was going to send a fire upon them.

The rest of the book is about Israel. After saying he was going to punish Israel he mentioned some of their sins, such as oppressing the poor. He reminded them that he brought them out of the land of Egypt, and destroyed the Amorite (the people of Canaan) before them. He said, "**But ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, Do not Prophesy**" (Amos 2:12). Jehovah said he was going to put pressure upon them, and no man would be able to deliver himself. He said the courageous among their mighty would flee away naked in that day. Jehovah said to the sons of Israel, "**You only I have known of all the families of the earth. Therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities**" (Amos 3:2).

Next Amos asked several rhetorical questions, such as, "**Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no net is set for him?**" (Amos 3:5). The answers were all obviously no. Then he asked, "**Shall evil befall a city, and Jehovah has not done it?**" (Amos 3:6). The answer was no then, and it is still no. For nowhere in the Bible does it say a time will come when it is otherwise. Nothing happens unless God either does it himself, or allows it to occur. Amos also said that Jehovah would do nothing unless he revealed his secret to his servants the prophets.

Jehovah said to publish in the palaces at Ashdod (of the Philistines) and in Egypt, telling them to

assemble upon the mountains of Samaria, and see what great tumults and oppressions were in it. He said, "**For they do not know to do right, says Jehovah, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces**" (Amos 3:10). He said therefore an adversary would plunder their palaces. Jehovah said to testify against the house of Jacob. He said he was going to destroy their great houses. Then he told the cows in the mountain of Samaria (probably meaning their women) to listen. He said they oppressed the poor and crushed the needy. Therefore, they would be taken away with hooks.

Jehovah told them to go ahead and multiply transgression. He said, "**For this pleases you, O ye sons of Israel, says lord Jehovah**" (Amos 4:5). Five times he described different plagues that he sent against them (such as drought and pestilence), and each time he said, "**Yet ye have not returned to me**" (Amos 4). He therefore told them to hear his word, which was a lamentation over the house of Israel. He said, "**The city that went forth a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which went forth a hundred shall have ten left, to the house of Israel**" (Amos 5:3).

Jehovah warned the sons of Israel to seek him and live, lest he break out like fire, and devour the house of Joseph. He said they turned justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth. He said they hated him who criticized them publicly, and they abhorred him who spoke uprightly. He said they trampled the poor, and built expensive houses. Jehovah told them, "**For I know how manifold are your transgressions, and how mighty are your sins—ye who afflict the just man, who take a bribe, and who turn aside the needy in the gate**" (Amos 5:12). He said therefore the prudent man would keep silent in such a time, for it was an evil time. In other words, they were so evil that any man who spoke of truth and justice would be persecuted. It sounds as if the people had become like the modern Mafia.

Amos said to them, "**Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate. It may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph**" (Amos 5:15). Jehovah said there would be wailing in the broad ways, with mourning and lamentation. He said, "**Woe to you who desire the day of Jehovah! Why would ye have the day of Jehovah? It is darkness, and not**

light” (Amos 5:18). Jehovah said he hated their feasts and their solemn assemblies. He told them to take away the noise of their songs, and let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

He said woe to those who were at ease in Zion, who feasted, and enjoyed music and revelry, but were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. He said they would be the first to go away captive. Jehovah said he abhorred the excellency of Jacob and hated his palaces. Therefore they were going to be destroyed. He said they had turned justice into gall, and rejoiced in a thing of nothing (like idols). Jehovah said he was going to raise up a nation against them that would afflict them.

Then Jehovah showed Amos three things. First were locusts eating the grass of the land, and second was fire that devoured the land. Both times Amos pleaded with Jehovah against them. He asked how Jacob could stand, for he was small. And both times Jehovah relented and said it would not be. All of that probably means that Jehovah would be doubly merciful to them, even though they deserved those plagues. The third time Jehovah stood beside a wall, with a plumb-line in his hand. Jehovah told him he would set a plumb-line in the midst of the house of his people Israel, and their high places and sanctuaries would be destroyed. What that probably means is that Jehovah would not continue being merciful if they continued to sin. Perhaps the plumb-line was to show how crooked the wall (Israel) was, and therefore had to be torn down.

Next the book says, “**Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos has conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words**” (Amos 7:10). Amaziah told the king that Amos said he (the king) would die by the sword, and Israel would be led captive out of the land. Amaziah also told Amos to flee into the land of Judah and prophesy there, not in Bethel where the king was. Amos replied, “**I was no prophet, nor was I a prophet’s son, but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees. And Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel**” (Amos 7:14-15). Then he told him his wife (Amaziah’s) was going to be a harlot in the city, his sons and daughters would fall by the sword, the land would be divided, and he would die in an unclean land. He

said Israel would surely be led captive out of his land.

Next Jehovah showed Amos a basket of summer fruit. He told him the end had come upon his people Israel. He said the songs of the temple would be wailings in that day, and the dead bodies would be many. The basket of fruit may have symbolized the people being ready for consumption. Then Jehovah rebuked the people for things like oppressing the poor and cheating in business. He said, “**Surely I will never forget any of their works**” (Amos 8:7). He said the land would tremble because of it, and everyone in it would mourn. And he told about more terrible things that he was going to bring upon them. He even said he would send a famine of hearing the words of Jehovah: “**And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east. They shall run to and fro to seek the word of Jehovah, and shall not find it**” (Amos 8:12).

Next Amos said he saw Jehovah standing beside the altar. And Jehovah said to smite the capitals, and break them in pieces on the head of all of them. That appears to symbolize the destruction of the temple and the people. Jehovah said he was going to kill all of them with the sword, and not one of them would escape, no matter where they fled. He said, “**And I will set my eyes upon them for evil, and not for good**” (Amos 9:4). And he spoke of his awesome power over the world. Then Jehovah said, “**Behold, the eyes of the lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth, except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, says Jehovah**” (Amos 9:8). He said he would sift the house of Israel among all the nations, and all the sinners of his people would die by the sword.

However, Amos ended his book with words of encouragement for the people of Israel. God said he would raise up the tabernacle of David that had fallen. He would raise up its ruins, and build it as in the days of old. He said he would bring back the captivity of his people Israel, and they would build the waste cities, plant vineyards, make gardens, and eat and drink. Jehovah said, “**And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, says Jehovah thy God**” (Amos 9:15). Those are probably figurative words about the spiritual people of Israel (disciples of Christ) and the new world in heaven.

A Description of **Obadiah**

This is the smallest book in the Old Testament, and it is a prophecy about Edom. Edom was the nation founded by Esau the brother of Jacob. That nation was located south of the Dead Sea in a rugged land with cliffs. The people hewed out many caves for their dwellings, which made their cities like fortresses. Petra, in what is now southern Jordan, was one of their cities. Although it is no longer populated, many spectacular monuments that were carved in the rocks remain. The Arabs, who now possess the land, claim their ancestors made them, but the Bible does not support that.

The book begins by saying, “**The vision of Obadiah. Thus says lord Jehovah concerning Edom ...**” Jehovah said he was sending nations against her (Edom) in battle. He said, “**The pride of thy heart has deceived thee, O thou who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high, who says in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?**” (Oba. 1:3). Jehovah said he was going to destroy the wisdom of the wise men out of Edom,

and their mighty men would be dismayed. He said shame would cover him for the violence done to his brother Jacob, and he would be cut off forever.

When Jerusalem was conquered and destroyed, the Edomites joined with the destroyers. Jehovah told them not to rejoice over the sons of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor seize their possessions. He also told them not to interfere with those who escaped, nor deliver them up. Yet apparently the Edomites were cruel toward the defeated Jews. And so Jehovah said, “**As thou have done, it shall be done to thee. Thy dealing shall return upon thine own head**” (Oba. 1:15). Jehovah said the house of Jacob would be like a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble. He said they would burn among them, and devour them, and there would not be any remaining of the house of Esau. Then, after describing who would possess the lands, he concluded the book, “**And saviors shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau, and the kingdom shall be Jehovah's.**”

A Description of **Jonah**

Jehovah said to Jonah, “**Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before me**” (Jonah 1:2). Instead Jonah fled from the presence of Jehovah, and he got on a ship going to Tarshish. However, Jehovah sent a great wind upon the sea that threatened the ship. When the mariners learned that Jonah was fleeing Jehovah, they took his advice and cast him overboard. They did not want to do it, but the storm threatened all their lives. After they cast Jonah into the sea it ceased from its raging. When that happened the men feared Jehovah exceedingly.

The book says that Jehovah prepared a great sea creature to swallow Jonah, and he was in its belly three days and three nights. Then he prayed to Jehovah. He told how he sank into the sea, with the weeds wrapped around his head, yet Jehovah saved him. He said he remembered Jehovah, and would sacrifice to him and pay his vow. Therefore, Jehovah told the sea creature to vomit Jonah out upon dry land.

He again commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach what he told him. That time he went. The book says Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, of three days journey. That probably means it took three days to travel throughout the city, which is what Jonah had to do. The Bible says, “**And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey. And he cried out, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown**” (Jonah 3:4).

The book says the people believed God. Even the king, when he heard the news, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. He also proclaimed a decree that neither man nor beast was to eat or drink. They were to cry mightily to God, and turn

each one from his evil way. He said, “**Who knows whether God will not turn and relent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we not perish?**” (Jonah 3:9).

When God saw how they turned from their evil way, he relented of the harm he said he would do. However, Jonah was displeased and angry. He prayed to Jehovah, and told him that was why he fled to Tarshish, because God was merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and would relent of the evil. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and perhaps he thought they were a threat to Israel. Indeed, the time came when Assyria did destroy Israel. Jonah said he wanted to die, but Jehovah asked him if he did well to be angry.

Jonah went out to the edge of the city, and made a booth (or shack) to see what would become of the city. Jehovah made a gourd grow up to give shade for him, and he was glad to have it. However, God then prepared a worm to kill the gourd, and it withered the next morning. When the sun grew hot God prepared a sultry east wind, which caused Jonah to faint. So he again wanted to die. When God asked him if it was well for him to be angry about the gourd, Jonah said yes.

Then Jehovah said to him, “**Thou have had regard for the gourd, for which thou have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand men who cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?**” (Jonah 4:10-11).

A Description of **Micah**

This book is the word of Jehovah that came to Micah about Samaria and Jerusalem in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. It is similar to the book of Isaiah by having many difficult passages and riddles. But like Isaiah, it also has some exceptionally marvelous words. So do not be discouraged if there are some things you do not understand. Neither I nor anyone else understands everything about it. Theories abound but proof is rare.

Micah told all the peoples of the earth to hearken and let Jehovah be witness against them from his holy temple. He said Jehovah was going to come forth mightily, and tread down the high places of the earth. He said the mountains would melt and the valleys would split. He said that was for the transgression of Jacob, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What that may mean is that Jehovah was going to trouble the world because the only righteous people left, Israel and Judah, had become corrupt.

Jehovah said he was going to destroy Samaria, and all her graven images would be beaten to pieces. Micah said he would lament and wail for that (Samaria's destruction, not the images), and he would go stripped and naked. He said her wounds were incurable, and had come even to Judah and Jerusalem. He said not to tell it in Gath, which was a city of the Philistines. He was apparently afraid of what the Philistines would do if they knew how weak Israel was. Micah mentioned several towns in Israel, and he told of evil that would come upon them.

Then he said, "**Woe to those who devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand**" (Mic. 2:1). Therefore, Jehovah said he devised an evil against them, from which they would not remove their necks. And they would say, "**We are utterly ruined**" (Mic. 2:4).

Jehovah said to them, "**Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly? But of late my people have risen up as an enemy**" (Mic. 2:7-8). And he told some of the evil they were committing. Jehovah said if a man was a liar, who told them he would prophesy of wine and strong drink, then he would be the prophet of that people. They would choose such a man instead of one who prophesied truth to them. Then Jehovah said he would gather

the remnant of Israel, as sheep in their pasture, and lead them.

After that Jehovah said, "**Hear, I pray you, ye heads of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel. Is it not for you to know justice? Ye who hate the good, and love the evil ...**" (Mic. 3:1-2). And he described how cruel and brutal they were to his people. Jehovah said they would cry to him, but he would not answer them because they did evil. And he rebuked the prophets who made his people to err, and who practiced extortion. He said, "**And the sun shall go down upon the prophets, and the day shall be black over them. And the seers shall be put to shame, and the diviners confounded**" (Mic. 3:6-7). But Micah said he was full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah, to declare to the people their sin.

He continued to rebuke the leaders of the house of Israel. He said they abhorred justice and perverted all equity. He said they built up Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. He said the rulers, priests, and prophets, were crooked and greedy, yet they claimed Jehovah was with them. He said for their sake Zion would be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem would become heaps (of rubble).

After that he told about the latter days, when the mountain of Jehovah's house would be established. And many nations would go there to be taught his ways. Then he spoke the same beautiful words that Isaiah did (see Isa. 2:4) about the end of war: "**And he will judge between many peoples, and will decide concerning strong nations afar off. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any more**" (Mic. 4:3).

He said all the peoples would walk in the name of their god, but we would walk in the name of Jehovah our God forever and ever. Jehovah said in that day he would gather the lame, the scattered, and the afflicted, and he would reign over them in mount Zion forever.

Several times in this book Jehovah went from rebuking the people and telling them about their punishment, to encouraging them and telling them about their deliverance. The writing goes from describing disaster to describing victory and blessing, back and forth several times.

Jehovah said the daughter of Zion would be in pain and come to Babylon, but would be rescued there and redeemed from her enemies. After that he said many nations were assembled against her. Among those things he spoke a prophecy about the messiah. The first part tells about his being born in Bethlehem, which is quoted in the New Testament (Mat. 2:6). He said, "**But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which are little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee he shall come forth to me who is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. Therefore he will give them up until the time that she who travails has brought forth. Then the residue of his brothers shall return to the sons of Israel. And he shall stand, and shall feed his flock in the strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God, and they shall abide. For now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And this man shall be our peace**" (Mic. 5:2-5). After that he told about deliverance from the Assyrian. And he said the remnant of Jacob would be a blessing among the nations, and would have strength over their adversaries.

Next Jehovah said in that day he would destroy her horses and chariots, cut off the cities of her land, throw down all her strongholds, and cut off witchcrafts, graven images, and objects of worship out of her. And he said, "**I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations that did not hearken**" (Mic. 5:15). What all those things mean is not clear.

After that Micah told the mountains and foundations of the earth to hear what Jehovah says, for Jehovah had a controversy with his people. Jehovah said, "**O my people, what have I done to thee? And in what have I wearied thee? Testify against me**" (Mic. 6:3). He said he brought them up out of the land of Egypt where they were in bondage. He said he sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam before them. He told them to remember the righteous acts of Jehovah.

Then Micah asked with what he should come before Jehovah. Should it be with burnt offerings? He asked if Jehovah would be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil, or even his firstborn. Jehovah said, "**He has shown thee, O man, what is good. And what does Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?**" (Mic. 6:8). That is one of the most beautiful and

meaningful passages in the Bible. O how much better the world would be if everybody lived that way.

After that Jehovah rebuked the city. He said, "**For the rich men of it are full of violence, and the inhabitants of it have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth**" (Mic. 6:12). Jehovah said therefore he smote her with a grievous wound, and made her desolate because of her sins. He told of her hardships, and how she would not profit from any of her endeavors.

Then Micah said, "**Woe is me! ... The devout man has perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood. They hunt every man his brother with a net**" (Mic. 7:1-2). He said the best of them was as a brier. He advised not to trust a neighbor, or have confidence in a friend, or even a wife. For they were all rebels. He said a man's enemies were the men of his own house.

Then Micah said, "**But as for me, I will look to Jehovah. I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me**" (Mic. 7:7). He said he would bear the indignation of Jehovah, because he had sinned against him. He trusted God, for he said he would plead his case. And he said, "**He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness**" (Mic. 7:9).

Then he said she who was his enemy would be covered with shame, and be trodden down as mire. That may refer to Babylon. He next spoke of a day for building walls, and for coming from Assyria, Egypt, "**and from sea to sea, and mountain to mountain**" (Mic. 7:12). He said, however, the land would be desolate because of its inhabitants, for the fruit of their doings. That may refer to the returning exiles who came back to the desolated land of Judah.

Micah asked (God) to feed his people, the flock of his heritage as in the days of old. And Jehovah said he would show marvelous things to them, as in the days when they came out of Egypt. He said the nations would see, and would be ashamed of all their might. He said they would lick the dust like a serpent. And like crawling things of the earth they would come trembling out of their close places.

Then Micah said, "**They shall come with fear to Jehovah our God, and shall be afraid because of thee**" (Mic. 7:17). Micah ended the book with these words: "**Who is a God like to thee, who pardons iniquity, and passes over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He does not**

retain his anger forever, because he delights in loving kindness. He will again have compassion upon us. He will tread our iniquities under foot, and thou will cast all their sins into the depths of

the sea. Thou will perform the truth to Jacob, and the loving kindness to Abraham, which thou have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.”

A Description of **Nahum**

The book begins, “**The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.**” It was written about a hundred fifty years after the book of Jonah. The preaching of Jonah caused the citizens of Nineveh to repent, thus sparing them destruction. However, Nahum wrote about a later generation that was apparently too wicked to repent. Therefore, he wrote this book which prophesies its doom.

Nahum first said, “**Jehovah is a jealous God and avenges. Jehovah avenges and is full of wrath. Jehovah takes vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserves wrath for his enemies**” (Nah. 1:2). He said that Jehovah was slow to anger and great in power, and would not clear the guilty. Then he described some of God’s power, such as drying up the sea and melting the hills. And he asked who could stand before his indignation, or abide in the fierceness of his anger. He said that Jehovah was good, a stronghold in the day of trouble for those who take refuge in him. But he will make a full end of those who devise against him. Then he seems to tell how he was going to destroy Nineveh, and spare Judah from that wicked nation.

After that Nahum described the violence within Nineveh when it was conquered. He said the chariots were like torches raging in the streets. He said

the defenders stumbled in their march and fled in retreat. He told how the city was looted of its treasures. Finally he said, “**She is empty, and void, and waste. And the heart melts, and the knees smite together, and anguish is in all loins, and the faces of them all have grown pale**” (Nah. 2:10).

Then he asked where was the den of the lions that filled his caves with prey, referring to Nineveh. Jehovah said he was against her, and a sword would devour her young lions. He said, “**Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and rapine. The prey departs not**” (Nah. 3:1). And he again described their final destruction. He spoke of the flashing sword, and a great heap of corpses which they stumbled over. He said it was because of the multitude of her whoredoms and witchcrafts. Jehovah said he would cast abominable filth upon her and make her vile. And with many other words he told of their destruction, and how helpless they would be.

He told the king of Assyria that all his people were scattered upon the mountains, and there was none to gather them. He said, “**There is no assuaging of thy hurt. Thy wound is grievous. All who hear the report of thee clap their hands over thee, for upon whom has not thy wickedness passed continually?**” (Nah. 3:19).

A Description of **Habakkuk**

The book begins, “**The burden which Habakkuk the prophet saw.**” Habakkuk asked Jehovah how long he would cry, and Jehovah would not hear. He said he cried out to him of violence, and he would not save. He told of iniquity, perverseness, and strife. He said therefore the law was slacked, and justice never went forth. He said the wicked man surrounded the righteous man, therefore justice went forth perverted.

Then Jehovah said, “**Behold ye scoffers, and look, and wonder marvelously. For I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you**” (Hab. 1:5). Paul quoted that scripture when he warned about rejecting Jesus (Acts 13:41), but in this book it refers to the Chaldeans (of Babylon) whom Jehovah raised up against the people of Judah. There are many passages of scripture that have more than one meaning or application.

Jehovah said they were fearful and dreadful, and he told of their power. He said they all came for violence, and gathered captives as the sand. Jehovah said he (the Chaldean) scoffed at kings, derided every stronghold, and his might was his god. But Habakkuk said that Jehovah had ordained him for judgment and correction. Then he said, “**Thou who are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look on perverseness, why do thou look upon those who deal treacherously, and hold thy peace when the wicked man swallows up the man who is more righteous than he?**” (Hab. 1:13). He said the wicked man (probably the Chaldean) treats men as animals to catch in his net, therefore he sacrifices to his net. Habakkuk asked if he would not spare to kill the nations continually.

Habakkuk said he would set himself upon the tower, and see what Jehovah would speak with him. He said Jehovah answered him, and told him to write the vision upon tablets, for it would surely come. He said, “**Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright in him. (But the righteous man shall live by his faith)**” (Hab. 2:4). He said he was a haughty man, who did not keep home, and could not be satisfied, but gathered to him all nations. He was probably describing the conquering Chaldean. He went on to say that the nations would curse him. He

said, “**Because thou have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder thee, because of men’s blood, and for the violence done to the land, to the city and to all who dwell therein**” (Hab. 2:8).

Jehovah said woe to him who gets evil gain for his house. He said woe to him who builds a town with blood, and establishes a city by iniquity. And he said woe to him who gives his neighbor drink, and makes him drunk that he may look upon his nakedness. He said they were filled with shame and not glory. And he uttered a woe against those who trusted dumb idols. Then he said, “**But Jehovah is in his holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before him**” (Hab. 2:20).

The last one-third of the book is a prayer of Habakkuk. It is like the prayers of the psalms. He began, “**O Jehovah, I have heard the report of thee, and am afraid. O Jehovah, revive thy work in the midst of the years. In the midst of the years make it known. In wrath remember mercy**” (Hab. 3:2). Then he spoke of God’s awesome power. He said fiery bolts went forth at his feet, and the eternal mountains were scattered. He asked if Jehovah was displeased with the rivers, or was his wrath against the sea, that he rode upon his horses and chariots of salvation. That may refer to God splitting apart the Red Sea when he led his people out of Egypt. He said Jehovah marched through the land in indignation, and threshed the nations in anger. That may refer to the conquest of the Gentile nations of Canaan. He said, “**Thou went forth for the salvation of thy people, for the salvation of thine anointed**” (Hab. 3:13).

Habakkuk said he heard and his body trembled. He trembled in his place because, he said, “**I must wait quietly for the day of trouble, for the coming up of the people who invade us**” (Hab. 3:16). Then he said that although all the food from the vines, the trees, and the fields failed, and there were no flocks and herds, yet he would rejoice in Jehovah. He said, “**I will joy in the God of my salvation. Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength. And he makes my feet like hinds’ feet, and will make me to walk upon my high places**” (Hab. 3:18-19).

A Description of **Zephaniah**

This book is the word of Jehovah that came to Zephaniah in the days of Josiah king of Judah. Jehovah said, "**I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the ground**" (Zep. 1:2). He said he would consume man and beast, including the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and "**the stumbling blocks with the wicked**" (Zep. 1:3). What all of that means is not clear. It sounds like the end of the world. However, the "face of the ground" may refer to a limited area. The book goes on to tell of destruction that God was going to bring upon several nations, after which he would gather his people and bless them. Perhaps the prophecy applies to both: a regional destruction, with renewal for the ancient Israelites, and the complete destruction of the world, with a new heavens and earth for the disciples of Christ.

God said he was going to stretch out his hand upon Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And he was going to cut off those who worshiped Baal and the host of heaven, and those who turned back from following him, and those who did not seek him or inquire after him. Jehovah said he was going to punish the rulers and all "**who fill their master's house with violence and deceit**" (Zep. 1:9). And he told of wailing and great crashing. Jehovah said he was going to punish the men who say in their heart, "**Jehovah will not do good, nor will he do evil**" (Zep. 1:12). That same idea is commonly believed today. Jehovah said their wealth would become a spoil, and their houses a desolation.

Then Zephaniah said, "**The great day of Jehovah is near. It is near and hastens greatly, the voice of the day of Jehovah. The mighty man cries there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath ...**" (Zep. 1:14-15). Jehovah said he was going to bring distress upon men, and they would walk like blind men, because they had sinned against him. He said their silver and gold would not be able to deliver them, but the whole land would be devoured by the fire of his jealousy. Zephaniah warned them, and he said, "**Seek ye Jehovah, all ye meek of the earth who have kept his ordinances. Seek righteousness, seek meekness. It may be ye will be hid in the day of Jehovah's anger**" (Zep. 2:3).

Then he told of the destruction of the cities of the Philistines. He said the word of Jehovah was against them. He said their land and houses would be for the remnant of the house of Judah. For Jehovah was

going to bring back their captivity. Jehovah also spoke against Moab and the sons of Ammon, who reproached his people. Jehovah said Moab would be as Sodom, and the sons of Ammon as Gomorrah, because of their pride. He said they reproached and magnified themselves against the people of Jehovah. Jehovah also told the Ethiopians they would be slain by his sword. And he said he would destroy Assyria, and make Nineveh (its capital) a desolation, and a place for beasts to lie down in.

Then Jehovah said, "**Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice. She received not correction. She trusted not in Jehovah. She did not draw near to her God**" (Zep. 3:1-2). He was referring to Jerusalem. He said her rulers were roaring lions, and her judges were evening wolves. He said her prophets were airy and treacherous men, and her priests profaned the sanctuary and did violence to the law.

Zephaniah said, "**Jehovah in the midst of her is righteous. He will not do iniquity. Every morning he brings his justice to light. He does not fail, but the unjust man knows no shame**" (Zep. 3:5). Jehovah said he had cut off nations and destroyed cities. Jehovah had urged them to fear him, and receive correction, so that her (Jerusalem's) dwelling would not be cut off. But he said they rose early and corrupted all their doings. Jehovah said he had determined to gather the nations, and pour upon them all his fierce anger. He said, "**For all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy**" (Zep. 3:8). Jehovah said he was going to take away out of the midst of them those who rejoiced in her pride. He would leave an afflicted and poor people, and they would take refuge in the name of Jehovah. He said "**The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth. For they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid**" (Zep. 3:13).

Then he told the daughter of Zion to sing and Israel to shout. He said to be glad and rejoice with all the heart. For Jehovah had taken away her judgments and cast out her enemy. He said the King of Israel, even Jehovah, was in the midst of her, and would rejoice over her with joy. He said, "**For I will make you a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth when I bring back your captivity before your eyes, says Jehovah**" (Zep. 3:20).

A Description of **Haggai**

The book says the word of Jehovah came to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, and to Joshua the high priest. It came by Haggai the prophet in the second year of Darius the king (of Persia). That was after Jews had returned from Babylonian captivity. Jehovah rebuked the people for saying it was not time for them to build Jehovah's house, yet they dwelt in their paneled houses. Jehovah told them to consider their ways. He told how much they labored, and yet they were still lacking in food, drink, and clothing. Jehovah told them, "**Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house. And I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says Jehovah**" (Hag. 1:8). He said they looked for much, but it came to little. And when they brought it home, he blew upon it. He asked why, and then answered saying it was because his house laid waste while each man ran to his own house. Therefore, he called for a drought upon the land.

Then Zerubbabel and Joshua, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of Jehovah and the words of Haggai the prophet. After that Haggai, Jehovah's messenger, gave his message to them. Jehovah said he was with them. And he stirred up their spirits, and they worked on the house of Jehovah in the sixth month.

In the seventh month Jehovah told Haggai to speak to Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and the remnant of the people. He was to say, "**Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes as nothing? Yet now be strong ...**" (Hag. 2:3). Jehovah

said he was with them. He said that in a little while he would shake the heavens and the earth and the sea. He said he would shake all nations, and the precious things of all nations would come and fill that house with glory. He said the silver and gold was his, and "**The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says Jehovah of hosts, and in this place I will give peace, says Jehovah of hosts**" (Hag. 2:9). I do not believe Jehovah was referring to material glory, like the first temple, but to the spiritual glory of his Son the Christ. For Jesus said he was greater than the temple (see Mat. 12:6).

In the ninth month the word of Jehovah came again to Haggai. He told him to ask the priest about the law of cleanliness. If a man carrying holy flesh touches any other food it does not become holy, but if a man who was unclean because of a dead body touches any food it also becomes unclean. Then Jehovah said it was that way with the nation before him. And he reminded them how he afflicted them earlier. Then he said, "**From this day I will bless you**" (Hag. 2:19).

On the same day the word of Jehovah came again to Haggai. He told him to speak to Zerubbabel the governor of Judah. He was to tell him that Jehovah was going to shake the heavens and the earth, and overthrow kingdoms, and destroy the strength of nations. Then he said, "**In that day, says Jehovah of hosts, I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says Jehovah, and will make thee as a signet. For I have chosen thee, says Jehovah of hosts**" (Hag. 2:23).

A Description of **Zechariah**

This book contains many passages that are difficult to understand, for it contains much symbolism. It also contains several prophecies of Christ that are quoted in the New Testament. It begins by saying the word of Jehovah came to Zechariah in the eighth month of the second year of Darius, which was two months after it first came to Haggai. Jehovah said he was greatly displeased with their fathers. Therefore, he told Zechariah to say to them, "**Thus says Jehovah of hosts: Return to me, says Jehovah of hosts, and I will return to you, says Jehovah of hosts**" (Zec. 1:3). He told them not to be like their fathers who refused to listen to the former prophets.

In the eleventh month the word of Jehovah came again to Zechariah. He said he saw in the night a man riding upon a red horse. He stood among the myrtle trees, and there were red, sorrel, and white horses behind him. Zechariah asked the agent who talked with him what they were. The man who stood among the myrtle trees said they were those whom Jehovah had sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they told the agent among the trees they had walked to and fro through the earth, and all the earth sat still and was at rest. What all of that seems to mean is that Jehovah surveyed the world, and found everything peaceful.

Then the agent of Jehovah said, "**O Jehovah of hosts, how long will thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou have had indignation these seventy years?**" (Zec. 1:12). Jehovah answered the agent with good and comforting words. So the agent told Zechariah to cry out, "**Thus says Jehovah of hosts: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy**" (Zec. 1:14). Jehovah said he was greatly displeased with the nations that were at peace, for they made the affliction (of Jerusalem) worse. The agent told him, "**Cry yet again, saying, Thus says Jehovah of hosts: My cities shall yet overflow with prosperity, and Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem**" (Zec. 1:17).

Zechariah then said he saw four horns, which represented the nations that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. But he was told they were going to be cast down. Then he saw a man with a measuring line in his hand, and he asked where he went. He said to measure Jerusalem. Zechariah was called a young man, and he was told Jerusalem would be

inhabited as villages without walls because of the large population. Jehovah said he would be a wall of fire round about, and the glory in the midst of her. Jehovah told the daughter of Zion to sing and rejoice, for he was coming, and would dwell in the midst of her. And Jehovah did come in the form of Jesus Christ.

Next Zechariah was shown Joshua the high priest standing before the agent of Jehovah, and Satan standing on his right side to be his adversary. Jehovah said to Satan, "**Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan. Yea, Jehovah who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee. Is this not a brand plucked out of the fire?**" (Zec. 3:2). Then they took off Joshua's filthy garments, and clothed him with rich apparel. And Jehovah, through the agent, told Joshua that if he kept (Jehovah's) ways, then he would judge his house and keep his courts. Then he spoke of his servant the Branch, and a stone with seven eyes, and some other things, which is a riddle that could refer to Christ.

Next the agent asked Zechariah what he saw. Zechariah said he saw a golden lampstand, and he described the details of it. He also saw two olive trees by it. And he asked the agent what they were. The agent said, "**This is the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says Jehovah of hosts**" (Zec. 4:6). And he said some other things about Zerubbabel who was governor of Judah, all of which is another riddle. Jehovah spoke further to Zechariah about Zerubbabel, saying Zerubbabel's hands had laid the foundation of the house (of Jehovah), and his hands would finish it. Then the riddle continues. For when Zechariah asked about the two olive trees, and two olive-branches beside two golden sprouts, the agent said, "**These are the two anointed ones, who stand by the Lord of the whole earth**" (Zec. 4:14). That may refer to Zerubbabel and Joshua, for anointed means chosen.

Next Zechariah said he saw a flying roll, twenty cubits long and ten cubits wide (about thirty by fifteen feet). The agent told him it was the curse that went forth over the face of the whole land. Jehovah said, "**I will cause it to go forth, says Jehovah of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him who swears falsely by my name. And it shall abide in the**

midst of his house, and shall consume it ...” (Zec. 5:4).

After that the agent told him to lift up his eyes and see what went forth. When Zechariah asked what it was, he said it was the ephah. Then its lead cover was lifted up, and he showed him a woman sitting inside of it. The book says, “**And he said, This is Wickedness. And he cast her down into the midst of the ephah, and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth of it**” (Zec. 5:8).

Then Zechariah said he saw two women come forth. He said they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between earth and heaven. That may be the source of the myth that agents from heaven (traditionally called angels) are women with wings. When Zechariah asked the agent where they were taking the ephah, he said to build her a house in the land of Shinar (Babylon). The woman in the ephah symbolized wickedness. The winged women also seem to symbolize something, for they are never called agents. Some speculate they symbolize two nations, but there is no agreement about which ones.

Zechariah looked again, and saw four chariots come out from between two mountains of bronze. The horses of each chariot were of a different color: red, black, white, and grizzled. When he asked the agent what they were, he said they were the four winds of heaven, which went from standing before Jehovah: the black ones going to the north, with the white following them, and the grizzled going to the south. He said the strong ones were told to walk to and fro through the earth, and so they did. All of that is another riddle in this book. Some claim the chariots represented ancient empires. Others say they symbolized things like war (red), famine or pestilence (black), etcetera. Nobody really knows. One thing is plain about all of this: Jehovah sent forth various forces upon the earth to do his will. He did not just sit back and watch what happened in the world. He did not then, and he does not now. The book of Revelation makes that clear.

After that Zechariah said the word of Jehovah came to him, and told him to take three men, whom he named, from those who had been captives in Babylon. He was to take silver and gold, and make crowns for the head of Joshua the high priest. And he was to say to him, “**Thus speaks Jehovah of hosts, saying, Behold, the man whose name is the Branch. ... and he shall build the temple of Jehovah. ... And he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne**” (Zec. 6:12-13). Jehovah

said the crowns were for the three men named, plus one other, for a memorial in his temple. Jehovah said it would come to pass, if they diligently obeyed the voice of Jehovah their God.

Later, in the fourth year of king Darius, the word of Jehovah came again to Zechariah. He told him to speak to the men who asked the priests and prophets, “**Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?**” (Zec. 7:3). That apparently referred to a time of fasting about the destruction of Jerusalem. Jehovah told Zechariah to speak to all the people and to the priests. He was to tell them they fasted and feasted for themselves and not to Jehovah. He said they should listen to the words which Jehovah cried by the former prophets before the dispersion. Jehovah said, “**Execute true justice, and show kindness and compassion every man to his brother. And do not oppress the widow, nor the fatherless, the sojourner, nor the poor man. And let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart**” (Zec. 7:9-10). But they refused to hearken, and stopped their ears so they would not hear. He said they made their heart as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law. Jehovah said he would scatter them, and thus the pleasant land was made desolate.

Zechariah said the word of Jehovah came again to him. Jehovah said, “**I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath**” (Zec. 8:2). He said he was going to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and it would be called the city of truth, the mountain of Jehovah of hosts, the holy mountain. He said it would be filled with people. Jehovah said to let their hands be strong. And he told them to contrast the afflictions before the temple was built (again), with how it was going to be. He said, “**And it shall come to pass that, as ye were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and ye shall be a blessing. Fear not. Let your hands be strong**” (Zec. 8:13). And he told them what they should do. He said they should speak truthfully to their neighbor, and execute judgment of truth and peace in their gates. They were to devise no evil in their hearts against their neighbor, and love no false oath; he said those were things he hated. Then Jehovah said, “**Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of Jehovah**” (Zec. 8:22).

After that Jehovah rebuked several nations, especially the Philistines. Then he gave a prophecy of

Jesus which is quoted in the New Testament (see Mat. 21:5): “**Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, thy king comes to thee. He is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon a donkey, even upon a colt the foal of a donkey**” (Zec. 9:9). Jehovah said he would speak peace to the nations, and his dominion would be from sea to sea. And he spoke many more words of comfort to his people. Jehovah told how he would return his people and bless them. And he mentioned the destruction of Assyria, Egypt, and Lebanon.

Then he said they were like sheep without a shepherd. He said his anger was kindled against the shepherds (their rulers), because they misled them. He said, “**And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them back. For I have mercy upon them, and they shall be as though I had not cast them off. For I am Jehovah their God, and I will hear them**” (Zec. 10:6).

Then Jehovah told of the wailing of the shepherds, for their glory was destroyed. And he said to Zechariah, “**Feed the flock of slaughter, whose possessors kill them, and hold themselves not guilty. And those who sell them say, Blessed be Jehovah, for I am rich, and their own shepherds pity them not**” (Zec. 11:4-5). Jehovah said he would no more pity the inhabitants of the land. He told how they would turn against each other and smite the land.

Then the book says, “**So I fed the flock of slaughter, truly the poor of the flock. And I took to me two staves, the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands, and I fed the flock**” (Zec. 11:7). That probably means Jehovah himself fed the flock (the poor of it), perhaps by giving words for Zechariah. The stave called Beauty was his covenant with all the peoples (see Zec. 11:10). The stave called Bands was the brotherhood between Judah and Israel (see Zec. 11:14). Then he said he cut off the three shepherds, “**for my soul was weary of them, and their soul also loathed me**” (Zec. 11:8). And he said he would not feed them (probably meaning the shepherds). Then he said he cut apart his staff Beauty—his covenant—and he said, “...**thus the poor of the flock who gave heed to me knew that it was the word of Jehovah**” (Zec. 11:11). Then he gave the words quoted in the New Testament about the betrayal of Jesus: “**And I said to them, If ye think good, give me my wage, and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my wage**

thirty pieces of silver. And Jehovah said to me, Cast it to the potter, the good price that I was valued by them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of Jehovah” (Zec. 11:12-13).

After that Jehovah said he broke his other staff Bands, breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. And he spoke of raising up a foolish shepherd who would not help, but would harm the flock. And he said, “**Woe to the worthless shepherd who leaves the flock! The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye. His arm shall be entirely dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened**” (Zec. 11:17).

Next the book says, “**The burden of the word of Jehovah concerning Israel**” (Zec. 12:1). He spoke of a siege against Jerusalem, and said all the nations of the earth would be gathered against it. He said in that day he would make the chieftains like firebrands. He said they would devour all the peoples round about, and Jerusalem would yet again dwell in their own place. He spoke of the great strength of those who defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and said he would destroy all the nations that came against it. Then Jehovah spoke words that applied to Jesus on the cross. He said, “**And they shall look to me whom they have pierced. And they shall mourn for him, as a man mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as a man who is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem ...**” (Zec. 12:10-11). And that was certainly true of the righteous souls there.

He said the land would mourn; each family by itself, and their wives by themselves. Jehovah said the idols would no longer be remembered. He said he would cause the prophets and the unclean spirits to pass out of the land. And he said some other things about prophets that are difficult to understand. Then he spoke the words that Jesus applied to himself and his apostles when he was betrayed (see Mat. 26:31): “**Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered**” (Zec. 13:7).

After that Jehovah said he would gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city would be taken. Then Jehovah would go and fight those nations. He said his feet would stand on the mount of Olives, and it would be split in half creating a very great valley. He said there would be no light that day, except at evening there would be light. He said on that day living waters would go out of Jerusalem, half toward the eastern sea, and half

toward the western sea. He said Jerusalem would be lifted up, and men would dwell there safely. After that Jehovah would smite all the peoples who warred against Jerusalem, with a plague that would consume their flesh. And everyone who was left of

all those nations would go up yearly to worship Jehovah and keep the feast of tabernacles. Those and other things he said are very hard to understand. There are many mysteries in the book of Zechariah.

A Description of **Malachi**

The book says it is the burden of the word of Jehovah to Israel by Malachi. Jehovah said he loved them, but they asked how he loved them. Therefore, he told them how he favored Jacob over Esau. Then he said, “**A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear?**” (Mal. 1:6). He said the priests despised his name by offering polluted bread upon his altar, and by saying it was not wrong to offer the blind for sacrifice. Jehovah said, “**Present it now to thy governor. Will he be pleased with thee, or will he accept thy person? says Jehovah of hosts**” (Mal. 1:8).

Jehovah said he would rather they shut the doors (of the temple), and not offer anything rather than make vain offerings. He said his name was great among the Gentiles, but they had profaned it. Jehovah said, “**Ye also say, Behold, what a weariness it is! And ye have snuffed at it, says Jehovah of hosts. And ye have brought that which was taken by violence, and the lame, and the sick. Thus ye bring the offering. Should I accept this at your hand? says Jehovah**” (Mal. 1:13).

Jehovah said he was a great King, and his name was feared among the Gentiles. Jehovah told the priests that if they did not hear, he would send the curse upon them. He said he would rebuke their seed, and spread dung upon their faces, because they did not lay it to heart. Jehovah said, “**For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth. For he is the messenger of Jehovah of hosts**” (Mal. 2:7). He said they turned aside and caused many to stumble in the law. He said they had corrupted the covenant of Levi.

Then Malachi said, “**Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, profaning the covenant of our fathers?**” (Mal. 2:10). He said Judah had dealt treacherously. He said they covered the altar of Jehovah with tears, because he did not regard the offering any more.

And they wanted to know why. He responded, “**Because Jehovah has been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou have dealt treacherously, though she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did he not make one ...? And why one? He sought a godly seed**” (Mal. 2:14-15). The “one” in that scripture may refer to the one flesh God said they would become (see Gen. 2:24). And that oneness helps produce a godly seed. Juvenile delinquency is always greater among broken homes. Jehovah told them he hated putting away (divorce).

Then he said, “**Ye have wearied Jehovah with your words. Yet ye say, How have we wearied him? In that ye say, Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of Jehovah, and he delights in them, or Where is the God of justice?**” (Mal. 2:17). That same attitude is very prevalent these days also. Many say that Jehovah loves everyone who does evil, and many deny that God is just.

After that Jehovah said, “**Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. And the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple**” (Mal. 3:1). The New Testament applies that scripture to John the immerser (see Mat. 11:10). Jehovah said he would sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. He would purify the sons of Levi, and they would offer to Jehovah offerings in righteousness.

Jehovah told them to return to him, and he would return to them. When they asked how they should return, he said, “**Will a man rob God? Yet ye rob me. But ye say, How have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with the curse, for ye rob me, even this whole nation**” (Mal. 3:8-9). In this most sinful generation of Americans God is literally being robbed, for church buildings everywhere are broken into and robbed. However, in this book Jehovah was referring to the tithe. Jehovah said to test him. He said if they would bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there would be food in his house, he would open to them the

windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing, that there would not be room enough for it.

Jehovah also said their words were against him. They were saying it was vain to serve God. And they called the proud happy. He said, “**Yea, those who work wickedness are built up. Yea, they challenge God, and escape**” (Mal. 3:15). And that also happens commonly in modern America, which breaks my heart and angers me. But there is a great judgment day coming (see Rev. 20:12), and I will rejoice then, no matter what happens to me.

Then the book says that those who feared Jehovah spoke with each other, and Jehovah said they would be his own possession. He said he would spare them, as a man spares his own son who serves him. And he would discern between the righteous man and the wicked man. He said the day comes, burning as a furnace, and all the proud, and all who work wickedness, would be burned up. But those who feared his name would go forth joyfully. Then Jehovah admonished his people, saying, “**Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded to him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and ordinances**” (Mal. 4:4).

Then he made a prophecy about the coming of Elijah: “**Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and fearful day of Jehovah comes. And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse**” (Mal. 4:5-6). Jesus told his apostles that John the immerser was the Elijah prophesied to come (see Mat. 11:14). However, John had denied being Elijah (see John 1:21). What John meant was that he was not the original Elijah. What Jesus meant was that John was the spiritual Elijah spoken of in this scripture: “**And he [John] will go ahead, in front of him [Jesus], in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn back the hearts of fathers toward children, and the disobedient in a mentality of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared**” (Luk. 1:17).

The word of God sometimes speaks in riddles that only the faithful can understand and accept. The psalmist said about unbelievers, “**They have ears, but they hear not**” (Psa. 115:6). And Jesus often told his followers, “**He who has ears to hear, let him hear.**” Pray God that you may have ears to hear what is true and right.

A Description of THE NEW TESTAMENT

beginning with

Matthew

This book begins with a genealogy of Jesus Christ. It begins with Abraham and ends with Joseph the husband of Mary the mother of Jesus. There are forty men and three women named in the genealogy. After that it tells about his birth. Mary was betrothed to Joseph. When he discovered she had conceived a child before they came together he was not going to marry her. However, an agent of the Lord told him in a dream the child was from the Holy Spirit. He said she would have a son, and he should call his name JESUS, for he would save his people from their sins. The book says all of that happened to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy about the virgin birth (see Isa. 7:14). Therefore, Joseph took her to be his wife, but was not intimate with her until after the birth.

After Jesus was born wise men from the east saw his star, and they came to Jerusalem looking for him. They said to Herod the king, "**Where is he who is born king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and have come to worship him**" (Mat. 2:2). When asked about it, the chief priests and scholars said the Christ would be born in Bethlehem, and they quoted a prophecy about it (see Mic. 5:2). Herod told the wise men to inform him after they found the child, because he also wanted to worship him.

Therefore, they followed the star until they found the place where the child was. When they came in the house they saw him with Mary his mother. Then they fell down, worshiped him, and gave him many gifts and treasures. Afterward they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went back to their own country another way. When they left an agent of the Lord told Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt, because Herod was going to seek the child to destroy it. No doubt the gifts of the wise men enabled them to survive there, for they were of humble means. When Herod saw he was scorned by the wise men, he became very angry, and had all the little boys in Bethlehem killed, from two years old and under. That also fulfilled a prophecy (see Jer. 31:15).

After Herod died an agent of the Lord told Joseph to return to the land of Israel. Therefore, he went, but he was afraid to go to Judea because

Herod's son reigned there. He was also warned in a dream, so he went into parts of Galilee, and dwelt in a city called Nazareth. That also fulfilled the prophecy saying he would be a Nazarene. However, that one is not found in the Old Testament. Perhaps it was simply an unrecorded oral prophecy.

Next the book tells about John the immerser, a man whom Isaiah prophesied about (see Isa. 40:3). John's clothing was camel's hair with a leather belt, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He preached in the wilderness of Judea, and the people went out to him to be immersed in the Jordan, confessing their sins. When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his immersion, among other things he said to them, "**Ye offspring of vipers, who showed you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore produce fruit worthy of repentance**" (Mat. 3:7-8). And he told about a man who was mightier than he, who was going to immerse them in a Holy Spirit. He said he would separate the wheat from the chaff which he would burn with unquenchable fire.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to be immersed by John. John considered himself unworthy, but Jesus insisted, saying it would fulfill all righteousness. When Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And there was a voice from heaven, saying, "**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**" (Mat. 3:17).

Next the book says Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. While there he fasted forty days and forty nights. Physiologists say that is the maximum time a man can fast without causing permanent harm to his body. Then the book says, "**And after he who tempts came, he said to him, If thou are the Son of God, speak so that these stones may become bread. But having answered, he said, It is written, Man will not live on bread alone, but on every word coming out through the mouth of God.**

"Then the devil takes him into the holy city, and stands him on the pinnacle of the temple.

And he says to him, If thou are the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, He will command his agents about thee, and, They will take thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said to him, Again it is written, **Thou shall not challenge the Lord thy God.**

“Again, the devil takes him onto an exceedingly high mountain, and shows him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. And he says to him, All these things I give thee, if after falling down, thou will worship me. Then Jesus says to him, Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shall worship the Lord thy God, and him only thou shall serve. Then the devil leaves him, and behold, agents came and served him” (Mat. 4:1-11).

After that Jesus left Nazareth and began to preach. He told people to repent, for the kingdom of the heavens had approached. Then he called four fishermen—Peter, Andrew, James, and John—to follow him. The book says, “**And Jesus went around all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people**” (Mat. 4:23). It says his fame spread, and they brought many who were afflicted in various ways. He healed them, and many multitudes from all around followed him.

Having seen the multitudes, Jesus went up onto a mountain. When he sat down, his disciples came to him and he taught them. He first spoke (Mat. 5:3-12) what is now called the beatitudes, which means perfect blessedness. He said,

- **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, because the kingdom of the heavens is theirs.”**
- **“Blessed are those who mourn, because they will be comforted.”**
- **“Blessed are the meek, because they will inherit the earth.”**
- **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they will be filled.”**
- **“Blessed are the merciful, because they will obtain mercy.”**
- **“Blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God.”**
- **“Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called sons of God.”**

Those are seven characteristics that help describe a righteous man. The number seven sym-

bolizes completeness, but those particular characteristics should not be considered the only desirable ones; they are simply representative. Notice that each one has a promise with it. There are two more, and they are about persecution. The last of the two seems to describe more severe persecution, but it brings a greater blessing. He said,

- **“Blessed are those who have been persecuted because of righteousness, because the kingdom of the heavens is theirs.”**
- **“Blessed are ye when they revile you, and persecute you, and say every evil word, being deceitful against you because of me. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, because your reward is great in the heavens, for so they persecuted the prophets before you.”**

Jesus taught many lessons in his sermon on the mount. I will only select a sample of them, for this is merely a description of the Bible. Jesus called his disciples the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. And he encouraged them to show it. He told them he had not come to abolish the law or the prophets. He said he came not to abolish, but to fulfill. He also told them that unless their righteousness abounded more than the scholars and Pharisees, they would not enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

Then he contrasted several things they had been taught in the past with what he taught. Five times he said, “**Ye have heard that it was said ...**” (Mat. 5). He mentioned the commands against murder, adultery, and swearing falsely. And each time he extended the prohibition further. He said to not even insult a brother, nor even look at a woman lustfully, nor swear at all. Regarding the strict recompense of an eye for an eye, he gave them examples of offering to endure or recompense even more. That is, offer to do more than justice requires. If you deserve a slap, offer to take another one; if you lose a lawsuit about your coat, add your cloak; go two miles instead of the required one. The reason for doing it that way seems to be to encourage peace and reconciliation, as well as to ensure justice.

He also told them to love their enemies, do good to those who hated them, and pray for those who mistreated them. That would also seem to encourage peace and reconciliation, and not further conflict. He said if they did that they would become sons of their Father in the heavens, because he does good to the righteous and the unrighteous. Remember, however, that does not mean everybody, includ-

ing authorities, should excuse every offense. For God himself does not do that, and the Bible does not teach we should.

He also warned them against hypocrisy. He mentioned charity, prayer, and fasting, and said the hypocrites make a big display about those things in order to be seen of men. He said they had their reward. He told his disciples to do those things in secret. And for each of those three things he said their Father who sees in secret would reward them (see Mat. 6: 4, 6, 18).

He told them not to be anxious about things necessary for their lives. He said, "**Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the clothing?**" (Mat. 6:25). He told them to look to the birds of the sky, and the grass of the field, which their heavenly Father feeds and clothes. He said not to be anxious about food and drink and clothing, "**But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you**" (Mat. 6:33).

Jesus also warned his disciples about being too critical of others. He taught them what we now call the golden rule: "**All things therefore, as many as ye may want that men should do to you, so also do ye to them, for this is the law and the prophets**" (Mat. 7:12). He told them to enter by the narrow gate, because the gate was wide and way was broad that leads to destruction, and many are they who enter through it. He said the gate was narrow, and the way restricted, that leads to life, and few there are who find it. That means the way of salvation is difficult and unpopular.

He also warned them about false prophets, who come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are predatory wolves. He said they can be known from their fruits. In other words, how they act and live will expose them (although it may take a while to see it). He said to them, "**Not every man who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of my Father in the heavens**" (Mat. 7:21). He said many would come to him in that day (of judgment), and claim they did many good things in his name, but he would reject them because they worked lawlessness.

Then he told a parable about a wise man and a foolish man, each of whom build a house. The wise man's house withstood the storms that beat against it, because it was founded upon a rock. The foolish man's house fell because it was founded upon the sand. The lesson from that parable is for us to be

wise and build our lives on the rock of faith in him and obedience to his will. Doing that will ensure our salvation, no matter what tribulations we face in this life.

Jesus gave many other lessons in his sermon on the mount, which I encourage you to read in the Bible itself. When he finished, the book says the multitudes were astonished at his teaching, "**for he was teaching them as having authority, and not as their scholars**" (Mat. 7:29).

When he came down from the mountain a leper worshiped him, and asked to be healed. Jesus healed him, and told him to speak to no man about it, but to see the priest as the law of Moses required. Then a centurion came, and besought him to heal his boy who was paralyzed and extremely tormented. When Jesus said he would go and heal him, the centurion said he was not worthy to have him come under his roof. He told him to only speak the word, and his boy would be healed. And he spoke about the power of authority. Jesus marveled, and said he had not found such faith even in Israel. Then he said, "**I say to you, that many will come from east and west, and will sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of the heavens, but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness. There will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth**" (Mat. 8:11-12).

After that the book says Jesus went to Peter's house, and healed his mother-in-law. But when many multitudes gathered around him, he commanded to depart to the other side (of the sea of Galilee). Before he departed, however, a certain scholar said he would follow him wherever he went. Jesus replied, "**The foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky, nests, but the Son of man has nowhere he may lay his head**" (Mat. 8:20).

On the way across the sea, a great storm developed, causing the waves to cover the boat, but he was sleeping. His disciples woke him, saying, "**Save us, Lord, we are perishing**" (Mat. 8:25). He answered, "**Why are ye cowardly, O ye of little faith?**" (Mat. 8:26). Then he rebuked the winds and the sea, and it was a great calm. The men marveled, and wondered what kind of man he was, that even the winds and sea obeyed him.

He came to the country of the Gergesenes on the other side, and two demon possessed men met him. They came out of the sepulchers exceedingly fierce. They cried out to Jesus, saying, "**What is with us and thee, Jesus, Son of God? Did thou come here before the time to torment us?**" (Mat. 8:29). And

they asked if he cast them out, to allow them to go into the nearby herd of swine. He allowed them, and after they went into them, the whole herd stampeded down the slope into the sea and drowned. After being informed, the whole town came out and besought him to depart from their regions.

After entering the boat he came to his own city. They brought a paralyzed man to him, and he told him his sins were forgiven. When some scholars said he was blaspheming, Jesus asked them which was easier, to tell a man his sins were forgiven or to heal him. Then he said, "**But that ye may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins (then he says to the paralyzed man), After rising, take up thy bed, and go to thy house**" (Mat. 9:6). When the multitudes saw the man get up they marveled and glorified God.

After that he called Matthew (also called Levi), a tax collector, to follow him. Later, when he was relaxing in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with him. When the Pharisees criticized him for eating with them, Jesus said, "**Those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those who fare badly**" (Mat. 9:12). He told them to go and learn what this means, "**I desire mercy, and not sacrifice**" (a quotation of Hosea 6:6). Jesus said he came not to call the righteous, but sinners for repentance. He also justified his disciples for not fasting when the disciples of John questioned him about that.

Next the book tells how a woman who had an issue of blood twelve years was healed. She said if she only touched his garment she would be healed, and it happened. When he saw it Jesus praised her faith. After that he raised a little girl, the daughter of a ruler, from the dead. And then he healed two blind men who besought him. He warned them not to tell anyone, but they disobeyed him, and proclaimed it in all that land. Was that not very ungrateful of them? Then they brought a mute man possessed with a demon. Jesus cast out the demon and healed him, but the Pharisees said, "**By the ruler of the demons he casts out demons**" (Mat. 9:34).

The book says Jesus continued to go about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and healing the afflicted. And it says, "**But when he saw the multitudes, he felt compassion for them, because they were troubled and dejected, as sheep having no shepherd**" (Mat. 9:36). Therefore, he called his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, and to heal every sickness and disease. Then the book names the

twelve apostles: Simon who is called Peter, Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Lebbaeus who was surnamed Thaddeaus (called Judas the son of James in the book of Luke), Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot who also betrayed him.

He told them not to go to the Gentiles nor the Samaritans, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They were to preach that the kingdom of the heavens has come near, and they were to heal and cast out demons. They were not to accept payment, and they were not to take money and extra provisions with them. He said, "**And whoever will not receive you, nor hear your words, while departing that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet**" (Mat. 10:14). He said it would be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Then he warned them of the persecution they would face, and told them how to respond. He also encouraged them, saying, "**And be not afraid of those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell**" (Mat. 10:28). He said that every man who professed in him before men, he would profess in him before his Father in the heavens.

He said to them, "**Think not that I came to spread peace on the earth. I came not to spread peace, but a sword**" (Mat. 10:34), although he did not mean a literal sword. He said he came to divide people, even families. And whoever loved anyone else above him, was not worthy of him. Indeed, he said, "**And he who does not take his cross and follow behind me, is not worthy of me**" (Mat. 10:38). But he also said they would be rewarded for their righteousness.

John the immerser was in prison, and he heard about the works of the Christ. Therefore, he sent two of his disciples to ask if he was the one who comes. Jesus told them to report to John about all the things they heard and saw: the sick were healed, and the poor had good news proclaimed to them. After those men left, Jesus began to tell the multitudes of the greatness of John, and to praise him.

The book says that Jesus upbraided the cities in which most of his mighty works occurred, because they did not repent. He said Sodom would have repented. Therefore, it would be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for them. Then he praised God for hiding those things

from the wise and astute, and revealing them to the childlike. And he told all who labored and were heavy burdened to come to him for rest. He said, “**Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, because I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is befitting, and my burden is light**” (Mat. 11:29-30).

The Pharisees frequently condemned Jesus for what they claimed was violating the sabbath. For example, the book tells how they criticized his disciples for plucking ears on the sabbath and eating them as they went through the grain fields. But Jesus defended them. Among other things, he said the priests in the temple worked on the sabbath and were guiltless. He said a greater than the temple was there. He also said, “**For the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath**” (Mat. 12:8). On another occasion there was a man with a withered hand in a synagogue where he was, and they asked him if it was permitted to heal on the sabbath. Jesus reminded them how they lifted out sheep that fell into a pit on the sabbath. And he said, “**How much therefore a man is superior to a sheep. So then it is permitted to do good on the sabbath**” (Mat. 12:12). Nevertheless, after he healed the man, they went out and held a consultation how they might destroy him.

After that the book tells how he healed a blind and mute man who was demon possessed. However, the Pharisees said he cast out demons by Beelzebub the ruler of demons. In this sinful and unjust world, when you are hated you can do no right, but when you are loved you can do no wrong. However, God does not judge that way, and he condemns all who do. Jesus pointed out to them how a kingdom divided against itself was brought to ruin. Therefore, Satan could not cast out Satan and have his kingdom stand. They were so cruel and unjust with that accusation, that he said, “**And whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it will be forgiven him, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, neither in the present age, nor in the one that is coming**” (Mat. 12:32). And he called them offspring of vipers, unable to speak good things.

Next the book says some of the scholars and Pharisees wanted to see a sign from him. How blind they were, for his miracles of healing were great signs. Apparently they wanted to see some spectacular display in the heavens, or some such thing. Jesus said to them, “**An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet**” (Mat.

12:39). He said as Jonah was in the belly of the sea-creature three days and three nights, so he would be in the heart of the earth. That was no doubt a riddle to them, for even his disciples did not understand about his death and resurrection. Jesus said the men of Nineveh would rise up in the judgment with that generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and a greater than Jonah was there. He also said the queen of the south would rise up in the judgment with that generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and a greater than Solomon was there.

On another occasion, when he was speaking to the multitudes, he was told his mother and brothers stood outside seeking to speak to him. He responded by stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, and saying, “**Behold, my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in the heavens, he is my brother, and sister, and mother**” (Mat. 12:49-50).

On that same day he was in a boat near the shore (to avoid being crowded by the people). And he told the multitudes a parable about a man who sowed seed. Some fell by the wayside and were eaten by the birds; some fell on rocky places and were scorched by the sun because they had no root; others fell among thorns and were choked; others fell upon good ground and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Then he said, “**He who has ears, let him hear**” (Mat. 13:9).

His disciples asked him why he spoke to the multitudes in parables. He said it had been given them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but not to the multitudes. He said, “**Because of this I speak to them in parables, because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, nor do they understand**” (Mat. 13:13). And he quoted the scripture in Isaiah about their heart being fat, their eyes hearing heavily, and their eyes being shut (see Isa. 6:9-10). Then he said to his disciples, “**But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear**” (Mat. 13:16).

Then he explained the parable of the man who sows: “**Of every man who hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, evil comes, and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is that which was sown by the wayside. And that which was sown upon the rocky places, this is he who hears the word, and straightaway receiving it with joy, yet he has no**

root in himself, instead it is temporary. And when tribulation or persecution develops because of the word, straightaway he is caused to stumble. And that which was sown in the thorns, this is he who hears the word, and the care of this age, and the deceitfulness of wealth, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But that which was sown upon the good ground, this is he who hears the word, and understands it, who indeed bears fruit, and is productive, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty” (Mat. 13:19-23).

He told several other parables about the kingdom of the heavens. One was about an enemy who sowed tares in the midst of the wheat. When it was discovered the house-ruler told his bondmen to wait until the harvest. Then they would be separated: the tares to be burned, and the wheat to be gathered into his barn. Another parable compared the kingdom of the heavens to a grain of mustard plant that, although very small, grew large. And another compared the kingdom of the heavens to leaven which is hidden in the meal.

Later his disciples asked him to explain the parable of the tares. He said the man who sows the seed was the Son of man, the field was the world, the good seed were the sons of the kingdom, but the tares were the sons of evil. He said the enemy who sowed them was the devil, and the harvest was the end of the age. He said the agents would gather out of his kingdom all the stumbling-blocks, and those doing lawlessness, and would cast them into the furnace of fire. He said, “**There will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear”** (Mat. 13:42-43).

He also compared the kingdom of the heavens to treasure hidden in the field. When a man finds it, with joy he sells all he has, and buys that field. He also compared it to a merchant seeking fine pearls, who found one very valuable pearl. He too sold all he had to buy it. Then he compared it to a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered from every kind. When it was full, they separated the good from the useless. He said it would be like that at the end of the age.

When he asked them if they understood all those things, they said yes. Then he said, “**Because of this every scholar who has been instructed in the kingdom of the heavens is like a man, a house-ruler, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old”** (Mat. 13:52). The new and old things

out of the scholars treasure probably refer to the New and Old Testaments of the Bible.

After that Jesus came to his fatherland, and taught them in their synagogue. But they were offended by him, wanting to know where that carpenter’s son they were familiar with had gotten all that wisdom and those powers. The book says, “**But Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor, except in his fatherland, and in his house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief”** (Mat. 13:57-58).

Then the book tells about how Herod’s wife Herodius found a way to get him to kill John the immerser. She had been the wife of Herod’s brother, and John told Herod it was not lawful for him to have her. Herod cast John in prison but did not want to kill him. However, on his birthday, the daughter of Herodius danced for them, and Herod was so pleased that he vowed he would give her whatever she asked. So her mother told her to ask for the head of John the immerser. His disciples came later, buried him, and informed Jesus. When he heard it, he departed in a boat to a desolate place in private.

Nevertheless, the multitudes followed him on foot, and Jesus felt compassion toward them. After healing the feeble among them, it became evening. When his disciples told him to sent the multitudes away to buy food for themselves, Jesus told them to feed them. They said all they had were five loaves and two fishes. Therefore, he commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And after looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke them into pieces. From those few he fed about five thousand men, besides women and children. And there were twelve baskets of fragments, which he told them to gather, meaning he wanted neither waste nor litter. Then his disciples got into the boat to go ahead of him to the other side while he dismissed the multitudes. After which he went up onto the mountain in private to pray, and was there alone at evening.

The men in the boat were struggling against a contrary wind, and so Jesus went to them, walking upon the sea. When they saw him they said it was a ghost, and cried out from fear. But he said to them, “**Cheer up. It is I, fear not”** (Mat. 14:27). Then Peter said, “**Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the waters”** (Mat. 14:28). Jesus told him to come. So Peter began to walk upon the water to go to Jesus, but when he saw the boisterous wind, he became afraid and began to sink. When he cried out for help, Jesus took hold of him, and said, “**O thou of little faith, why did thou doubt?”** (Mat. 14:31).

When he entered into the boat, the wind ceased, and they worshiped him, saying he really was the Son of God.

When they got to the land, they recognized him, and brought the afflicted from all around for him to heal. Then the scholars and Pharisees from Jerusalem came, and wanted to know why his disciples transgressed the tradition of the elders by not washing their hands when they ate bread. Jesus then gave an example of how they transgressed the commandment of God because of their tradition. And he said to them, "**Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, This people comes near me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips, but their heart is far distant from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men**" (Mat. 15:7-9).

Then he called the multitude and told them it was not what enters into the mouth that defiles a man, but what comes out of it. Later his disciples came and told him the Pharisees were offended by what he had said. Jesus said to leave them, "**They are blind leaders of blind men, and if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a ditch**" (Mat. 15:14). Then Peter asked him to explain the parable. Jesus asked him if he was still without understanding. He said what goes into the mouth passed through the body. But what comes out of the mouth comes forth from the heart, such as evil thoughts, murders, adulteries. They defile the man, not unwashed hands. What Jesus meant by defiling the man was his spirit, his eternal being. He never meant the body could not be defiled by what goes into the mouth. Be very careful how you interpret what Jesus said. Much error and harm have resulted from misunderstanding his words and others in the Bible.

After that a Canaanite woman cried out for him to be merciful to her, because her daughter was grievously demon-possessed. At first he ignored her, but she persisted. His disciples even told him to send her away because she was crying out behind them. Jesus finally told her that he was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. However, she worshiped him, and said, "**Lord, help me**" (Mat. 15:25). Then Jesus told her, "**It is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the house dogs**" (Mat. 15:26). Nevertheless, rather than become offended, she agreed, and said that even the house dogs eat of the crumbs that fell from the table of their masters. She was a humble and wise woman. And so Jesus said, "**O woman, great**

is thy faith. Be it done for thee as thou desire" (Mat. 15:28). And should we not persist in prayer for a worthy cause, and not become discouraged or offended?

When Jesus came to the sea of Galilee he went up onto the mountain. The book says many multitudes brought their infirmed to him. He healed them, and they glorified the God of Israel. Then he said to his disciples, "**I feel compassion toward the multitude because they continue with me now three days and do not have what they might eat. And I do not want to dismiss them without food, lest they might faint on the way**" (Mat. 15:32). They said they only had seven loaves and a few small fishes, so he fed them the same way as before. This time there were four thousand men, besides women and children.

Later Jesus asked his disciples who men said he was. They replied, "**Some, John the immerser, others, Elijah, but others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets**" (Mat. 16:14). When he asked them who they said he was, Peter said he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus blessed him, and said, "**... thou are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it**" (Mat. 16:18). He said he would give him the keys of the kingdom of the heavens. The Roman Catholic church uses those words to justify having a pope. However, Jesus never spoke of a successor to Peter, and the New Testament is filled with teaching against the papal system. Jesus also said that whatever Peter bound on the earth would be what is bound in the heavens, and whatever he loosed on the earth would be what is loosed in the heavens. However, he later said the same thing to all of his disciples (see Mat. 18:18).

Jesus also told his disciples to tell no man he was the Christ. And he began to show them he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the leaders there, and be killed, and be raised up the third day. Peter, however, rebuked Jesus, and said it would not be. However, Jesus said to Peter, "**Go thee behind me, Satan. Thou are my stumbling-block, because thou regard not the things of God, but the things of men**" (Mat. 16:23). Then he told them if any man wanted to come behind him, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him. He said, "**For whoever wants save his life will lose it, and whoever will lose his life for my sake will find it**" (Mat. 16:25). And he asked them what was the profit if a man gained the whole world, and lost his soul.

Next the book says, “**And after six days Jesus takes Peter, and James, and John his brother, and brings them up onto a high mountain in private. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him. And having responded, Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If thou desire, we could make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.** While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying, **This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him.** And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were exceedingly afraid. And having come, Jesus touched them and said, Arise, and fear not. And having lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, except Jesus only” (Mat. 17:1-8).

After they came down, he healed a man’s son who was demon possessed. His disciples had been trying but were unable. When they asked him why they could not, he said it was because of their unbelief. However, he also said that kind did not go out except by prayer and fasting. And he again told them about his death, which made them exceedingly sorry.

When they came to Capernaum, his disciples asked him who was greater in the kingdom of the heavens. Jesus called in a child, and said, “**Truly I say to you, if ye are not turned, and become as children, ye will, no, not enter into the kingdom of the heavens. He therefore who will make himself lowly as this child, this man is the greater in the kingdom of the heavens**” (Mat. 18:3-4). And he told of severe punishment for anyone who caused one of the little ones who believed in him to stumble.

He spoke further about stumbling-blocks, and warned them against anything that would cause them to stumble. He even said it was better to cut off their hand or foot, or pluck out their eye, if it caused them to stumble. He said it was better to enter into life crippled or maimed, than to be cast into the hell of fire. Jesus said he came to save that which was lost. And he spoke of a man with a hundred sheep leaving the ninety-nine to seek the one going astray. He said it was not a purpose of their Father in the heavens, that one of those little ones should perish.

Then he told how we should deal with offenses committed against us by a brother: “**But if thy brother should sin against thee, go and reprove him between thee and him alone. If he should hear thee, thou have gained thy brother. But if he should not hear, take with thee one or two besides, so that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he is heedless of them, speak to the church. But if he is also heedless of the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the tax collector**” (Mat. 18:15-17).

After that Peter asked him how often he should forgive his brother, and he asked if it was seven times. Jesus said, not seven times, but until seventy times seven. Then he told a parable about a king who wanted to settle account with his bondmen. One debtor owed ten thousand talents (a huge sum), and could not pay. Therefore his lord commanded him to be sold, including his wife and children and all he had. But he pleaded with him for patience, and said he would pay it all. His lord had compassion on him, and forgave him the debt. However, the man went out and cast into prison another man who owed him a small sum, although he too had asked for patience. His fellow bondmen were extremely sorry when they saw what happened, and they reported it to their lord. So he summoned him back, and rebuked him for not being merciful as he had been. And having become angry, he delivered him to the tormenters until he could pay all that was due. Then Jesus said, “**So also my heavenly Father will do to you, if ye do not forgive each man his brother, from your hearts, their trespasses**” (Mat. 18:35). Notice also that parable teaches that God will un-forgive if we prove unworthy of his forgiveness.

Jesus then departed from Galilee and came into the regions of Judea beyond the Jordan, with many multitudes following. Pharisees then came, trying him, and asking if it were permitted for a man to divorce his wife for every cause. Jesus reminded them that the two were to become one flesh, and he said, “**What therefore God has joined together, no man shall separate**” (Mat. 19:6). When they asked why Moses allowed a man to divorce his wife, Jesus said, “**For your hard heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it did not happen this way**” (Mat. 19:8). And he told them that whoever divorced his wife, not for fornication, and married another, com-

mits adultery. And a man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

His disciples said if that was the case, it was not advantageous to marry. Then Jesus spoke of men who make themselves eunuchs because of the kingdom of the heavens. And he concluded, "**He who is able to receive it, let him receive it**" (Mat. 19:12). Thus indicating that it was not required of all his disciples. Paul was an example of a man who never married because of his commitment to the Church.

Next the book tells about a young man who had lived righteously, but he asked Jesus what he lacked. Jesus said, "**If thou want to be perfect, go, sell the things being possessed by thee, and give to the poor, and thou will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me**" (Mat. 19:21). The young man went away sorrowing, because he had many possessions. Jesus then told his disciples that a rich man will enter into the kingdom of the heavens with difficulty. He said, "**And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the hole of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God**" (Mat. 19:24).

His disciples were amazed. But Peter said they had forsaken all, and followed him. And he asked what would be for them. Jesus said in the regeneration, when he sat on the throne of glory, they also would sit upon twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel. He said, "**And every man who has forsaken houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, because of my name, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life. But many first will be last, and last, first**" (Mat. 19:29-30).

Then he told a parable about a house-ruler hiring men at different hours of the day to work in his vineyard. At evening he paid them all the same amount, beginning with those who were hired last. When the first ones complained, saying they had borne the burden of the day and the heat, he said to one of them, "**Friend, I do not wrong thee. Did thou not agree with me for a denarius? Take thine and go. But I want to give to this last man, as to thee also**" (Mat. 20:13-14). He asked him if it was not permitted for him to do what he wanted with his own (alas, not in pagan America). And he asked the man if his eye was evil, because he was good. Jesus concluded, "**So the last will be first, and the first last, for many are called but few chosen**" (Mat. 20:16).

Again he told his twelve disciples about his suffering in Jerusalem. He said he was going to be

betrayed and crucified there. Sometime later the mother of the sons of Zebedee (James and John) asked him to speak that her two sons would sit, one at his right, and one at his left, in his kingdom. Jesus told them they did not know what they were asking. He asked them if they could endure what he had to endure, and they said yes. However, he said to sit at his left or his right was not his to give, but for whom it had been prepared by his Father.

When the ten heard it, they were indignant about the two brothers. Therefore, Jesus summoned them, and said they would not be like the rulers of the Gentiles, who lord over them. He said, "**Rather whoever wants to become great among you, he shall be your helper, and whoever wants be first among you shall be your bondman. Just as the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many**" (Mat. 20:26-28).

Next the book tells about his humble procession into Jerusalem. He rode a lowly donkey, and not a majestic horse, which was fulfillment of a prophecy (see Zec. (9:9): "**Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King comes to thee, meek, and mounted upon a donkey, and a colt the foal of a pack animal**" (Mat. 21:5). A great multitude was with him, and they spread their garments on the road. Some cut down branches from trees to spread on the road. They also cried out, "**Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!**" (Mat. 21:9). Jesus had come privately to Jerusalem many times before, but his entrance into Jerusalem that way caused quite a stir in the city.

He then entered into the temple of God, and cast out all the merchants, saying, "**It is written, My house will be called a house of prayer, but ye made it a den of robbers**" (Mat. 21:13). It was not only wrong for them to be there, but they must have been selling at exorbitant prices to the visitors. The book says the lame and blind came to him in the temple, and he healed them. Then he went out of the city to Bethany (about two miles from Jerusalem), and lodged there.

The next morning he cursed a fig tree that had no figs, and it immediately dried out. When the disciples saw it, they asked how it happened. Jesus said if they had faith, and did not doubt, they could tell the mountain to be cast into the sea, and it would happen. He said, "**And all things, as many as ye may ask in prayer, believing, ye will receive**" (Mat. 21:22).

When he returned to the temple, the chief priests and elders of the people demanded to know by what authority he did those things. He said he would tell them, if they answered his question: “**The immersion of John, from where was it, from heaven or from men?**” The book says, “**And they deliberated with themselves, saying, If we should say, From heaven, he will say to us, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we should say, From men, we fear the multitude, for all hold John as a prophet**” (Mat. 21:25-26). So they said they did not know. Therefore, Jesus would not answer their question.

Then he told them some parables. The first was about two children, whom their father told to go work in his vineyard. One said he did not want to go, but later went. The other said he would go, but did not. When he asked which one did the will of the father, they said the first. Then he said to them, “**Truly I say to you, that the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you**” (Mat. 21:31). He said the tax collectors and the harlots believed John, but they did not, even when they saw it.

He told them another parable about a house-ruler who planted a vineyard, leased it to farmers, and went on a journey. Later he sent his bondmen to the farmers to receive his fruits, but they abused them. He kept sending others with the same response. Then he decided to send his son, expecting them to be made ashamed by him. However, they killed him so they could possess his inheritance. When he asked them what the lord of the vineyard would do, they said, “**Evil men, he will miserably destroy them, and will lease out the vineyard to other farmers, who will render him the fruits in their seasons**” (Mat. 21:41). Then he said the kingdom of God was going to be taken away from them, and given to a nation producing the fruits of it. So they sought to seize him, but feared the multitude, because they held him as a prophet.

Jesus spoke another parable. He said the kingdom of the heavens was like a man, a king who made a wedding for his son. But when he sent forth his bondmen to call those who were invited, they all found excuses not to go. They even abused and killed his bondmen. Therefore, the king became angry, sent forth his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he told his bondmen to go out into the roads and gather as many as they found, both bad and good. And the wedding was filled with those who were dining. However, he

saw a man there without a wedding garment. When the man had no explanation why, he was bound, and cast into the outer darkness. Jesus said, “**There will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen**” (Mat. 22:13-14).

The Pharisees counseled together how to trap him in his talk. And so they sent out disciples, who flattered him, and then asked him a trick question. They said, “**Is it permitted to give tribute to Caesar or not?**” (Mat. 22:17). If he said no, then he would have been in trouble with the Romans. If he said yes, he would have angered the people, for they hated the Roman occupiers and their tax collectors. However, the tribute money had Caesar’s image and inscription on it, so Jesus told them, “**Therefore, render the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God**” (Mat. 22:21). When they heard it, they marveled and left.

However the Sadducees also came and questioned him. They claimed there was no resurrection. They reminded him that Moses said if a man who had no child died, his brother must marry his widow to raise up seed for him. Then they told of a woman who had married seven brothers, one after the other, because they each died without a child. She ended having had seven husbands before she finally died. They asked him who would be her husband in the resurrection, because they all had her. Jesus responded, “**Ye are led astray, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as agents of God in heaven**” (Mat. 22:29-30). The book says the multitudes were astonished at his doctrine.

Then one of the Pharisees, a lawyer, tried him by asking which was the great commandment in the law. Jesus replied, “**Thou shall love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law, and the prophets**” (Mat. 22:37-39). Jesus then asked them a question about David which they could not answer, and so no man dared question him anymore.

After silencing his adversaries, Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples about the scholars and the Pharisees. He said they sat on Moses seat (meaning they had the religious authority), and so they should observe what they told them. However, he said not to do according to their works, for they say, and do not. Then he gave examples of their

hypocrisy, and their love of power and glory. He told his disciples not to be like them. He said the greater of them would be their helper, not their leader. He said, “**And he who will exalt himself will be made low, and he who will make himself low will be exalted**” (Mat. 23:12).

Then he rebuked the scholars and Pharisees. Three times he said to them, “**Woe to you, scholars and Pharisees, hypocrites!**” (Mat. 23:13-15). And each time he gave an example of their hypocrisy, such as devouring widows houses, and then praying long in pretense. Then he said “**Woe to you, ye blind guides**” (Mat. 23:16). He said they were foolish and blind men, and he gave examples to prove it. Then four more times he said, “**Woe to you, scholars and Pharisees, hypocrites!**” (Mat. 23:24, 25, 27, 29). And each time he gave more examples of it.

He said they strained out the gnat, and swallowed the camel, because they were particular about tithing, but omitted the weightier matters of the law— justice and mercy and faith. He said they cleansed the outside of the cup and of the platter, but inside they were full of plunder and unrighteousness. He said they were like whitewashed tombs, beautiful outside, but full of dead men’s bones. He said outwardly they appeared righteous to men, but inside they were full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. He said to them, “**Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how will ye escape from the damnation of hell?**” (Mat. 23:33).

Then Jesus spoke with both compassion and foreboding toward the city. He said, “**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets, and stones those who have been sent to her. How often I wanted to gathered thy children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left to you desolate**” (Mat. 23:37-38).

When Jesus was going out of the temple his disciples showed him the buildings of it. However, Jesus replied, “**Do ye not see all these things? Truly I say to you, there will be left here, no, not a stone upon a stone, that will not be thrown down**” (Mat. 24:2). After he came to the mount of Olives his disciples came to him privately, and asked him when those things would be, and what was the sign of his coming and the end of the age.

First he told them what to expect in life before the end of the world. There would be false Christs and false prophets; wars and rumors of wars; famines, plagues, and earthquakes; persecution and lawlessness. He said, “**But he who endures to the end,**

this man will be saved” (Mat. 24:13). And he said the good news of the kingdom would be proclaimed in the whole world, then the end would come.

After that he told them about the destruction of Jerusalem. He warned when to flee, saying, “**When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation that was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him who reads understand), then let those in Judea flee to the mountains**” (Mat 24:15-16). He also warned them about false Christs and false prophets.

Next he told them about the end of the world, when the Son of man would come in the clouds of the sky with power and much glory. He also said nobody knows when that will be, not even the agents in heaven, except his Father only. Then he warned them to be prepared for the end. And he told parables about being prepared. First he told about bondmen whom their lord had appointed over his service. The faithful would be rewarded, but the unfaithful would be punished. Then he told a parable about ten virgins invited to a wedding, five were wise and five were foolish. The wise took olive oil for their lamps. However, the foolish did not, and when the bridegroom delayed, they ran out of oil. When they went to get more the wedding festivities began, and they were not allowed in afterward. Notice even though they were virgins, they were rejected because they were not prepared. After the parable, Jesus said, “**Watch therefore, because ye know not the day nor the hour in which the son of man comes**” (Mat. 25:13).

Next he told a parable about three men being given talents to invest while their lord went on a journey. One was given five talents, another two, and the other one, each according to his personal ability. After their lord returned, the men with the five and two talents had doubled their money. Their lord said to each of them, “**Well, good and faithful bondman. Thou were faithful over a few things, I will appoint thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord**” (Mat. 25:21, 23). The man with the one talent gave it back. He told his lord he knew he was a hard man, reaping and gathering what he did not sow and scatter, so he hid it in the ground. His master called him an evil and lazy bondman, and said he should have given it to the bankers, so he could have received it back with interest. And he commanded to cast the unprofitable bondman into the outer darkness. He said, “**There will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth**” (Mat. 25:30).

Then he told how it would be when the Son of man will sit on the throne of his glory, with all the holy agents with him. He said he will gather all the nations, and separate them from each other, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He was going to place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then he (the King) will tell the sheep on his right to come and inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. For they fed him, gave him drink, clothed him, and helped him in other ways when he was in need. He said when the righteous ask him when they did all those things, he will answer, **“Truly I say to you, inasmuch as ye did it to one of these my brothers, the least, ye did it to me”** (Mat. 25:40).

Then he will tell those on his left to depart into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his agents. And he mentioned his same needs, which they ignored. And when they ask when they did so, he will say, **“Truly I say to you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of these least, ye did it not to me”** (Mat. 25:45). Jesus said those would go into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

After that he told his disciples that he was going to be betrayed in two days, at the Passover. He was in Bethany, and a woman came having an alabaster cruse of precious ointment, which she poured on his head as he sat relaxing. His disciples criticized her for wasting what could have been sold and given to the poor. But Jesus said, **“Why do ye cause troubles to the woman? For she has wrought a good work upon me. For ye always have the poor with you, but ye do not always have me”** (Mat. 26:10). He said she did it for his burial, and wherever the good news was proclaimed in the whole world, what she did would be told for a memorial of her. Then Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests, and made a deal to betray him for thirty silver pieces.

Later, during the Passover feast with his twelve apostles, Jesus said one of them was going to betray him. They were all exceedingly sorrowful, and each one began to ask if it was he. When Judas asked, Jesus replied, **“Thou have said”** (Mat. 26:25), which is an expression meaning yes.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, expressed thanks (to God), broke it in pieces, gave it to the disciples, and told them to eat, for it was his body. He also took the cup, expressed thanks, and gave it to them. He told them to drink, for it was the blood of the new covenant, which was shed on behalf of many for remission of sins. And after singing a hymn, they went out to the mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, **“All ye will be caused to stumble by me in this night, for it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered”** (Mat. 26:31). And after he was raised, he would go before them into Galilee. Peter responded he would never be caused to stumble, but Jesus said he would deny him thrice before a cock sounded. Nevertheless, Peter said that even if he died with him, he would not deny him. And all the disciples said the same.

Jesus took them to a place called Gethsemane, and told them to sit there while he went and prayed. Then he took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and distressed. He told them his soul was deeply grieved, as far as death. He told them to watch, and then he went ahead of them, fell on his face, and prayed, **“My Father, if it be possible, may this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I want, but as thou”** (Mat. 26:39). Then he returned to the disciples and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, **“So ye could not watch with me one hour. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. Truly, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak”** (Mat. 26:40-41). He went and prayed a second time, and prayed a similar prayer. When he returned he found them again sleeping. Then he went and prayed a third time, asking the same thing.

When he returned the third time, Judas came with a great multitude with swords and clubs from the chief priests and elders of the people. Judas gave them a sign, saying whomever he kissed was he. Therefore, after he kissed Jesus, they seized him. Then Peter drew a sword, and cut off the ear of the high priest's bondman, but Jesus told him to put it back. He said he could ask his Father, and he would send twelve legions of agents. But how would the scriptures be fulfilled?

So they led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, and Peter followed from a distance. The chief priests, the elders, and the whole council sought testimony against Jesus so they could put him to death. They were not successful. So the high priest asked him if he was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said, **“Thou have said. Nevertheless I say to you, Henceforth ye will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of the sky”** (Mat. 26:64). The high priest tore his clothes and said he blasphemed. They all condemned him to death, and began to abuse him physically, spitting in his face, and beating him.

Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. He was accused on three separate occasions of being with Jesus, but he denied it each time. A cock sounded immediately after the third time, and Peter remembered Jesus' prediction. Then he went outside and wept bitterly. When it became morning, the chief priests and the elders held consultation together to condemn Jesus to death. Then they bound him, and took him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and returned the thirty silver pieces to the chief priests and elders, saying, "**I sinned, having betrayed innocent blood.**" But they answered, "**What is it to us? See thou to it**" (Mat. 27:4). Therefore, he cast the silver in the temple, and went out and hanged himself. The chief priests bought a potters field with the silver to bury foreigners, because they said it was not lawful to put blood-money in the treasury. What hypocrites! Yet what they did fulfilled a prophecy which Matthew said was from Jeremiah. However, it is not found in the book of Jeremiah, but in the book of Zechariah (11:12-13). Jeremiah died almost half a century before Zechariah. Hence, Zechariah probably quoted what Jeremiah said that was either never written down, or was in some lost manuscript of his.

When the governor asked Jesus if he was the king of the Jews, he said he was. The chief priests and elders accused him of many things, but he did not respond, which caused Pilate to marvel. It was a custom during a feast for the governor to release one prisoner to the crowd. He offered either Jesus or Barabbas a notorious prisoner. Persuaded by the chief priests and elders, the crowd chose Barabbas. When asked about Jesus, they cried out that he be crucified. Pilate washed his hands in front of them, and said, "**I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man. See ye to it**" (Mat. 27:24). Upon which the crowd answered, "**His blood be on us, and on our children**" (Mat. 27:25).

Then he released Barabbas to them, and after scourging Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. After taking him into the Praetorium, the whole band of soldiers ridiculed and abused him. Then they took him to a place called Golgotha (meaning the place of a skull), and crucified him. They divided his garments by casting a lot, and they set up over his head his accusation: "**THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS**" (Mat. 27:37). The book says that all who passed by reviled him, shaking their heads. Likewise the chief priests with the

scholars, elders, and Pharisees, ridiculed him. Also the robbers who were crucified with him reviled him the same way.

The book says that from the sixth hour (noon) darkness developed over the land for three hours. Then Jesus cried out in a great voice, saying, "**Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is, My God, my God, why have thou forsaken me?**" (Mat. 27:46), which was a quotation from Psalm 22. God forsook him then so that he could become our redeemer and save our souls. After that Jesus died. And the curtain of the temple was torn apart, the earth quaked, sepulchers were opened, and many bodies of the sanctified who had slept arose. After his resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared to many.

The book says, "**And many women were there watching from afar, who followed Jesus from Galilee, serving him, among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee**" (Mat. 27:55-56). At evening a rich man named Joseph, a disciple of Jesus, requested his body from Pilate. He wrapped him in linen, and laid him in his own new sepulcher, which he hewed out in the rock. Then he rolled a great stone to the door of it. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

Near dawn on the first day of the week, those two women came to see the tomb. A great earthquake had occurred when an agent of the Lord came down from heaven, and rolled away the stone. The book says his appearance was as lightning and his clothing white as snow. The men sent by the Jews to guard his body shook from fear, and became as dead men. The agent told the women not to fear. He told them the Lord was raised as he said. And he told them to go quickly and tell his disciples he was raised from the dead, and goes before them into Galilee. They will see him there. As they went, Jesus also met them and greeted them. He too told them to inform his brothers to go into Galilee to see him.

When the security force went and told the chief priests, they paid them silver to say his disciples came and stole him while they slept. They said they would protect them from the governor if he heard about it. When Jesus met his disciples on the mountain in Galilee, the book says they worshiped him. Yet there were still some who doubted. Why do men harden their hearts so?

The book ends with Jesus saying, "**All authority in heaven and on earth was given to me. After**

going, make ye disciples of all the nations, immersing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them

to observe all things, as many as I commanded you. And lo, I am with you all the days, until the end of the age. Truly.”

A Description of Mark

“The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” After those words the book quotes the prophets Malachi and Isaiah, who wrote about John the immerser, saying he was a messenger sent to prepare the way of the Lord. John was immersing in the wilderness, and preaching an immersion of repentance for remission of sins. The book says all the land of Judea and the Jerusalemites went out to him to be immersed in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. He also preached of a man mightier than he, whom he was not worthy to stoop down and loosen the strap of his shoes. He said that man would immerse them in a Holy Spirit.

Then Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was immersed by John in the Jordan. When he came up out of the water, he saw the heavens divided, and the Spirit descending upon him as a dove. And a voice spoke out of the heavens, saying, **“Thou are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”** (Mark 1:11). And immediately the Spirit drove him into the wilderness with the wild beasts. He was there forty days tempted by Satan. And the agents served him.

After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the good news. He said the time was fulfilled, and the kingdom of God had come near. He told the people to repent and believe the good news. Then he called four fishermen to follow him. First was Simon (Peter) and Andrew his brother, then James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother. He entered Capernaum, and taught in the synagogue on the sabbath day. The book says they were astonished at his teaching, because he taught them as having authority, and not as the scholars.

There was a man in the synagogue with an unclean spirit, who cried out, **“Oh no! What is with us and with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Did thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou are, the Holy man of God”** (Mark 1:24). But Jesus told him to be silent, and come out of the man. After he did the people were amazed, and his fame spread into the entire region around Galilee.

After leaving the synagogue he came into the house of Simon and Andrew, and healed Simon’s

mother-in-law who had a fever. That evening they brought to him all who were faring badly, and were demon-possessed. He healed many who were infirmed, and cast out many demons. But he would not allow the demons to speak, because they had recognized him.

He arose very early the next day, and departed to other towns. The book says he preached in their synagogues, and cast out the demons. Then a leper came and besought him. Jesus healed him, and then warned him to tell nobody. However, he began to proclaim it much, and spread it abroad, so that Jesus could no longer enter openly into a city, but was outside in desolate places. And they came to him from all directions. Was it not very ungrateful and even cruel of that leper to disobey him? He may not have anticipated the trouble he caused Jesus, but that is no excuse. It should be a lesson for all of us. Disobedience to God always causes trouble, one way or another.

Jesus entered again into Capernaum, and after some days they heard he was in a house. So many gathered together that they filled the house. While he spoke the word to them, four men brought a paralyzed man. When they could not get him inside because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof above him, and let the bed down to him. After seeing their faith, he told the man his sins were forgiven. However, some scholars thought he was blaspheming, for only God could forgive sins. Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them which was easier, to say his sins were forgiven, or to tell him to take up his bed and walk. Then he said, **“But that ye may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins (he says to the paralyzed man), I say to thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go to thy house”** (Mark 2:10-11). And all the people were amazed and glorified God.

After that he called Levi (also called Matthew), a tax collector, to follow him. When he was dining in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and his disciples. The scholars of the Pharisees criticized him for that, but Jesus said the strong had no need of a physician, but those faring

badly. He said, “**I came not to call the righteous, but sinners for repentance**” (Mark 2:17).

John’s disciples and those of the Pharisees were fasting, and they asked Jesus why his disciples did not fast. Jesus gave some comparisons to justify his disciples, including one about not putting new wine in old wineskins. He also defended his disciples from criticism for plucking and eating grain in a field on the sabbath day. And he said, “**The sabbath came into being for sake of man, and not man for sake of the sabbath. So then the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath**” (Mark 2:27-28). When he entered into the synagogue, there was a man with a withered hand, and they were ready to criticize him for healing on the sabbath. Therefore, Jesus asked them if it was permitted to do good or to do harm on the sabbath day, to save life or to kill. But they were silent. He looked at them with anger, being grieved at the callousness of their heart, and he healed the man. Nevertheless, the Pharisees went out and made a plot how they might destroy him. Did they care about afflicted people?

Jesus continued to travel about, and a great multitude from Galilee followed him. Then he went up onto a mountain, and called those whom he wanted. He appointed twelve men, so that they might be with him. And that he might send them forth to preach, and have authority to heal diseases and to cast out demons. Then the book names them. He added the name Peter to Simon. Next was James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, to whom he added the name Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder. Then Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus (called Judas the son of James in the book of Luke), Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

When the multitude came together again, they were not even able to eat. And apparently Jesus was so zealous to help the people that those with him said he was beside himself, and they went out to grasp him. However, acting like the devil (which means slanderer), the Pharisees even used the good he did against him. They said, “**He has Beelzebub, and, By the ruler of the demons he casts out the demons**” (Mark 3:22). However, Jesus taught them with parables that a house divided cannot stand. And if Satan had risen up against himself, he could not stand, but would have an end.

Their false accusation was very cruel, for by implication it even condemned those who were restored by what they charged was the devil’s work.

They would rather the people have remained demon possessed, than give Jesus any credit for doing good. Therefore, Jesus said, “**Truly I say to you, that all the sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and the blasphemies, as many as they may blaspheme. But whoever may blaspheme against the Holy Spirit has no forgiveness, into the age, but is deserving of eternal damnation**” (Mark 3:28-30). He said those things, the book says, “**because they said, He has an unclean spirit.**” (Mark 3:30).

Jesus again began to teach by the sea, and because of the crowd he sat in a boat. He taught them many things in parables. He told about a man sowing seed. Some fell by the path, and the birds came and devoured it; others fell on rocky ground, and were scorched by the sun because they had no root; others fell among thorns, and were choked by them; others fell on good ground and gave fruit, one thirty, one sixty, and one a hundred. Then he said, “**He who has ears to hear, let him hear**” (Mark 4:9).

Afterward the twelve asked him about the parable. He said to them, “**To you is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to those outside, all things occur in parables. So that seeing they may see, and not perceive, and hearing they may hear, and not understand, lest they should turn, and the sins would be forgiven them**” (Mark 4:11-12). Then he explained the parable. He said those by the path were those who heard, but Satan took away the word from their hearts. The ones on the rocky places receive the word with joy, but are caused to stumble when tribulation or persecution developed. The ones in the thorns were those who let the cares of this age, and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. Those upon the good ground were those who heard, received it, and bore fruit. He also said to them, “**Watch what ye hear. By what measure ye measure, it will be measured to you, and to those who hear, it will be added to you. For whoever has, to him it will be given. And he who has not, even what he has will be taken away from him**” (Mark 4:24-25).

He also compared the kingdom of God to the mustard plant, which is smaller than all the seeds, yet it grows greater, and makes great branches. The book says he spoke many parables to them. And he did not speak to the people apart from a parable, but privately he explained all things to his disciples.

At evening that day he went with his disciples in a boat to the other side (of the Sea of Galilee). On

the way a great storm developed, and the boat was filling from the waves tossed in. Jesus was asleep in the stern, so they awoke him, and said, “**Teacher, does it not concern thee that we perish?**” (Mark 4:38). Jesus rebuked the wind, and told the sea to be quiet. Then it became a great calm, and Jesus said to them, “**Why are ye cowardly this way? How have ye no faith?**” (Mark 4:40). The book says they feared a great fear, and asked each other who he was, that even the wind and the sea obeyed him. Remember, however, unlike the wind and the sea, we have the gift of freewill, and can obey or not. Therefore, we will be judged accordingly.

On the other side they were met by a man with an unclean spirit who dwelt among the sepulchers. He was so fierce that no man could bind him, even with chains, because he always broke free. The book says he spent night and day, in the mountains and in the sepulchers, crying out and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus, he ran and worshiped him, and cried out with a great voice, “**What is with me and with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, do not torment me**” (Mark 5:7). When he asked the unclean spirit his name he said it was Legion, because they were many. The demons begged him to send them into the nearby herd of swine. Jesus allowed them, and when they did the herd stampeded down the slope, and were drowned in the sea. There were about two thousand.

When the people in the fields and in the city heard about it, they came and saw the man, clothed and in his right mind. Then they begged Jesus to depart from their borders. When Jesus got in the boat, the man who was restored besought him to go with him. However, Jesus told him to go to his house, and report to them how much the Lord did for him, and was merciful to him. And so the man began to proclaim in Decapolis how much Jesus did for him. And all men marveled. He proved worthy of being saved, because he obeyed Jesus.

On the other side a synagogue ruler fell at his feet, and besought him to come and save his little daughter. On the way he was surrounded by a great multitude. And a woman with an incurable issue of blood twelve years, came from behind, and touched his garment. She said, “**If I but touch his garments, I will be healed**” (Mark 5:28), and it happened. Jesus asked who touched him, and the woman, fearing and trembling, came and fell down before him, and told him the truth. He said to her, “**Daughter, thy faith has healed thee. Go in**

peace, and be healthy from thy scourge” (Mark 5:34).

Then word came saying the synagogue ruler’s daughter had died, so not to trouble the teacher. However, Jesus told him not to fear, only believe. When he arrived he told the crowd not to make a commotion, because the child was not dead, only sleeping. However, they ridiculed him, but he had them all put out. Then he went in with the father and mother of the child, and only Peter, James, and John with them. He took her hand and told her to awake. She immediately rose up and walked. They were all amazed, but he commanded them that no man know it.

He went from there to his fatherland. However, having seen him as a carpenter they were offended by his wisdom and mighty works. Therefore, he said to them, “**A prophet is not without honor, except in his fatherland, and among his kin, and in his house**” (Mark 6:4). He marveled because of their unbelief, and went around the villages teaching.

Then he summoned the twelve, and began to send them forth in pairs, giving them authority over the unclean spirits. He told them not to take extra provisions, and when they entered a house, to lodge there until they departed. And they were to shake the dust from their feet where they were not received. He said it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city. He told them to preach that men should repent.

King Herod heard of Jesus, and he thought he was John the immerser raised from the dead. Herod had arrested John and bound him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, whom he had married. John told Herod it was not permitted for him to have his brother’s wife. Herodias wanted to kill him, but could not, because Herod feared John, knowing he was a righteous and holy man. However, a convenient day came for Herodius when her daughter danced before Herod and his guests on his birthday. She pleased Herod, and he vowed to give her whatever she asked. Prompted by her mother, she asked for the head of John the immerser. Herod was sorry, but did not refuse. Afterward his disciples came and laid his corpse in a sepulcher.

After Jesus’ apostles returned, he told them to go to a desolate place and rest. However, many saw them going, and they ran together before them. When Jesus saw the great multitude, he felt compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd. And he taught them many things. When the hour became late, his disciples

told him to send them away to get food. However, he told them to feed them. When they said they could not, he asked what they had. They said five loaves and two fishes. Jesus then commanded the people to sit down in companies. So they sat in groups, by hundreds and fifties. Then, after looking up to heaven, he blessed, and broke the loaves, giving the pieces to the disciples. He also distributed the two fishes. The book says they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments. The record says those who ate were five thousand men.

Jesus then compelled his disciples to enter the boat and go to the other side, while he would send the crowd away. Afterward he went onto the mountain to pray. At evening the boat was in the midst of the sea, and the men were struggling because the wind was against them. Therefore, late at night he came to them, walking on the water. When they saw him they thought he was a ghost, and they cried out. But he said, "**Cheer up. It is I, fear not**" (Mark 6:50). Then he entered the boat, and the wind ceased. And they were exceedingly amazed.

On the other side the Pharisees and some scholars from Jerusalem gathered to him. When they saw some of his disciples eating with unwashed hands, they accused them. The book says the Pharisees, and all the Jews, were very fastidious about washing. When they asked Jesus why his disciples did not walk according to the tradition of the elders, he said, "**Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far distant from me. But in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men**" (Mark 7:6-7).

He gave one example of how they rejected the commandment of God so that they could keep their tradition. And he said they did many such things. Then he summoned all the people, and said to them, "**There is nothing outside the man, entering into him that can defile him, but the things coming out of him those are the things that defile the man. If any man has ears to hear, let him hear**" (Mark 7:15-16).

Later when he entered into a house from the crowd, his disciples questioned him about the parable. He said what goes into the man passes through the body. Then he mentioned things like evil thoughts, adulteries, murders, deceit, pride. And he said, "**All these evil things come from inside, and**

defile the man" (Mark 7:23). He meant the spirit of a man, his eternal being.

Afterward he went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. A woman there heard, and she came and fell down at his feet. She besought him to cast out the demon from her daughter. Jesus told her it was not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the house dogs. She was a wise and humble woman, so she agreed, but added that even the house dogs ate of the children's crumbs. Jesus said to her, "**Because of this saying, go thou. The demon has gone out of thy daughter**" (Mark 7:29). And when she went to her house, she found the demon had gone out.

When he came back to the sea of Galilee, they brought a deaf, tongue-tied man to him, and he healed him. The book says, "**And he commanded them that they should tell no man, but as much as he commanded them, so much the more abundantly they proclaimed it**" (Mark 7:36). They praised Jesus, saying he did all things well. But let no man think that Jesus did not care they disobeyed him, or that they would not be held accountable (see Mat. 12:36).

After that he fed a crowd of four thousand with only seven loaves and a few small fishes. Having compassion toward the multitude, he did not want to send them away without food. For they had been with him three days. Then he got in the boat again with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmathia. Pharisees there began to dispute with him, and they sought a sign from the sky. Apparently they wanted a spectacular show, but Jesus refused. Having left them, he entered into the boat, and departed to the other side. Then he said to his disciples, "**Take heed, watch for the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod**" (Mark 8:15). They thought it was because they forgot to take bread, but he said to them, "**Why do ye deliberate because ye have no loaves? Do ye not yet perceive nor understand? Have ye your heart still hardened?**" (Mark 8:17).

When they came to Bethsaida, they brought a blind man for him to heal. Jesus healed him, then told him to neither go into the village, nor tell any man in the village. On the way into the villages of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples who men said that he was. They said John the immerser, or Elijah, or one of the prophets. When he asked them who they said he was, Peter said he was the Christ. Jesus chided them to tell no man about him. Then he began to tell them it was necessary for the Son of

man to suffer many things, and be rejected by the leadership, and be killed, and after three days to rise. After taking Jesus aside, Peter began to rebuke him. However, Jesus turned his back to Peter and rebuked him, saying, “**Go thee behind me, Satan, because thou think not the things of God, but the things of men**” (Mark 8:33).

Then he called in the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, “**Whoever wants to follow behind me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever will lose his life because of me and the good news, this man will save it**” (Mark 8:34-35). He asked what it would profit a man if he should gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul. He also said that whoever was ashamed of him and his words in that adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man would also be ashamed of him when he comes into the glory of his Father with the holy agents.

After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, up onto a high mountain alone. Then he was transfigured before them, and his garments became glistening, exceedingly white. Also Elijah and Moses appeared and spoke with him. Peter then suggested building three tabernacles, one for each of them. However, a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of it, saying, “**This is my beloved Son. Hear ye him**” (Mark 9:7). Then they saw no man anymore, except Jesus with them. When they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them to tell no man what they saw until he had risen from the dead. But they wondered among themselves what was the rising from the dead.

They told Jesus the scholars said that Elijah must come first. He said it was true, and it was also written that the Son of man would suffer many things and be rejected. Then he told them Elijah had already come, and they did to him as much as they wanted, just as it was written for him (he was referring to John the immerser).

When they came to the disciples he saw a great multitude around them, and the scholars were disputing with them. One from the multitude told Jesus how he brought his son to him. He had a mute spirit that would seize him, and throw him into a fit. He said his disciples could not cast it out. Then Jesus said, “**O faithless generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I endure you? Bring him to me**” (Mark 9:19). The man told how the evil spirit tormented his son, and he said to Jesus, “**But if thou can do anything, help us, having compas-**

sion toward us” (Mark 9:22). Then the book says, “**Jesus said to him, If thou are able to believe, all things are possible to him who believes. And straightaway the father of the child having cried out, he said with tears, I believe. Lord, help thou my unbelief**” (Mark 9:23-24). Jesus healed him, but his disciples later asked why they could not cast it out. He said that kind could come out by nothing except prayer and fasting. And again he told them how he would be killed, and would rise the third day.

When they came to Capernaum he asked them what they had been deliberating on the way. They were silent, for they had discussed among themselves who was greater. Jesus said to them, “**If any man wants to be first, he will be last of all, and helper of all**” (Mark 9:35). Then he took a child, and set it in the midst of them. And he spoke of rewards and punishments for helping or hindering such little ones who believed in him. He also told them to remove anything that caused them to stumble, even if it were a hand or an eye. He said it was better to enter life crippled, than to be cast into the unquenchable fire of hell.

Then he went to the other side of the Jordan, and the Pharisees demanded of him if it were permitted for a man to divorce his wife, testing him. When asked what Moses commanded, they said he allowed a document of divorce. Jesus said, “**For your hard heart he wrote for you this commandment**” (Mark 10:5). He told them from the beginning of creation they were to be no more two, but one flesh. And what God had joined together, no man should separate. When his disciples asked him about this, he said that whoever divorced and married another, commits adultery.

Next the book tells about a man who asked him what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him he knew the commandments, and he mentioned some of the ten. When the man said he had observed them from his youth, Jesus looked at him, loved him, and told him he lacked one thing. He told him to sell all he had, give it to the poor so he would have treasure in heaven, and after taking up the cross, come and follow him. The man went away sorrowing, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus told his disciples how hard it was for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of heaven. They were exceedingly astonished, and asked who then could be saved. He said it was impossible with men, but not with God.

When Peter said they had left all and followed him, Jesus replied, **“Truly I say to you, there is no man who has left house, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, because of me, and because of the good news, but he will receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands—with persecutions—and in the coming age, eternal life. But many first will be last, and the last first”** (Mark 10:29-31).

Later James and John asked if they could sit, one at his right and the other at his left, in his glory. Jesus said they did not know what they were asking. When he asked them if they could endure what he had to endure, they said yes. Nevertheless, he told them that to sit at his left or his right was not his to give, but was for whom it had been prepared. When the ten heard it they became indignant about James and John. Therefore, Jesus summoned them, and said they would not be like those who rule over the Gentiles. He said whoever wanted to become great among them, would be their helper. He said, **“For the Son of man also came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many”** (Mark 10:45).

Next the book tells how he healed a blind man as he continued on his way to Jerusalem. Then when he came near the city he sent two of his disciples to get a colt. And after they threw their garments on it, he sat upon it. Many spread their garments upon the road, and others were cutting branches, and spreading them on the road. They also cried out, **“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”** (Mark 11:9-10).

After he came to Jerusalem he went into the temple, and looked around on all things. Since it was late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve. On the way back the next day he cursed a fig tree that had no figs. Then he entered the temple, and drove out the merchants. He also would not allow any man to carry a container through the temple. And he said to them, **“Is it not written, My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But ye made it a den of robbers”** (Mark 11:17). The scholars and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him. They were afraid of him, because all the people were awed at his doctrine.

At evening he again went outside the city. The next morning Peter told him the fig tree he had

cursed was dried out. Jesus told them if they had faith and did not doubt, they could tell the mountain to be cast into the sea, and it would happen. He said, **“Because of this I say to you, all things, as many as ye may ask, praying, believe that ye receive, and it will be for you”** (Mark 11:24).

After he came to the temple, the chief priest, the scholars, and the elders, came to him. They wanted to know by what authority he was doing those things. Jesus said he would answer them if they would tell him whether the immersion of John was from heaven or from men. They had rejected John, but the people held he was a prophet. Therefore, they would have looked bad whichever way they answered. Therefore, they said they did not know. And Jesus said neither would he tell them by what authority he did those things.

Then he began to speak to them in parables. He told of a man who planted a vineyard, made things for it, then leased it to farmers and went on a journey. When it was time to receive the fruits, he sent bondmen to them. However, they abused them, and sent them away empty. He continued sending men, but they gave them the same treatment, even killing some. So he send his son, saying they would be ashamed by him. However, they killed him so as to get his inheritance. Jesus asked them what the lord of the vineyard would do. They said he would destroy the farmers, and give the vineyard to others. Then Jesus asked them if they had not read this scripture: **“The stone that those who build rejected, this came to be into the head of the corner. This happened from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes?”** (Mark 12:10-11). That was a quote from Psalm 118:22-23. Knowing he spoke the parable against them, they sought to seize him, but feared the multitude.

Later they sent some of the Pharisees and the Herodians to trap him in talk. They first flattered him (see Pro. 29:5), then asked if it was permitted to give tribute or not. Jesus knew their hypocrisy, and he asked why they tested him. When he called for a coin, he asked them whose image and inscription was on it. When they said it was Caesar's, he said to them, **“Render the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God”** (Mark 12:17). The book says they marveled at him.

The Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, also questioned him. They reminded him that Moses said if a childless man died, his brother must marry his widow to raise up seed for him. Then they told of a woman who married seven brothers, one after

the other, because they each died childless. So they asked him whose wife she would be in the resurrection. Jesus said to them, “**Are ye not led astray because of this: not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as agents in the heavens**” (Mark 12:24-25).

When one of the scholars heard them disputing, and knowing that Jesus answered them well, he asked him which was the first commandment of all. Jesus answered, “**The first of all the commandments is, Hear, thou Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shall love the Lord thy God from thy whole heart, and from thy whole soul, and from thy whole mind, and from thy whole strength. This is the first commandment. And this second is similar, Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these**” (Mark 12:29-31). When the scholar agreed, Jesus told him he was not far from the kingdom of God. And no man dared question him anymore. Jesus then asked them a question about David they could not answer, and the book says the great multitude heard him gladly.

Next it says he sat opposite the treasury, and watched how the multitude cast in their money. Many rich men cast in much, but one poor widow cast in two mites. Jesus said she cast in more than all of them, because she cast in all she had, her whole living. When they were going out of the temple, one of his disciples said for him to look at what kind of stones and buildings they were. Jesus told him there would not be left one stone upon another that would not be brought down. As they sat upon the mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately to tell them when those things would be, and what was the sign when they were all going to be fulfilled.

Jesus warned them not to be led astray. He said there would be wars, earthquakes, famines, and troubles, but they were the beginnings of travails. Then he told them to expect severe persecution, even from within their families. He said, “**And ye will be hated by all men because of my name, but he who endures to the end, this man will be saved**” (Mark 13:13). Then he told them what to look for, and what to do when Jerusalem was going to be destroyed. And he warned them of false Christs and false prophets. Finally, he told them what would happen at the end of the world. He said they would see the Son of man coming in clouds

with much power and glory. And he would send forth his agents to gather his chosen.

He told them to learn a parable from the fig tree. When its branch sprouts leaves, they know summer is near. So also when they saw those things, they would know it was near. Then he said, “**But about that day or that hour no man knows, not even the agents in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father**” (Mark 13:32). And he warned them to watch and pray. He said it was like a man who departed after giving authority to his bondmen, to each man his work. He said to watch, for they knew not when the lord of the house would return, lest he find them sleeping. He said, “**And what I say to you I say to all, watch!**” (Mark 13:37).

Two days before the Passover and the (feast of) unleavened bread, the chief priests and the scholars sought how to take Jesus by trickery so they might kill him. But they did not want it during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people. Jesus was relaxing in Bethany, and a woman poured on his head an alabaster cruse of ointment of pure spikenard, very costly. Some were indignant, calling it a waste that could have been sold and given to the poor. And they grumbled at her. However, Jesus defended her, saying she did it beforehand for the burial. He said, “**And truly I say to you, wherever this good news may be preached in the whole world, also what she did will be told for a memorial of her**” (Mark 14:9). Then Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests so that he might betray him to them. They were glad, and promised to give him silver.

After that, while Jesus ate the Passover with the twelve, he said that one of them was going to betray him. They began to be sorrowful, and say one by one, “Not I?” Jesus said it was written about him, but he uttered a woe to his betrayer. He said it would be better for his betrayer if that man had never been born. Then he took bread, blessed, broke in pieces, and gave to them, telling them to eat, it was his body. Likewise the cup, saying it was his blood of the new covenant, which was poured out for many. And after singing a hymn, they went out to the mound of Olives.

Then he said to them, “**All ye will be caused to stumble by me this night, because it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered**” (Mark 14:27). He said that after he was raised, he would go before them into Galilee. Peter said he would never be caused to stumble, but Jesus told him he would deny him that very night three

times, before a cock sounded twice. However, Peter spoke more vehemently, saying if he must die with him, he would not deny him. The record says they all spoke the same way. No doubt they thought they were doing right by expressing their loyalty, but they were really challenging God by denying what Jesus said. Beware lest what you think is right is actually wrong.

They came to a place named Gethsemane, and he told his disciples to wait until he prayed. The book says, "**And he takes Peter and James and John with him, and began to be greatly disturbed, and very distressed**" (Mark 14:33). He said his soul was deeply grieved, to the point of death, and he told them to remain and watch. And having gone forward a little, he fell on the ground, and prayed that, if possible, the hour might pass from him. Then he returned, and found them sleeping. He asked Peter if he could not watch one hour. He said, "**Watch ye and pray that ye may not enter into temptation. Truly, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak**" (Mark 14:38). Then he departed, and prayed the same way. After the third time, he told them to sleep, and take their rest.

Then he awoke them, saying his betrayer had come near. While he spoke Judas came with a great multitude with swords and clubs from the chief priests, scholars, and elders. The betrayer had given them a sign. He said that whomever he kissed was he. So he came to Jesus, called him Rabbi, and kissed him much. Then they seized him, but one with Jesus drew a sword, and cut off the ear of the high priest's bondman. Jesus asked them if they came out as against a robber with their weapons to arrest him. He reminded them how he taught daily in the temple. He said, "**... but that the scriptures might be fulfilled**" (Mark 14:49).

Then all his disciples fled, and Jesus was led away to the high priest. And all the chief priests, elders, and scholars assembled with him. Peter followed him from a distance, and sat in the courtyard warming himself with the subordinates near the light. The chief priests and the whole council sought testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, but were not successful. Their testimonies were not consistent. The high priest finally demanded to know from him if he was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed. Jesus said, "**I am. And ye will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of the sky**" (Mark 14:62). Then the high priest tore his clothes, said he blasphemed, and asked what it seemed to them. They all

condemned him as deserving death. And they abused him by spitting in his face and striking him. Peter was approached three times and accused of being with Jesus, but he denied it each time. After the third denial the cock sounded the second time. Then Peter remembered what Jesus said, and he broke down and wept.

Straightway in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scholars and the whole council made a plan. Then they bound Jesus, and delivered him up to Pilate. When Pilate asked him if he were the king of the Jews, he said he was. The chief priests accused him of many things, but Jesus answered nothing, which caused Pilate to wonder. During a feast he released to them one prisoner whom they requested. And there was a man called Barabbas, who was with rebels that had committed murder during the insurrection. Pilate asked the crowd if they wanted Jesus released. However, the chief priests incited the crowd to ask for Barabbas instead. Pilate tried to dissuade them, wanting to know what evil Jesus had done, but they cried out even more to crucify him.

Finally, he released Barabbas, and after scourging Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. The soldiers led him to the Praetorium, and called together the whole band. They abused and ridiculed Jesus, and then led him out to the place called Golgotha (meaning the place of a skull) to crucify. They divided his garments, casting a lot for them. The inscription of his accusation was, "**THE KING OF THE JEWS**" (Mark 15:26). They also crucified two robbers with him, one on each side. The book says that fulfilled the scripture which said he was reckoned with lawless men (see Isa. 53:9). The book also says that all who passed by railed at him, wagging their heads. Likewise, the chief priests and the scholars mocked him.

At the sixth hour (noon) darkness occurred over the whole land for three hours. Then Jesus cried out in a great voice, saying, "**Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?**" which is, being interpreted, "**My God, my God, why have thou forsaken me?**" (Mark 15:34). God forsook him on the cross so that we could be saved. Then Jesus expired, and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. The book says, "**And there were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were also Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the small man, and of Joses, and Salome**" (Mark 15:40). They had followed him and served him when he was in Galilee.

There were also many other women who came with him to Jerusalem.

At evening Joseph of Arimathaea, an honorable councilman, who also was awaiting the kingdom of God, requested his body from Pilate. When Pilate learned from the centurion that he was already dead, he granted the body to him. He wrapped him in linen, and laid him in a sepulcher that had been hewn out of rock. And he rolled a stone to the door. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses watched, and when the sabbath was past, they and Salome brought spices to anoint him.

The book says that very early morning on the first day of the week, they came to the sepulcher, and saw a young man sitting and clothed in a white robe. They were alarmed, but he told them not to be, that Jesus was raised. He showed them the place where they had laid him, and told them to go tell his disciples and Peter that he goes before them into Galilee where they will see him, just as he told them. Therefore, they fled from the sepulcher with trembling and astonishment.

The book says that having risen early morning on the first day of the week, Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven

demons. She went and informed those who had been with him, but they did not believe her. After that he appeared in a different form to two of them as they walked in the countryside. When they reported it, they did not believe those men either.

Afterward he became visible to the eleven, and upbraided their unbelief and hard heart, because they did not believe those who saw him after he was raised. And he said to them, "**Having gone into all the world, preach ye the good news to the whole creation. He who believes and is immersed will be saved, but he who does not believe will be damned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will cast out demons. They will speak in new tongues. They will take up serpents, and if they drink anything deadly, it will, no, not harm them. They will lay hands on the feeble, and they will fare well**" (Mark 16:15-18).

The book concludes, saying that Jesus was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And those men went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs (such as miracles) that followed.

A Description of Luke

This book says it was written to inform the eminent Theophilus (meaning lover of God) about the deeds that were brought to fullness among them. It begins with the story of a priest named Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth, who were both righteous before God. They had no children, and were both advanced in age. An agent of the Lord appeared to him in the temple, and said his plea had been heard, and his wife Elizabeth would bear a son. And he was to call his name John. Among other things, he said he would be great, would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's belly, and would turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. He said he would also make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

Zacharias asked how he would know that, because he and his wife were old. The agent said he was Gabriel who stands in the presence of God, and because he did not believe his words, he would be mute until they came to pass. When the days of Zacharias' service were fulfilled he returned to his house. Then his wife conceived, and hid herself five months. She said the Lord had taken away her shame among men. In those days women knew their role was to bear and rear children.

In the sixth month the agent Gabriel was sent by God to Mary of Nazareth in Galilee. She was a virgin betrothed to Joseph. When he came near her, he said, "**Hail, thou who are highly favored. The Lord is with thee, thou who are blessed among women**" (Luke 1:28). He said she was going to conceive in her womb and bear a son. And she was to call his name JESUS. He said he would be great, would be called the Son of the Most High, and God would give him the throne of his father David. He also said, "**And he will reign over the house of Jacob into the ages. And of his kingdom there will be no end**" (Luke 1:33). Mary asked how that could be, since she had not known a man (intimately). The agent told her the Holy Spirit would come upon her. He also said Elizabeth, her kinswoman, had conceived in her old age, and it was the sixth month with her. Then Mary said, "**Behold the maid-servant of the Lord. May it happen to me according to thy word**" (Luke 1:38). And the agent departed.

After that Mary went with haste to the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard her greeting, the babe leaped in her belly. Then Elizabeth was filled of the Holy Spirit, and

said, "**Blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy belly**" (Luke 1:42). With humility she asked why the mother of her Lord would come to her, and she told how the babe leaped for joy when she came. She also praised her for believing what was spoken to her from the Lord.

Then Mary spoke words of praise to God. Among other things she said her soul magnified the Lord, and her spirit rejoiced in God her Savior, because he looked upon her lowliness. She said that henceforth all generations would regard her blessed. She told how God scattered the proud, and raised up lowly men. Then she dwelt with Elizabeth about three months, which would have been about the time she brought forth John.

When John was born all of Elizabeth's neighbors and kinfolk rejoiced with her. On the eighth day, the time of circumcision, they were going to name the child after his father Zacharias. However, his mother said no, it would be John. When they made signs to his father, he wrote saying his name was John. Then his mouth was opened and he praised God. The book says all the people who dwelt around them feared, and wondered what the child would be, for the hand of the Lord was with him.

Then his father Zacharias was filled of the Holy Spirit and prophesied. Among other things he praised God for helping his people Israel, and for giving them salvation from their enemies. He told the child that he would be called a prophet of the Most High. He said he would go ahead to prepare the ways of the Lord, and give knowledge of salvation to his people in the remission of their sins. The book says the child grew, and became strong in spirit. And he was in the desolate regions until his manifestation to Israel.

It came to pass in those days that Caesar Augustus gave a decree to enroll all the world. So all went to be enrolled, each to his personal city. Joseph went to Bethlehem because he was of the house and patriarchy of David, he and Mary his betrothed. While they were there she brought forth her son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in the feed trough, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The book says there were shepherds in the same region living in the fields, keeping watch by night over their flock. Then an agent of the Lord stood near them, and the glory of the Lord shone around

them. They feared greatly, but the agent told them not to fear, for he brought them good news of great joy for all people. Then he told them about the birth of Christ the Lord, and said they would find a babe lying in a feed trough. Next a great multitude of the heavenly host appeared praising God. After the agents went into heaven, the shepherds went hastily, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe in the feed trough. When they saw the child, they reported what they had been told about him.

After the required eight days, Jesus was circumcised, and was called JESUS, according to what the agent said before he was conceived. They also brought him up to Jerusalem after the days of their purification according to the law of Moses (see Lev. 12:2-4). While they were there a man named Simeon came to the temple. It had been divinely revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Christ of the Lord. He took Jesus into his arms and praised God. The book says that Joseph and his mother marveled at what was spoken about him. Also there was a prophetess, Anna, who was a widow of eighty-four years. She served in the temple continuously, never departing. She also spoke about him.

The book says, “**And the child grew, and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom. And the grace of God was upon it**” (Luke 2:40). When he was twelve years old, during their annual trip for Passover feast in Jerusalem, they began the trip home without him. After traveling a day they discovered he was missing, so they went back. The book says, “**And it came to pass after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and questioning them**” (Luke 2:46). All who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. When his mother said she and his father were seeking him sorrowing, he replied, “**Why is it that ye were seeking me? Had ye not known that I must be among the things of my Father?**” (Luke 2:49). Nevertheless, he returned, and was subordinate to them. The book says he increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and men.

Next the book tells about the ministry of John the son of Zacharias. He was in the wilderness, and preached an immersion of repentance for remission of sins, which fulfilled a prophecy of Isaiah (see Isa. 40:3-4). He rebuked the multitudes who went out to him, saying, “**Ye offspring of vipers, who showed you to flee from the coming wrath? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance ...**” (Luke

3:7-8). When they asked what they should do, he told them to share what they had with the needy. He told the tax collectors to be honest, and the soldiers not to be abusive or unfair, and be content with their wages.

Since the people were thinking he was the Christ, he told them about a man coming who was mightier than he, who would immerse them in a Holy Spirit and fire. Herod arrested him because he had reproved Herod about Herodias his brother’s wife, whom he had taken. The book says that during the immersion of all the people, Jesus was also immersed. After which the Holy Spirit descended on him as a dove, and a voice from heaven said, “**Thou are my beloved Son. In thee I am well pleased**” (Luke 3:22).

Next the book says that Jesus was beginning to be about thirty years old. And it gave a genealogy of him, beginning with Joseph and ending with Adam, the son of God. Seventy-five men are named. After that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted forty days by the devil. He ate nothing in those days, and afterward he was hungry. Then the book tells about three ways the devil tempted him, which are the same ones described in the book of Matthew. The first one is about changing a stone to bread. The second and third ones, however, are in reverse order from how they are in Matthew. Remember, events described in the Bible do not always follow a strict chronological order. In Luke the second temptation is about receiving the authority and glory of all the kingdoms of the world. The third one is about leaping off the pinnacle of the temple. Each time Jesus quoted an appropriate scripture to rebuff the devil. After the third one, the book says, “**And when the devil ended every temptation, he withdrew from him until a time**” (Luke 4:13).

Next the book says that Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. He came to Nazareth where he was brought up, and entered into their synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read, and the book of Isaiah was given to him. He found the place (Isa. 61:1-2) where it was written, “**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to sent forth in deliverance those who have been broken, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord**” (Luke 4:18-19). He

closed the book, and said that scripture had been fulfilled in their ears that day.

The record says they wondered at his gracious words, and asked if he was not the son of Joseph. However, he said to them, "**Truly I say to you, that not one prophet is acceptable in his fatherland**" (Luke 4:24). Then he told how Elijah was sent during a great famine to a widow of Sidon, and not to any in Israel. And also how Elisha healed Naaman the Syrian of leprosy, and not any in Israel. The book says, "**And all in the synagogue were filled with rage, having heard these things**" (Luke 4:28). They did not dispute the facts, but they hated the implication. So they took him to the brow of the hill where the city was in order to throw him down headlong. However, he passed through the midst of them, and departed.

After that he came to Capernaum and was teaching them on the sabbath day. He also restored a man who was possessed with an unclean deity. After which he entered Simon's house, and healed his mother-in-law of a great fever. At sundown many came to be healed by him. The next morning he went to a desolate place. The multitude sought him, and were restraining him not to depart. But he told them he had to preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities as well. He said he was sent for that.

A time came when Jesus asked Simon if he could enter his fishing boat to teach from because the multitude pressed upon him. When he finished he told Simon to put out his nets for a catch. Simon said they had toiled all night without taking anything, but at his word they would let down the net. And when they did they enclosed a great multitude of fishes. They beckoned to their partners in the other boat for help, and both boats were filled with so many that they sank lower in the water. When Simon saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, and said, "**Depart from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord**" (Luke 5:8). Jesus told him to fear not, henceforth he would be catching men. And they forsook everything and followed him.

Next the book tells how he healed a man full of leprosy in one of the cities. He commanded him to tell no man about it, but the report of him spread, and many multitudes came to be healed by him. Therefore he withdrew into the desolate regions to pray.

One day he was teaching, and there were Pharisees and law teachers who came from every town of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem. Then, because of

the crowd, some men uncovered the roof over him, and let down a paralyzed man on a bed. When he saw their faith he told the man his sins were forgiven him. However, the scholars and Pharisees said to themselves that he was blaspheming, for only God could forgive sins. When Jesus knew it, he asked them which was easier, to say his sins were forgiven, or to say arise and walk. He said, "**But that ye may know that the Son of man has authority upon earth to forgive sins**" (he said to the paralyzed man), "**I say to thee, Arise, and after taking up thy small bed, go to thy house**" (Luk. 5:24).

After that Jesus called Levi, a tax collector. Levi made a great feast for him, and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and other men with him. However, the scholars and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, wanting to know why they ate with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus replied those who were well had no need of a physician, but those faring badly. He said, "**I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance**" (Luke 5:32). Also they said the disciples of John and the Pharisees fasted often, but his disciples ate and drank. Jesus said it was inappropriate to fast at a wedding. And he told how it was wrong to patch an old garment with new material, or put new wine in old wineskins.

Later they criticized his disciples for plucking and eating ears in a grain field on the sabbath, saying it was not permitted. Jesus reminded them how David once ate the loaves of the presentation, which was only for the priests. And he said to them, "**The Son of man is lord also of the sabbath**" (Luke 6:5). On another sabbath he entered into the synagogue to teach, and there was a man with a withered hand. The scholars watched to see if he would heal him, so they could accuse him. Jesus knew it, and he asked them if it was permitted on the sabbath to do good or to harm, to save life or to kill. Then he healed the man. But they were filled with fury, and deliberated with each other what they might do to him.

The book says that later he spent all night in prayer to God. And the next morning he chose twelve of his disciples, whom he named apostles (which means, sent). They were, "**Simon, whom he also named Peter, and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas the son of James** [called Thaddaeus in the books of

Matthew and Mark], and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor” (Luke 6:14-16).

The book says a large number of people came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases. Then he lifted up his eyes to his disciples, and said, “**Blessed are the poor, because the kingdom of God is what belongs to you. Blessed are those who hunger now, because ye will be filled. Blessed are those who weep now, because ye will laugh. Blessed are ye, when men will hate you, and when they will exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, because of the Son of man. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap, for behold, your reward is great in heaven, for their fathers did in the same way to the prophets.**

“**However, woe to you the rich, because ye have received your consolation. Woe to you who are filled now, because ye will hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, because ye will mourn and weep. Woe when men will speak well of you, for their fathers did in the same way to the false prophets”** (Luke 6:24-26).

This book mentions some of the other things he taught them in the sermon on the mount that is recorded in the book of Matthew (5-7). Among other things he taught about loving their enemies, giving beyond exact recompense, giving and forgiving, being merciful, and not criticizing. He used the example of a man wanting to take the speck out of his brother's eye, but he had a beam in his own eye. He taught what we call the golden rule: “**And as ye desire that men would do to you, do ye also to them likewise**” (Luke 6:31). He told how a tree is known by its fruit. He also said, “**And why do ye call me, Lord, Lord, and not do the things that I say?**” (Luke 6:46). Finally, he said, “**Every man who comes to me, and hears my sayings, and does them, I will show you to whom he is like**” (Luke 6:47). He said he was like a man who built his house upon rock. But the man who does not do them is like a man who built his house on sand. When the storm came, the first house stood, but the second one fell.

After that he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion sent elders of the Jews to him about his bondman who was about to perish. They told Jesus he was a worthy man, for he loved their nation and built their synagogue. Therefore, Jesus went with them. However, when he came near, the centurion sent friends saying he was not worthy to have him come under his roof. He said to just speak the word and his boy would be healed, for he used his

own authority to do things. When Jesus heard it, he said, “**I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith**” (Luke 7:9). And when they returned they found the bondman well.

Jesus went to another city with his disciples and a large multitude. As he came near, an only begotten son of a widow had died and was being carried out. And there was a large crowd of the city with her. The book says, “**And when the Lord saw her, he felt compassion toward her, and said to her, Weep not**” (Luke 7:13). Then he touched the coffin, and told the young man to rise. Upon which he sat up and began to speak. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God. The report of that went forth in the whole of Judea and the region all around.

When John heard about Jesus he sent two of his disciples, and asked Jesus if he was he who comes, or do they look for another man. Jesus healed many, and then told them to report to John the things they saw and heard. He said, “**... the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor are preached good news. And blessed is he, whoever will not be offended by me**” (Luke 7:22-23).

After they left, Jesus began to speak about John, and to praise him. All the people who accepted John justified God, but the Pharisees and the lawyers who were not immersed by him rejected the purpose of God for themselves. Therefore, Jesus compared the men of that generation to children calling to each other, “**We piped to you, and ye did not dance. We mourned to you, and ye did not weep**” (Luke 7:32). They said John had a demon because he neither ate bread nor drank wine. When the Son of man came eating and drinking, they called him a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Then Jesus said, “**And wisdom is justified from all her children**” (Luke 7:35), which means wisdom is verified by its results.

While eating in the house of a certain Pharisee, a sinful woman brought an alabaster cruse of ointment to him. She stood behind near his feet, wetting them with her tears, and wiping them with her hair. She also kissed his feet much, and anointed them with the ointment. The Pharisee said to himself that if Jesus were a prophet he would know who and what kind of women she was who touched him. Therefore, Jesus spoke a parable to him about two debtors, one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not repay, the creditor forgave them both. He asked Simon (the Pharisee) which would love him most. Simon said he sup-

posed it was to whom he forgave most. Jesus said he judged correctly, and then applied it to him and the woman. He contrasted her treatment of him with that of Simon, who gave him no water for his feet, no kiss, and no oil for his head. Then he told the woman her sins were forgiven. And he said to her, "**Thy faith has saved thee. Go in peace**" (Luke 7:50).

The book says he traveled about by city and village, announcing and preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve men were with him. Also certain women, having been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, served him from the things they possessed. Among whom were Mary Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out.

When a large multitude gathered together he spoke by parable. He told of a man who sowed seed. Some fell by the way, and were trampled and eaten by birds; some fell on rocks, and withered from lack of moisture; some fell among thorns, and were choked; some fell on the good ground, and produced fruit a hundredfold. Then he called out, "**He who has ears to hear, let him hear**" (Luke 8:8). His disciples asked about the parable, and he said, "**To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the others in parables, so that seeing they would not see, and hearing they would not understand**" (Luke 8:10).

Then he explained the parable. He said the seed was the word of God; the ones by the way were those when the devil takes it from their heart; the ones on the rock were those who receive the word with joy, but withdraw in time of trial; the ones among thorns were those choked by cares, wealth, and pleasures of life; the ones in the good ground were those with a good and right heart, who hold the word firm, and bring forth fruit in perseverance. When he was told his mother and brothers were outside, desiring to see him, he said, "**My mother and my brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it**" (Luke 8:21).

As he was crossing to the other side of the lake, a storm came down while he slept. The boat was filling up, and they awoke him, saying they were perishing. After rising, he rebuked the wind and the raging water, and it became calm. Then he asked them where was their faith. But they were afraid, and wondered who he was that even the winds and water obeyed him.

When they arrived in the country of the Gadarenes, a man met him who had demons a long time.

He wore no clothes, and dwelt in the sepulchers. When he saw Jesus he cried out, fell down before him, and said in a great voice, "**What is with me and with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I beseech thee, do not torment me**" (Luke 8:28). The man had been bound with chains, but broke them apart, and was driven by the demon into the desolate regions. When Jesus demanded his name, he said it was Legion, because there were many demons in him. They implored Jesus to allow them to go into the herd of swine nearby. And after entering them, they stampeded down the slope into the lake and drowned. Those who saw, fled and reported it in the city and in the fields. After the people all came out to see what happened, they were gripped with great fear, and besought Jesus to depart from them. The man who recovered begged to go with him, but he told him to return to his house, and relate everything God did for him. So he departed, proclaiming throughout the city what Jesus did for him.

Back on the other side the multitude welcomed him. Also a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, fell down before him, and besought him to come and heal his only begotten daughter, about twelve years old, who was dying. As he went the crowd thronged him. A woman who had an incurable issue of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched him, and was immediately healed. Jesus asked who touched him, for he perceived power had gone from him. The woman came trembling, fell down before him, and told all. He said to her, "**Cheer up, Daughter. Thy faith has healed thee. Go in peace**" (Luke 8:48).

As he spoke, a man came and told the synagogue ruler his daughter had died, and not to trouble the teacher. Jesus said not to fear, only believe and she would be saved. When he came to the house he allowed only Peter, John, James, and the father and mother of the child to enter. When he told the wailing crowd she was only sleeping, they ridiculed him. However, he sent them out and restored her. And he ordered her parents to tell no man what happened.

Then he summoned the twelve, gave them power over demons and to heal diseases, and sent them to preach the kingdom of God. He told them to take no provisions, and remain in whatever house they entered until they departed that city. He also told them to shake the dust from their feet of any city that did not receive them. And so they went. When they returned they reported to him as many things as

they did. Then he took them into a desolate place, but the multitudes followed.

When the day began to decline, the twelve told him to send the multitude away to find rest and provision. However, he told them to give them to eat. They said they had no more than five loaves and two fishes, and there were about five thousand men. Jesus said to make them sit in groups of fifty each. Then he took the loaves and the fishes, looked up to heaven, blessed them, broke in pieces, and gave to the disciples for the multitude. They all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets of remaining fragments.

When he was praying privately he asked his disciples who men said he was. They answered, some said John the immerser, some Elijah, and some a prophet of the ancient men. When he asked them who he was, Peter answered he was the Christ of God. Jesus commanded to tell that to no man. Then he told how he was going to suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, chief priest, and scholars, and be killed, and the third day to rise. He also said to them all, **“If any man wants to come behind me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever may lose his life because of me, this man will save it”** (Luke 9:24).

Eight days later he took Peter, John, and James, and went up onto the mountain to pray. As he prayed the appearance of his face became different, and his clothes were glistening white. Also, Moses and Elijah appeared in glory, and spoke of his departure, which he was going to fulfill at Jerusalem. His disciples had been asleep, and they saw those things. When they were departing Peter suggested they make three tabernacles: one for him, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. While he spoke, a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out, saying, **“This is my beloved Son. Hear ye him”** (Luke 9:35). The book says they informed no man in those days of what had happened.

The next day, after coming down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. And a man besought him to look upon his son, his only begotten. He said that a spirit seizes him and convulses him, injuring him. He said he begged his disciples to cast it out, but they could not. Jesus answered, **“O faithless and perverted generation, how long will I be with you and endure you? Bring thy son here”** (Luke 9:41). Then he rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy. The book says they were all amazed at the majesty of God, and wondered at all Jesus did.

Then the disciples began to consider which of them may be greater. When Jesus knew it, he took a child by him, and said, **“Whoever may receive this child in my name receives me, and whoever may receive me receives him who sent me, for he who exists smaller among you all, this man will be great”** (Luke 9:48).

On the way to Jerusalem, a certain man said he would follow him wherever he went. However, Jesus said foxes had holes, and birds had nests, but the Son of man had not where he might lay his head. He told another man to follow him, but he wanted to bury his father first. Jesus told him to let the dead bury their own dead, and for him to go proclaim the kingdom of God. Another said he would follow him, but he wanted to bid farewell to those in his house. Jesus told him that no man who put his hand to the plow, and looked to things behind, was fit for the kingdom of God.

The book says that after those things the Lord appointed seventy other men, and sent them by twos before him into every city and place he was going. He said he was sending them forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. He told them not to take provisions, and to eat whatever was set before them. He said whatever city received them, they were to heal the weak in it, and tell them the kingdom of God had come near them. But whatever city would not receive them, they were to say, **“Even the dust that clings on us from your city, we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know ye this, that the kingdom of God has come near to you”** (Luke 10:11). Jesus said it would be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

After that he rebuked Chorazin and Bethsaida, saying woe to them. He said if the mighty works were done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in them, they would have repented long ago in sack-cloth and ashes. Then he said, **“He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me”** (Luke 10:16). The book says the seventy returned with joy that even the demons were subject to them. However, he told them not to rejoice that the spirits were made subject to them, but to rejoice because their names were written in the heavens. That same hour Jesus said, **“I thank thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and the earth, that thou hid these things from the wise and astute, and revealed them to the childlike. Yea, Father, because it became pleasing this way in thy sight”** (Luke 10:21).

A certain lawyer stood up, testing him. He said, **“Teacher, having done what, would I inherit eternal life?”** (Luke 10:25). Jesus asked him what was written in the law. He said to love the Lord from thy whole heart, soul, strength, and mind, and thy neighbor as thyself. Jesus said he answered correctly. However, wanting to justify himself, he asked who was his neighbor. In response, Jesus told a parable about a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. He encountered bandits, who stripped him, beat him, and left him half dead. By coincidence, a certain priest saw him, but passed by. Likewise a Levite. However, when a certain Samaritan saw him, he felt compassion for him, carried him to an inn, and took care of him. When he departed, he also gave the innkeeper money to care for him, promising to repay if it took more. Jesus then asked which of the three became neighbor to the man. When the lawyer said it was he who did mercy to him, Jesus told him to go and do likewise.

After that he entered into a certain village, and was received by a woman named Martha into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet listening to his word. The book says that Martha was encumbered with much serving, and she asked Jesus to speak to her sister to come help her. However, Jesus said, **“Martha, Martha, thou are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary, and Mary has chosen the good part, which will not be taken away from her”** (Luke 10:41-42).

When he was in a certain place praying, one of his disciples asked him to teach them to pray as John taught his disciples. Jesus answered, **“When ye pray, say, Our Father in the heavens, hallowed be thy name. May thy kingdom come, may thy will happen on the earth as also in heaven. Give us our bread sufficient for each day. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive every man who is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”** (Luke 11:2-4).

Then he gave some lessons about making requests in prayer. After giving an example of how we give to each other when urged, he said, **“And I say to you, ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and ye will find. Knock, and it will be opened. For every man who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened”** (Luke 11:9-10). He also told how fathers give good things to their sons, and he said how

much more the Father from heaven would give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

Jesus cast out a demon from a man, and the multitudes marveled. However, some said he cast out the demons by Beelzebub, ruler of the demons. Others challenged him by seeking a sign from the sky. Jesus told them that every kingdom divided against itself was made desolate, and a house against a house falls. And he asked how Satan's kingdom would stand if he was divided against himself. Then he said if it was by the finger of God that he cast out demons, then the kingdom of God had come upon them. And he said, **“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters”** (Luke 11:23). After he spoke, a certain woman cried out praising her who bore him and gave him suck. Jesus replied, **“Blessed rather, are those who hear the word of God, and keep it”** (Luke 11:28).

Then he said that was an evil generation, for they sought a sign. He said no sign would be given them except the sign of Jonah. And he told how they would be condemned in the judgment by some of the ancients, because he was greater than what they had during their time. Then he told how the lamp of the body was the eye, and he said, **“Watch therefore the light in thee not be darkness”** (Luke 11:35).

A certain Pharisee invited him to dine with him. When he sat down, the Pharisee marveled that he did not first wash before dinner. But Jesus said to him, **“Now ye Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but your interior is full of plundering and wickedness”** (Luke 11:39). He called them foolish men. He said to give compassion, things that are within, and all things are clean to them. Then he uttered three woes to the Pharisees. He said they were strict about tithing, but passed by justice and the love of God. He rebuked them for loving places of honor and greetings in the marketplaces. He called them hypocrites, like unseen sepulchers that men walk over unawares.

In response one of the lawyers said, **“Teacher, in saying these things thou rebuke us also”** (Luke 11:45). Then he uttered three woes against the lawyers. He said they put difficult burdens on men, but would not touch them with their finger. He told how they build the sepulchers of the prophets, but their fathers killed them. And he said they took away the key of knowledge, refusing to enter, and hindering those who were entering. What Jesus meant by that last statement is not clear. He sometime spoke

in riddles. Perhaps he was referring to himself, for he is the key to knowledge of the eternal reality. After hearing that stinging rebuke, the book says, “... the scholars and the Pharisees began to harass him extremely, and to provoke him to speak impulsively about more things, waiting to ambush him, seeking to catch something out of his mouth so that they might accuse him” (Luke 11:53-54). Beware of being provoked by your enemies to speak impulsively. Evil men try to get you to stumble by urging you.

Later Jesus told his disciples to take heed to themselves of the leaven of the Pharisees, which was hypocrisy. He said there was nothing hidden that would not be known. And he told them not to fear those who kill the body, and have nothing more severe to do. He told them to fear him who had power to cast into hell. He also said that every man who will confess him before men, the Son of man will confess in him before the agents of God. But he who denies him in the presence of men will be denied in the presence of the agents of God.

Then a certain man asked Jesus to speak to his brother about dividing the inheritance with him. However, Jesus said, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” (Luke 12:14). And he told them to watch, and keep away from greed, because the life of a man is not in the abundance of what he possesses. Then he told them a parable about a rich man who had to build greater barns to store all his grain. Afterward he planned to take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry. God called him a fool, because his soul was demanded that very night. And Jesus said, “So is he who stores up for himself, and is not being rich toward God” (Luke 12:21).

Then he told his disciples not be anxious for their lives, what to eat or what to wear. He told about the ravens, who had no storehouse, yet God fed them. And he told about the lilies, who did not toil or spin, yet God clothed them. He told them not to be unsettled about food and drink, for their Father knows they had need of those things. He said, “However, seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you” (Luke 12:31). He called them a little flock, and he told them not to fear, because their Father was well pleased to give them the kingdom. And he told them to make treasures in heaven that would never fail. He said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:34).

Then he told them a parable about men who were prepared while waiting for the return of their lord. He said for them to be ready, because the Son of man was coming at that hour they did not suppose. Peter asked him if he spoke the parable for them or to all. However, Jesus told another parable about managers serving their lord. The faithful and wise bondman would be blessed, but the negligent and abusive bondman would be cut in two, and have his portion with the unbelieving. He also told about varying punishment. And he said that every man to whom much was given, much would be required from him.

Then he said, “I came to cast fire upon the earth, and what I desire is if it were kindled already. But I have an immersion to be immersed [his crucifixion], and how am I constrained until it will be accomplished. Do ye suppose that I came to give peace on the earth? I tell you, no, but rather division” (Luke 12:49-51). And he told how even close family members would be divided against each other.

After that he gave a couple of examples about making wise judgments. And when he was told about the horrible deaths of certain men, he told them not to think they were debtors above all who lived in Jerusalem. He said, “I tell you, no, but if ye do not repent, ye will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5). Then he told a parable about a barren fig tree that was given special treatment to encourage it to bear. If it still did not bear, it was going to be cut down.

He was teaching in one of their synagogues on the sabbath day, and there was a woman who had been bent over, unable to straighten up for eighteen years. After he healed her, the synagogue ruler told the multitude to come on the six work days to be healed, and not on the sabbath. Jesus called him a hypocrite, because they all loosed their livestock from their stalls to give drink on the sabbath. And he said, “And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has bound, lo, eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the day of the sabbath?” (Luke 13:16). The book says all those opposing him were shamed, and all the multitude rejoiced for the glorious things that were done by him.

Jesus went through by cities and villages, teaching, while he was on his way to Jerusalem. And a certain man asked him if few were going to be saved. He said to him, “Compete to enter in by the narrow gate, because many, I say to you, will

seek to enter in, and will not be able" (Luke 13:24). And he told him that many who think they will be accepted would not be, because they were workers of unrighteousness. And he lamented about Jerusalem, that killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to her. He said, "**How often I wanted to gather thy children together as a hen does her brood under her wings, and ye would not**" (Luke 13:34). He said her house was left desolate to her.

He went into the house of one of the chiefs of the Pharisees on the sabbath to eat bread. And they were watching him, for there was a man afflicted with edema there. He asked the lawyers and the Pharisees if it was permitted to heal on the sabbath, but they were silent. Nevertheless, he healed the man, and asked them which one would not lift a son or an ox out of the ditch on the sabbath. And they were unable to answer back.

Then he spoke a parable to those who were invited when he noticed how they chose out the chief places. The parable was about a wedding where a man was asked to go lower for a more honorable man. He said it is better to be asked to go higher. And he told them not to invite their friends and relatives to a dinner, because they could invite them in return. He said to invite instead the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, because they could not make recompense. But a recompense would be made for them at the resurrection of the righteous.

Then he told a parable about a man who made a supper and invited many. However, they all made excuses not to go. The house-ruler became angry, and told his bondmen to go out to the busy places and invite the poor, maimed, crippled, and blind. When that was not enough, he told them to go out to the roads and hedges and compel them to come in. He said none of those who were invited would taste of his supper. And Jesus said, "**For many are called, but few chosen**" (Luke 14:24).

Since many multitudes went with him, he turned, and said to them, "**If any man comes to me, and does not regard as inferior his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, and besides his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross, and come behind me, cannot be my disciple**" (Luke 14:26-27). Then he gave examples about planning ahead so as to succeed in a venture.

When all the tax collectors and sinners approached Jesus to hear him, the Pharisees and scholars murmured against him. Therefore, he told a

parable about a man who lost one of his hundred sheep. He left them all to look for it, and when he found it he called his friends to rejoice with him. He also spoke the same thing about a woman who lost a coin. And he said, "**Thus I say to you, there becomes joy in the presence of the agents of God over one sinner who repents**" (Luke 15:10).

Then he told a parable about a prodigal son. A man had two sons, and the younger wanted his portion of goods. A few days later he took everything, went to a distant country, and squandered his wealth in reckless living. Then a mighty famine developed, and he had to work for someone else. He was sent to feed swine, and even longed to eat their food. However, he came to himself, and remembered how well his father's hired men ate. So he said, "**After rising, I will go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. I am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired men**" (Luke 15:18-19).

When his father saw him from a distance, he ran, fell on his neck, and kissed him much. His son said he was not worthy to be called his son, but his father told his bondmen to bring the best robe, give a ring for his hand, and shoes for his feet. He also told them to prepare the fatted calf for them to eat. And they began to be cheerful. However, his elder son was in a field, and when he heard music and dancing, he asked about it. After he was told, he would not go in. Therefore, his father went out to persuade him. But he was resentful, saying he had always been obedient, yet had never received special treatment, while the wasteful son was given the fatted calf. His father told him all that he had was his, "**But it was needful to make merry and be glad, because this thy brother was dead, and became alive again, and was lost, and was found**" (Luke 15:32).

Jesus told another parable to his disciples. This one was about the manager of a rich man, who had been accused of squandering things possessed by him. He told the manager to render account of his management, because he was taking it away from him. The manager wondered what he was going to do. Then he said, "**I know what I will do, so that when I am removed from the management they may receive me into their houses**" (Luke 16:4). He called in his lord's debtors one by one, and discounted what they owed. The book says his lord commended the man for his shrewdness (but not his dishonesty, for he cheated his lord). Then Jesus said that the sons of this age are shrewder in their gener-

ation than the sons of light. But he also said that no servant can serve two masters. He said, “**Ye cannot serve God and mammon**” (Luke 16:13). However, the Pharisees sneered him, because they loved money. Therefore, Jesus said to them, “**Ye are those who declare yourselves righteous in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts. Because what is lofty among men is an abomination in the sight of God**” (Luke 16:15).

Then Jesus told a parable about two men. One was a rich man who lived lavishly. The other was a poor man named Lazarus, who was covered with sores, and longed to be fed with his garbage. In time they both died. The poor man was carried by the agents to Abraham’s bosom, but the rich man was tormented in Hades. Seeing Abraham and Lazarus from afar, he cried out for Abraham to be merciful, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue, because he was in agony in that flame. But Abraham said, “**Child, remember that thou in thy lifetime received thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. But now here he is comforted and thou are in agony**” (Luke 16:25). He said besides that there was a great chasm between them which could not be crossed. So the rich man begged him to send Lazarus to his five brother to warn them. Abraham said they had Moses and the prophets (the Bible). He said no, but they would repent if some man went to them from the dead. Abraham said if they did not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded if some man rose from the dead. Many people say that Jesus’ parables were fictitious, but nowhere does the Bible say that. Therefore, we should accept them as things that really happened.

Jesus taught other lessons to his disciples on his way to Jerusalem. He also healed ten leprosy men in a certain village, and he told them to show themselves to the priests (as required by the law of Moses). One of them turned back when he saw that he was healed. He glorified God with a great voice, fell on his face at the feet of Jesus, and gave him thanks. He was a Samaritan. However, Jesus wondered where were the nine. He said, “**Were there none found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?**” (Luke 17:18).

Then he taught them to be prepared for the end. And he gave examples of the days of Noah, and the time of Sodom. He also spoke a parable to teach them to always pray, and not give up. He told of a judge who did not fear God, nor did he regard men. And a widow kept asking him to avenge her of her

opponent. For a time he would not, but because of her persistence, he became weary, and did as she asked. Jesus said, “**And God, will he, no, not do the vengeance of his chosen who cry out to him day and night, and yet being patient toward them?**” (Luke 18:7). Let no man say that we should never want vengeance, for vengeance is justice. But this adulterous generation hates justice, and demands only mercy and forgiveness. Indeed, Jesus said, “**I say to you, that he will do their vengeance speedily**” (Luke 18:8).

He told a parable of two worshipers, one was boastful of his righteousness, the other prayed for mercy because of his sinfulness. Jesus said the latter man went to his house justified rather than the first. And he said, “**Because every man who lifts himself up will be made lower, and he who makes himself lower will be lifted up**” (Luke 18:14).

Then a certain ruler asked him, “**Good teacher, having done what, will I inherit eternal life?**” (Luke 18:18). Jesus said to him, “**Why do thou call me good? None is good except one, God**” (Luke 18:19). Then he reminded the man of the ten commandments. When the man said he had kept them all from his youth, Jesus then said he lacked one thing. He told him to sell all he had, give to the poor so he would have treasure in heaven, and come, follow him. But he became sorrowful, for he was very rich. When Jesus saw it he told how hard it was for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. He said it was easier for a camel to enter through the hole of a needle.

When Peter said they had left all and followed him, Jesus told him, “**Truly I say to you, that there is no man who has left house, or parents, or brothers, or wife, or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will, no, not receive back manifold more in this time, and in the coming age eternal life**” (Luke 18:29-30). Then he told the twelve how he was going to be abused and killed, and the third day rise up, but they did not understand.

As he approached Jericho, a blind man cried out for Jesus to be merciful to him. Therefore, at his request Jesus restored his vision. Afterward the man followed Jesus glorifying God, and all the people gave praise to God. When Jesus was passing through Jericho, a man called Zacchaeus, a rich chief tax collector, climbed a tree to see him, because he was a short man. When Jesus saw him, he told him to come down, for he was going to lodge with him that day. The people murmured, say-

ing he went in to relax with a sinful man. However, Zacchaeus said, “**Behold, half of the things possessed by me, Lord, I give to the poor. And if I defrauded any man of anything, I repay four-fold**” (Luke 19:8). Jesus told him salvation had come to his house, forasmuch as he also was a son of Abraham. Jesus said he came to seek and save the lost.

Then Jesus spoke a parable, because they thought the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. He said a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom and return. He called ten of his bondmen, gave them one mina each, and told them to do business until he came. However, his citizens hated him, and sent an embassy behind him, saying they did not want him to reign over them. At his return one of the bondmen had gained ten minas. The nobleman said to him, “**Well, thou good bondman. Because thou became faithful in the least, be thou having authority over ten cities**” (Luke 19:17). Another gained five minas, and became over five cities. Another came, who had simply put his mina away. His lord rebuked him for not at least putting it in a bank so it would have collected interest. Therefore, he took it from him, and gave it to the man with the ten minas. And he said, “**For I say to you, that to every man who has, will be given, but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away from him**” (Luke 19:26). Then he had his enemies (those who did not want him to reign over them) killed before him.

After that he went ahead, going to Jerusalem. He sent two disciples to get a colt, and after they cast their garments on it, he sat on it. As he descended the mount of Olives near the city they spread their garments on the road, and said, “**Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!**” (Luke 19:38). Some of the Pharisees told him to rebuke his disciples, but Jesus said if they were silent, the stones would cry out. The book says when he saw the city, he wept over her, and he told how she would be destroyed, because she knew not the time of her visitation.

When he entered into the temple he cast out the merchants, saying, “**It is written, My house is a house of prayer, but ye made it a den of robbers**” (Luke 19:46). The chief priests and the scholars sought to destroy him, even the foremost men of the people, but they did not know how, because all the people hung upon him, listening. Sometime later,

however, they asked him by what authority he was doing those things. He said he would also ask them a question. He asked if the immersion of John was from heaven or men. They would have been condemned for either answer, because they had rejected John, yet the people were convinced he was a prophet. So they said they did not know, and Jesus would not give them an answer either.

Then he told a parable about a man who planted a vineyard, leased it to farmers, and went abroad for a time. Later he sent a bondman to get the fruit from them, but they abused him, and sent him away empty. He sent others, and they did the same. Therefore, he decided to send his son, saying they would be ashamed when they saw him. However, the farmers decided to kill him in order to get his inheritance. Jesus said the lord of the vineyard would come and destroy those farmers, and give it to others. But when they heard it, they said, “**May it not happen!**” (Luke 20:16). This must have been a different group of listeners from those described in the books of Matthew and Mark, for the others approved punishing the farmers. It is naïve to think that Jesus never repeated his lessons and parables, teaching them to more than one group.

The chief priests and the scholars wanted to arrest him, but they were afraid. Consequently, they sent forth insidious men, who pretended to be righteous, so they could find something to charge against him to the governor. They first flattered him, then asked if it were permitted to give tribute to Caesar of not. If he said no, he would have been in trouble with the Romans. If he said yes, he would have offended the people, who resented the Roman taxes. However, after asking them whose image and inscription was on the money, he said, “**Then render the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God**” (Luke 20:25). They marveled at his answer and were silent.

After that some Sadducees came, who say there is no resurrection. They reminded him of Moses’ law that says if a man died with no children, his brother was to marry his widow to raise seed for him. Then they told of seven brothers who married the same woman, one after the other, because they all died childless. And they asked whose wife she would be in the resurrection. Jesus said they do not marry in the resurrection. He said, “**For neither can they die any more, for they are like the agents, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection**” (Luke 20:36). Some of the scholars told him

he answered well, and they no longer dared question him anything.

Jesus then warned the people about the scholars, who loved the praises of men, but were cruel hypocrites. Next he saw the rich casting gifts into the treasury. He also saw a poor widow cast in two mites. He said she cast in more than the rich, because she gave all she had. After that some spoke about the fine stones and gifts of the temple. But he told them there would not be a stone left that was not thrown down.

They asked him when those things would be, and what was the sign when they were going to happen. He warned them not to be led astray, because many would make false claims. He told them not to be alarmed when they saw such things as wars, earthquakes, famines and plagues, and fearful sights from the sky, for the end was not straightaway. He also told them to expect persecution. Indeed, he said, "**And ye will be hated by all men because of my name**" (Luke 21:17). But he also said not one hair of their head would perish, and in their perseverance they would gain their souls. Then he told them of signs that would indicate the coming destruction of Jerusalem. And after that he told them of the signs of the end of the world. He said they would see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and much glory. He said, "**And when these things begin to happen, stand upright, and lift up your heads, because your redemption approaches**" (Luke 21:28). And he warned them to be prepared, for it will come unexpectedly.

The book says the feast of unleavened bread, called Passover, was coming. Since the seven day feast of unleavened bread followed immediately after the day of Passover, the two feasts together are sometimes called one or the other. Now the chief priests and scholars sought how to kill him, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, and he went and talked with them about betraying Jesus. They were glad, and gave him silver.

On the day of unleavened bread, Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare the Passover for them. When he came with the twelve apostles, he said, "**With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before my suffering**" (Luke 22:15). Then he took bread, expressed thanks, broke in pieces, gave to them, and said, "**This is my body that is given for you. Do ye this in my memory**" (Luke 22:19). And likewise the cup, which he said was the new covenant in his blood being shed for them. Then he

told of his betrayal by a man who was with him at the table. And they questioned each other who would do that thing.

The book says a dispute developed among them, namely, which of them was considered greater. Jesus told how the rulers of the Gentiles had dominion over them, and he said they were not that way. He said, "**Rather, the greater among you, shall become as the newer, and he who leads, as he who serves**" (Luke 22:26). He also said they would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel in his kingdom.

Then he told Simon how Satan had demanded to have him, to sift as wheat, but he had prayed for him, that his faith not fail. And he told him to strengthen his brothers when he returned. However, Peter said he was willing to go with him both to prison and to death. But Jesus said a cock would not sound, before he had denied him thrice.

Then they went as usual to the mount of Olives. He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt and prayed, asking his Father to remove the cup from him. However, he also said, "**Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done**" (Luke 22:42). The book says an agent from heaven appeared, strengthening him. Yet he became in agony, and prayed more intensely, with his sweat falling like drops of blood. After rising from prayer, he returned and found his disciples sleeping from sorrow. He told them to rise, and pray they may not enter into temptation.

While he spoke, Judas came with a multitude, and kissed him. Jesus said to him, "**Judas, thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?**" (Luke 22:48). Those around him asked if they should strike with the sword, and one of them cut off the ear of the high priest's bondman. However, Jesus told them to allow it, and he touched the man's ear to heal him. Then Jesus asked the rulers if they came as against a robber, with swords and clubs. He said, "**When I was with you daily in the temple, ye did not stretch forth hands against me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness**" (Luke 22:53). Then they seized him, and brought him to the high priest's house.

Peter followed from afar, and sat in the court with those by the fire. Then on three separate occasions he was accused of being with Jesus, which he denied each time. After the last denial a cock sounded, and he remembered the word of the Lord. Then he went outside and wept bitterly.

The men who held Jesus mocked him, struck him, and railed against him. The next morning the eldership of the people, the chief priests, and the scholars led him into their council, and asked if he were the Christ. After he said he was, they led him to Pilate. There they accused him of perverting the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, and saying he was Christ, a king. When Pilate asked if he were king of the Jews, Jesus said, "**Thou say**" (Luke 23:3), which means yes. Then Pilate told the chief priests and the multitudes that he found nothing guilty in the man. Yet they were emphatic, saying he stirred up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, having begun from Galilee.

When Pilate learned he was a Galilean, he sent him to Herod, because that was his jurisdiction, and Herod was in Jerusalem. He was exceedingly glad, for he heard many things about Jesus, and hoped to see some sign by him. He interrogated him with many words. Nevertheless, Jesus said nothing, even though the chief priests and scholars vehemently accused him. Therefore, after mocking him with his soldiers, he sent him back to Pilate. The book says the two men became friends that day, having formerly been at enmity.

Pilate still wanted to release Jesus. He had to release one man at every feast, but they all cried out to release Barabbas, a rebel and a murderer. The multitude shouted to crucify Jesus, but Pilate wanted to know what evil he had done. But they were relentless with loud voices, and so he gave them their request. He released the rebel and the murderer, and delivered Jesus to be crucified. When they led him away, a great multitude followed, and also women who bewailed and lamented him. However, Jesus turned, and told them to weep for themselves and their children, "**Because if they do these things in the green tree, what will happen in the dry?**" (Luke 23:31). That meant when hard times came they would be even more brutal.

Jesus was crucified between two malefactors at a place called Skull. But Jesus asked his Father to forgive them, because they knew not what they were doing. They divided his garments, casting a lot, and the rulers and the soldiers mocked him. The inscription over him was in Greek and Latin and Hebrew, and read, "**THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS**" (Luke 23:38). One of the malefactors railed at him for not saving himself and them, but the other one rebuked him. He said they deserved their punishment, but he did nothing wrong. When he asked Jesus to remember him when he came into his king-

dom, Jesus replied, "**Truly I say to thee, today thou will be with me in the paradise**" (Luke 23:43).

Beginning with the sixth hour (noon) darkness occurred over the whole land for three hours. Also the curtain of the temple was torn in the middle. Finally, Jesus spoke in a great voice, "**Father, into thy hands I entrust my spirit**" (Luke 23:46), and then he expired. All the multitudes turned back, beating their breasts. And all his acquaintances, and the women who had been with him, stood from afar and saw those things.

Then a righteous man named Joseph, a council member who had not consented to what they did, asked Pilate for his body. He wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a new and unused sepulcher cut in rock. The women followed closely, and saw how the body was laid. Then they returned, prepared spices and ointments, and rested on the sabbath according to the commandment.

Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the sepulcher with the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away, and after entering in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were bewildered, two men stood near them in shining apparel. They became frightened, and bowed their face to the ground. The men asked them why they sought the living among the dead. And they reminded them how he told them he would be crucified and the third day rise. And they remembered his saying. Then they returned to report all those things to the eleven and all the others. The ones who told those things were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and others. However, their words appeared to them as idle talk, and they did not believe. Nevertheless, Peter went to the sepulcher, and saw the linen clothes lying alone. He departed wondering what happened.

Two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village about eight miles from Jerusalem, and they conversed with each other about all that happened. While they went, Jesus came and went along with them, but their eyes were held so as not to recognize him. Jesus asked what they were saying to each other, while they looked sad. One of them, named Cleopas, asked if he were a stranger, and knew nothing about what had happened during those days. When Jesus asked what, they told him how their chief priests and rulers condemned and crucified Jesus. They said it was the third day, and some of their women astonished them, saying they saw a vision of agents who said he was alive. They said

some of them went and found it as the women had said, but did not see him. Jesus said to them, “**O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets spoke. Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?**” (Luke 24:25-26). Then beginning with Moses and from the prophets, he expounded all the scriptures about himself.

When they came near the village, they urged him to remain with them, because it was toward evening. He went, and while dining with them, he took bread, blessed, broke in pieces, and gave to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, but he vanished. Therefore, they rose up the same hour, returned to the eleven in Jerusalem, and reported what happened. As they spoke Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said, “**Peace to you**” (Luke 24:36). They became frightened, and thought they saw a spirit. However, he reassured them, and showed them his hands and feet. And he asked for something to eat, perhaps as further proof that it was he in the flesh.

Then the book says, “**And he said to them, These are the words that I spoke to you while still being with you, that it is necessary for all things that are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms about me to be fulfilled. Then he opened their mind to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and to proclaim in his name repentance and remission of sins for all the nations, having begun from Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you. But stay ye in the city until ye are clothed with power from on high**” (Luke 24:44-49).

Then, after leading them outside as far as Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And while he blessed them he was brought up into heaven. Having worshiped him, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.

A Description of John

The book begins, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**” The book says the Word was in the beginning with God, and all things came into being through him. It says that life was in him, and it was the light of men. John (the immerser) was not the light; he came to testify about the light. The book says the world came into being through him (the Word). He came into the world, to his own, but his own did not accept him, “**But as many as did accept him, to them he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name ...**” (John 1:12). And it says, “**The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. And we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth**” (John 1:14).

The Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to John (the immerser) to ask who he was. John confessed he was not the Christ. When they asked who he was, he said, “**I am the voice of a man crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord, just as the prophet Isaiah said**” (John 1:23). When asked why he was immersing, he told them a man was coming after him, of whom he was not worthy to loosen the strap of his shoe. The following day he saw Jesus coming to him and he said, “**Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**” (John 1:29). He said that was the man he was talking about. He said he had not known him, but he who sent him to immerse in water (God), told him that on whomever he saw the Spirit descending like a dove, that was who immerses in a Holy Spirit. John said, “**And I have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God**” (John 1:34).

On the next day two of John’s disciples heard him say Jesus was the Lamb of God, and they followed him. When Jesus saw them following, he asked what they sought. They asked where he dwelt, and he told them to come and see. One of them was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He told Simon they had found the Messiah, and brought him to Jesus, who told him he would be called Cephas, which is interpreted, Peter.

The next morning he wanted to go into Galilee. He found Philip, and told him to follow him. Philip then found Nathanael, and told him they found him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote. He said he was Jesus the son of Joseph of Nazareth. But Nathanael asked what good could be from Nazareth.

Philip told him to come and see. When Jesus saw him, he said, “**Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit**” (John 1:47). Nathanael wanted to know how he knew him. Jesus said he saw him under the fig tree before Philip called him. At that Nathanael said, “**Rabbi, thou are the Son of God. Thou are the king of Israel**” (John 1:49). Jesus said he would see greater than those things. He said he would see the heavens opened, and the agents of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. That probably happened during his ascension after his resurrection.

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and Jesus’ mother was there. Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. During the wedding his mother told him they had no wine left (the hosts were obviously not rich people). Therefore, Jesus commanded the helpers to fill water pots with water, which became wine. Then they carry some to the feast-ruler. When he tasted it, he told the bridegroom that he was unlike others, because he kept the good wine for later. The book says that was the beginning of the signs he did in Cana, manifesting his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

After that he went up to Jerusalem at the Passover. He saw the merchants in the temple, so he made a whip with cords, drove the animals out, poured out the moneychangers’ money, and overturned their tables. He told them not to make his Father’s house a house of merchandise. Jesus probably did that on more than one occasion. For he spent most of his ministry away from Jerusalem, and no doubt the merchants came back when he left, because they had the support of the chief priests. The Jews wanted to know what sign he was going to show them since he did those things. He said, “**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up**” (John 2:19). They said it took forty-six years to build it, but he spoke of the temple of his body. And when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered those words.

Next the book tells about a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night, and said, “**Rabbi, we know that thou have come a teacher from God, for no man can do these signs that thou do if God is not with him**” (John 3:2). Jesus then told him that if a man is not begotten from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus wanted to know how a man could be reborn of his mother. Jesus replied, “**Truly,**

truly, I say to thee, If any man is not begotten from water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Then he contrasted flesh with spirit. He said wind can be heard but not seen, and so it was with a man begotten from the Spirit.

When Nicodemus still wondered how it could happen, Jesus said, “**Thou are the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?”** (John 3:10). He said if he told him earthly things, and he did not believe, how could he believe if he told him heavenly things? He said no man had ascended into heaven, except he who came down out of heaven. He said that every man who believes in him would not perish, but may have eternal life. Then he spoke these beautiful and oft quoted words: “**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, so that every man who believes in him would not perish, but have eternal life**” (John 3:16). And he condemned unbelievers, because their deeds were evil, and they loved darkness rather than light.

After that Jesus and his disciples came into the Judean country. He remained there and immersed (although Jesus himself did not immerse). John was also immersing near Salem, because there was much water there, and he had not yet been cast into prison. John’s disciples told him the man he had testified about was immersing, and all men were going to him. John reminded them he was not the Christ, but was sent ahead of that man. And he said, “**It is necessary for that man to increase, but me to decrease**” (John 3:30).

As Jesus was going to Galilee, he had to pass through Samaria. He came near a city there, and being weary from the journey he was sitting on the well. When a woman of Samaria came to draw water, Jesus asked her to give him some, for his disciples had gone to the city to buy food. The woman replied, “**How do thou, being Jewish, ask to drink from me, being a Samaritan woman, for Jews do not associate with Samaritans?**” (John 4:9). Jesus said if she knew who he was, she would have asked, and he would have given her living water. When she questioned him about that, he told her how superior living water was. When she asked for it, he told her to go call her husband. When she told him she had no husband, Jesus said she spoke correctly, “**For thou have had five husbands, and he whom thou now have is not thy husband. This thou have said true**” (John 4:18).

Having heard that, she said she perceived he was a prophet. She told how they worshiped on that mountain, but they (the Jews) said it was necessary to worship in Jerusalem. Jesus said to her, “**Woman, believe me, that the hour is coming when neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem will ye worship the Father. Ye worship what ye do not know. We worship what we know, because salvation is from the Jews**” (John 4:21-22). He told how God wants the true worshipers to worship him in spirit and truth. The woman said she knew Messiah, called Christ, was coming, and he would declare all things to them. Jesus said, “**I who speak to thee am the man**” (John 4:26).

Then his disciples came, and they marveled that he spoke with the woman. The woman, however, left her water pot, and told the men of the city to come and see a man who told her as many things as she did. Therefore, they went and came to him. His disciples had asked him to eat, but he said he had food to eat they did not know. When they question about that, he said, “**My food is that I do the will of him who sent me, and may finish his work**” (John 4:34). Then he taught them about sowing and harvesting, and he said, “**One is who sows, and another who reaps. I sent you to reap what ye have not labored. Others have labored, and ye have entered into their labor**” (John 4:37-38). The book says that many of the Samaritans from that city believed in him, first because of the woman’s testimony, then because they heard him themselves.

He remained there two days, then went into Galilee. A certain nobleman there besought him to come and heal his son who was near death. Jesus said to him, “**Unless ye may see signs and wonders, ye will, no, not believe**” (John 4:48). When the man urged him to come before his child died, Jesus told him to go, for his son lived. When he returned, he learned the boy became well at the very hour Jesus said his son would live, and he believed and his whole house.

After that Jesus went to Jerusalem during the time of a feast. There was a pool there, where many infirmed people gathered, waiting for the movement of the water. For at times an agent would agitate the water, and the first man who stepped in afterward became well. A man was there who was thirty-eight years in his weakness. When Jesus asked if he wanted to become well, he said he had no man to help him go to the water when it was agitated, so another goes before him. Then Jesus told him to arise, take up his bed, and walk. And he did.

It was a sabbath, and the Jews told the man is was not permitted for him to take up his bed. He told them what happened, but when they asked, he said he did not know who did it. Later Jesus found him in the temple, and told him to sin no more lest something worse happen to him. Then he told the Jews it was Jesus who made him well. Because of this the Jews persecuted Jesus, doing those things on a sabbath. However, Jesus answered them, "**My Father works until now and I work**" (John 5:17). Therefore the Jews sought even more to kill him, because he called God his own Father.

Jesus said to them, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of himself, except what he sees the Father doing. For whatever he may do, the Son also does these things in like manner**" (John 5:19). He told of the closeness of the Father and the Son, and he said, "**For as the Father raises up the dead and makes alive, so also the Son makes alive whom he will**" (John 5:21). He said that he who hears his word, and believes in him who sent him, has eternal life, and does not come into condemnation. He said the Father gave the Son authority to execute judgment because he was the son of man, and he spoke about the resurrection. And again he said he could do nothing from himself.

Then Jesus spoke about witnesses to him. The law of Moses required two or more witnesses, so his own testimony would not have been considered sufficient. He mentioned the testimony of John, but said he had a greater testimony than John: the works the father gave him testified that the Father sent him. He also said, "**Ye search the scriptures, because ye think to have eternal life in them, and those are testifying about me**" (John 5:39). That meant Jesus had four witnesses, twice what was required: himself, John the immerser, his miracles from the Father, and the holy scriptures. Jesus told them they did not have the love of God within them. He said Moses would accuse them, in whom they had hope, for Moses wrote about him.

After that Jesus went to the other side of the sea of Galilee. He was followed by a great multitude, because they saw the signs he did with those who were infirmed. When he saw the multitude he asked Philip where they could buy loaves to feed them. He said that to test him, for he knew what he was going to do. Philip said it would take a lot of money. Andrew said they had five barley loaves and two fishes. Therefore, Jesus had them all sit down. There were about five thousand men. Then after

expressing thanks, he distributed to the disciples to give to them. When they were all filled, they gathered twelve baskets of fragments. When the men saw what he did, they wanted to seize him to make him king. However, he departed onto the mountain alone. At evening his disciples were in the boat going to the other side toward Capernaum. It was dark and a great wind was blowing. When they saw Jesus walking on the sea to them, they were afraid. But he said, "**It is I, fear not**" (John 6:20). So they received him into the boat.

The next day the multitude entered boats and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. When they found him, they asked how he got there. He replied, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, ye seek me not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled**" (John 6:26). He told them to labor for the food that endures to eternal life, which he would give to them. When asked what to do, he said to believe in the man whom God had sent. They asked for a sign, so they might believe in him, and they mentioned the manna their fathers ate in the wilderness. When he said the Father gives true bread from heaven, they asked him to always give that bread to them. He answered, "**I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will, no, not hunger, and he who believes in me will, no, not ever thirst**" (John 6:35). Again he said he came to do the will of the Father, and he would give eternal life to all who believe in him.

The book says the Jews murmured about him. They wanted to know why he said he came out of heaven, since they had known him, and his father and mother. Jesus told them not to murmur among themselves. He said, "**No man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up in the last day**" (John 6:44). And again he said that he who believes in him has eternal life. And again he said he was the living bread that came down from heaven, that whoever eats of it would live into the age (meaning forever).

Then he said the bread he would give was his flesh. That caused the Jews to contend with each other, wanting to know how he could give them his flesh to eat. Therefore, Jesus said even more: "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in yourselves**" (John 6:53). And with different words he kept saying the same thing. The book says he spoke those things in a synagogue. And many of his disciples said, "**This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it?**" (John 6:60). Then Jesus explained, "**It**

is the spirit that makes alive. The flesh benefits nothing. The sayings that I speak to you are spirit, are life” (John 6:63). The book says that Jesus knew from the beginning who would not believe, and who would betray him.

Many of his disciples went back at those things, and no longer walked with him. Therefore Jesus asked the twelve if they also wanted to go. But Peter answered him, “**Lord, to whom will we go? Thou have sayings of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God”** (John 6:68-69).

After that Jesus walked in Galilee instead of Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him. As the Jew’s feast of tabernacles approached, his brothers told him to go to Judea so his disciples would see his works. They said, “**If thou do these things, show thyself to the world”** (John 7:4). The book says that not even his brothers believed in him. Jesus said his time was not yet, but theirs was always ready. He said, “**The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it, that its works are evil”** (John 7:7). He told them to go, but he was not going then, because his time was not yet.

After his brothers left, Jesus also went to the feast, but not openly. The Jews sought him at the feast, and there was much murmuring and controversy about him. However, they all spoke privately for fear of the Jews. In the middle of the feast Jesus went into the temple and taught. They wanted to know how he was so learned, and he told them it was not his doctrine, but his who sent him. Then he said, “**If any man wants to do his will, he will know about the doctrine, whether it is from God, or I speak from myself”** (John 7:17).

He said Moses gave them the law, and none of them did the law. And he asked why they sought to kill him. Hearing that, they accused him of having a demon, and asked who wanted to kill him. Then he told how they circumcised on the sabbath day, so why were they angry because he made a man well on a sabbath (that was one reason why the Jews wanted to kill him). Jesus said, “**Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment”** (John 7:24). Then some of the Jerusalemites wondered if this was not he whom they sought to kill. He continued to teach, and they sought to seize him, yet no man laid a hand on him, because his hour had not come.

Many from the crowd believed in him, asking when Christ comes, would he do more signs than

Jesus did? When the Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring about him, they sent subordinates to take him. On the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, “**If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water”** (John 7:37-38). He was talking about the Holy Spirit that believers would receive after he was glorified. There was a division about him, many believing and many not. When the subordinates returned to the chief priests and the Pharisees, they wanted to know why they had not brought him. They replied, “**A man never so spoke like this man”** (John 7:46). But the Pharisees asked if they too had not been led astray, and they called the multitude ignorant of the law and accursed.

Jesus went to the mount of Olives, and returned at early morning. All the people came to him, and he sat and taught them. Then the scholars and Pharisees brought him a woman taken in adultery. They stood her in the midst to tempt him. They reminded him of Moses law to stone such, and they asked what he said about her. They wanted an accusation against him. For to stone or not to stone would have violated law, either Roman law or Moses’ law. Jesus did not reply immediately. Instead he stooped down and wrote on the ground with his finger. When they kept asking, he stood erect, and said to them, “**Let the innocent man of you first cast the stone at her”** (John 8:7). Then he stooped to write again. Being convicted by their conscience, her accusers left, one by one, beginning with the elder. Obviously those hypocrites had all committed adultery; they had just not been caught. Then Jesus stood again, and asked the woman if no man condemned her. When she said no man, he said to her, “**Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and henceforth sin no more”** (John 8:11).

Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “**I am the light of the world. He who follows me would, no, not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life”** (John 8:12). When the Jews challenged the validity of his testimony, he said the Father also testified for him. When they asked where his Father was, he said they knew neither him nor his Father. He said if they had known him, they would have also known the Father. Jesus sometimes spoke in riddles that only believers can understand. Remember, that was one reason for his parables (see Mat. 13:10-11). He said to them, “**I go, and ye will seek me, and ye will die in your sin. Where I go, ye**

cannot come" (John 8:21). He told them they were of this world, but he was not of this world. When they asked who he was, he said, "**The beginning, something that I am even telling you**" (John 8:25). And he spoke other things to them.

The book says that as he spoke, many believed in him. Therefore, he told them if they remained in his word, they were truly his disciples, and he said, "**... ye will know the truth, and the truth will make you free**" (John 8:32). They said they were Abraham's seed, and had never been in bondage. However, Jesus said, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, that every man who does the sin is a bondman of the sin**" (John 8:34). He said they sought to kill him because his word had no place in them. Jesus said he spoke what he heard from his Father, and they did what they saw from their father. They said Abraham was their father, but Jesus said they were from their father, the devil, who was a man-killer from the beginning, and a liar and the father of it. He said the reason they did not listen was because they were not of God.

The Jews answered, saying he was a Samaritan and had a demon. Jesus denied it, saying he honored his Father, and they dishonored him. Then he said, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, if any man keeps my word, he will, no, not see death, into the age**" (John 8:51). The Jews asked if he were greater than their father Abraham who died. Jesus said Abraham rejoiced that he would see his day. They said he was not yet fifty years old, and how could he have seen Abraham. He said to them, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I am**" (John 8:58). When they heard that, they sought to stone him, but he hid himself and left the temple.

While going he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked Jesus who sinned, the man or his parents, that he was born blind. Jesus said neither, but that the works of God might be manifested in him. Then he made clay of his spittle, anointed his eyes with it, and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. Therefore, he went and washed, and came seeing. Those who knew him formerly, asked how his eyes were opened. He told them what happened, and said the man's name was Jesus. When they asked where he was, he said he did not know.

It was a sabbath, and they brought him to the Pharisees. They asked him how he received his sight and he told them. Some of the Pharisees said Jesus could not be from God, because he did not keep the sabbath, but others asked how a sinner could do such signs. So there was a division among

them. When they asked the blind man, he said Jesus was a prophet. The Jews did not believe that he had been blind, so they called the man's parents. They admitted he had been born blind, but they claimed they did not know how he sees. They were afraid to say anything about Jesus, because the Jews had agreed to excommunicate from the synagogue any man who confessed him as Christ.

Therefore, they called the man a second time. They told him to give glory to God, for they knew that man was sinful. He said he did not know about that; what he knew was, he had been blind, but now could see. When they asked again how he did it, he asked if they wanted to become his disciples. They reviled him, and said they were disciples of Moses. They said they knew God had spoken to Moses, but they knew nothing about that man. The man said that was amazing. He said it had never been heard that any man opened the eyes of a man born blind (and never will be, for the brain must learn to recognize anything). He said if that man were not from God, he could do nothing. The Pharisees said, "**Thou were born entirely in sins, and thou teach us**" (John 9:34). And they cast him out.

When Jesus heard it, he found him and asked if he believed in the Son of God. When the man learned that was Jesus, he said, "**Lord, I believe**" (John 9:38), and he worshiped him. Then Jesus said, "**For judgment I came into this world, so that those not seeing might see, and those who see might become blind**" (John 9:39). When the Pharisees asked if they were also blind, Jesus said if they were blind they would have no sin. But since they claimed to see, their sin remained.

Then Jesus spoke about how sheep only follow their shepherd and not strangers. However, they did not understand him. Therefore, he first said that he was the door of the sheep, and any man who entered by him would be saved. Then he contrasted himself with a hired man who does not care about the sheep. He said, "**I am the good shepherd, and I know mine, and I am known by mine, just as the Father knows me, I also know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep**" (John 10:14-15). Hence, the Jews were again divided about him, some saying, "**He has a demon, and is mad. Why do ye listen to him?**" (John 10:20), but others asked if a demon could open the eyes of the blind.

Afterward Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon's porch at the feast of the dedication. The Jews surrounded him, and wanted him to tell them plainly if he were the Christ. He replied, "**I told**

you, and ye did not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, these testify about me” (John 10:25). He said they did not believe because they were not of his sheep. He said his sheep hear his voice, and follow him, and he gives them eternal life. He said his Father, who is greater than all, gave them to him. Then he said, **“I and the Father are one”** (John 10:30).

When the Jews took up stones, he asked them for which of his good works they were stoning him. They said not for a good work, but blasphemy, since he made himself God. Then Jesus said, **“Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If he designated those men gods, for whom the word of God came to be (and the scripture cannot be broken), whom the Father made holy and sent into the world, do ye say, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?”** (John 10:35-36). He told them not to believe him if he were not doing the works of his Father. Nevertheless, they sought again to take him, but he departed from them, and went beyond the Jordan.

Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, was sick. The book says Mary was the woman who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair (described later). They therefore sent to him, saying he whom he loved was sick. However, Jesus said that sickness was not about death, but for the glory of God, and that the Son of God may be glorified by it. The book says Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Nevertheless he remained where he was for two days. Then he told his disciples that Lazarus died, and he was going to go to him.

When he arrived at Bethany, he found Lazarus had already been four days in the sepulcher. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she met him, but Mary was sitting in the house. Martha told Jesus that Lazarus would not have died if he had been there. That was a statement of faith, and was in no way an accusation, as his enemies try to make it seem. Jesus said her brother would rise, but she thought he meant the resurrection at the last day. He said to her, **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, even though he died, he will live”** (John 11:25). When he asked her, she confessed that he was the Christ, the Son of God.

Martha went from Jesus and told Mary privately that the teacher was calling her. So she arose and came to him. The Jews who were consoling her followed, thinking she was going to the sepulcher. When Mary came to Jesus, she fell at his feet, and

also said her brother would not have died if he had been there. When Jesus saw her weeping, and all with her weeping, he groaned in the spirit, and was himself troubled. When he asked where they laid him, they showed him. Then the book says Jesus wept. The sepulcher was a cave, with a stone laying against it. After Jesus told them to remove the stone, he lifted up his eyes, and said, **“Father, I thank thee that thou heard me. And I had known that thou always hear me, but because of the multitude that stands by I spoke, so that they may believe that thou sent me”** (John 11:41-42). Then he cried out with a great voice for Lazarus to come out. And he came forth, wrapped head to foot with grave-clothes.

Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary believed in him, yet some went and reported to the Pharisees. The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, **“What are we doing? Because this man does many signs. If we allow him this way, all men will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and the nation”** (John 11:47-48). The high priest then told them it was expedient that one man die for the people. But, unknown to him, it was a prophecy that Jesus would die, not only for the nation, but to gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad. In other words, Jesus died to save the souls of all who commit themselves to God. From that time forward they consulted together how to kill him. Therefore, Jesus would no longer walk openly among the Jews.

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, and they made a supper for them with Martha serving. Mary took a pound of very costly genuine spikenard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair. Judas Iscariot asked why the ointment was not sold, and the money given to the poor. The book says it was not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief; he had the purse and removed things put in it. Jesus said to let her alone; she kept it for the day of his burial. He said they always had the poor, but not him. The book says a great multitude of the Jews came because they knew he was there, and they wanted to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. Therefore, the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus also, since because of him many were believing in Jesus. Those corrupt priests were worse than the modern mafia.

The next day, having heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took palm branches, and went

forth to meet him. They also cried out, "**Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel!**" (John 12:13). Jesus sat on a donkey, as it is written, "**Fear not, daughter of Zion. Behold, thy King comes, sitting on a donkey's colt**" (John 12:15). After he was glorified, his disciples remembered those things were written about him (see Zec. 9:9). The book says the multitude met him because they heard how he raised Lazarus from the dead.

When told some Greeks wanted to see him, Jesus began to say his hour had come to be glorified. He used the analogy of a grain of wheat that must die in order to bear much fruit. And he said, "**He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life**" (John 12:25). He said his soul was troubled, but he would not ask his Father to save him from that hour, because that was why he came. Then he said, "**Father, glorify thy name**" (John 12:28). And a voice from heaven said, "**I both glorified it, and I will glorify again**" (John 12:28). The multitude said it thundered, others said an agent spoke to him. But Jesus said it occurred for their sake, not his. And he said, "**Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out**" (John 12:31). Cast out of heaven, not from the earth (see Rev. 12:9).

The multitude asked him who was the Son of man. However, he taught them about walking in the light, so that darkness would not overcome them. And he told them to believe in the light, so they could become sons of light. Then he departed. The book says that although he did many signs, they (the majority) did not believe in him. That was fulfillment of Isaiah's prophesies: one about believing him (see Isa. 53:1), and one about blinding their eyes and hardening their hearts (see Isa. 6:10). Yet even many of the rulers believed in him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it. The record says, "... for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43).

Jesus cried out saying that he who believed in him, also believed in him who sent him. And he said he had come a light into the world, so that those who believe in him would not remain in the darkness. He also said the word that he spoke would judge the man who rejected him, for he spoke what God told him. The book says that Jesus loved his own in the world, and he loved them to the end.

Next the book says it was Passover supper, and the devil had put into the heart of Judas Iscariot to

betray him. Jesus set his garments aside, took a towel, and girded himself. Then he poured water into the wash-basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and wipe them with the towel. Peter did not want him to wash his feet (he considered Jesus his Lord), but Jesus said he would understand later. When Peter refused to allow him, Jesus said if he could not wash him, he had no part with him. Then Peter said, "**Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and head**" (John 13:9). However, Jesus said there was no need. He said they were clean, but not all, for he knew the man betraying him.

When he finished, he told them why he did it. He said if he, the lord and teacher, washed their feet, they ought to wash each other's feet. For he gave them an example. And he said, "**If ye have seen these things, blessed are ye if ye do them**" (John 13:17). Then he became troubled in the spirit, and said one of them would betray him. The disciples did not know about whom he spoke. The author of this book (John) said that Peter gestured to him to inquire of Jesus, because he was next to him. Jesus said it was the man to whom he would give a morsel. And he gave it to Judas Iscariot. Then Satan entered into Judas, and Jesus told him to do what he did quickly. Therefore, he went out into the night.

Then Jesus said that where he was going they could not come. And he said, "**A new commandment I give to you, that ye should love each other, just as I loved you, so that ye also should love each other. By this all men will know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love among each other**" (John 13:34-35). Peter asked him where he was going, and wanted to know why he could not follow him. He said he would lay down his life for him. Jesus asked him if he really would, for a cock would not sound until he denied him thrice.

Then he spoke words of great comfort and encouragement to them. He said, "**Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me**" (John 14:1). He told them of many dwellings in his Father's house, and said he goes to prepare a place for them. He said he would come again, and take them to be where he was. And he said they knew the way. When Thomas asked about that, Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father, except by me**" (John 14:6). He said if they had known him, they would have known the Father also. He said, "**And from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him**" (John 14:7).

Philip then asked him to show them the Father, and it would be enough. Jesus said to him, “**Have I been so long a time with you, and thou do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father. And how can thou say, Show us the Father?**” (John 14:9). He said the Father who dwells in him does the works. And he told them to believe that he was in the Father, and the Father was in him. He said to them, “**And anything whatever ye may ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye will ask me anything in my name, I will do it**” (John 14:13-14).

He said, “**If ye love me, keep my commandments**” (John 14:15). He said he was going to ask the Father to give them another helper, so that he would dwell with them into the age (always). He said it was the Spirit of Truth, which the world could not receive, but would dwell with them and be in them. He said in a little while the world would see him no more. And he said, “**He who has my commandments, and keeps them, that man it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him**” (John 14:21).

Judas (not Iscariot) asked him why he was going to manifest himself to them and not the world. Jesus said again that if any man loves him, he would keep his word, and his Father would love him, and they would come and make a dwelling with him. And again he said that the word they heard was not his, but the Father’s who sent him. He said the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in his name would teach them all things, and would remind them of all he said to them.

He continued to encourage them, and tell of his departure. He said if they loved him, they would have rejoiced because he said he goes to the Father, because the Father was greater than he. And he said he told them before it happens, so that when it happens they might believe. He said he would no longer speak many things to them, because the ruler of the world comes. Then he said he was the true grape-vine, and his Father was the farmer. And he spoke of them as the branches that bear fruit through him. Otherwise a man is cast out as a branch and is withered and burned. And again he said, “**If ye dwell in me, and my sayings dwell in you, ye will ask whatever ye may want, and it will be done to you**” (John 15:7). He said by that his father is glorified.

He said he loved them as the Father loves him, and if they keep his commandments, they would dwell in his love. He said, “**These things I have spoken to you that my joy may dwell in you, and your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that ye love each other, just as I have loved you**” (John 15:11-12). He said there was no greater love than for a man to lay down his life for his friends. And he said he no longer called them bondmen, but friends. He said they did not choose him, but he chose them, and appointed them to go and bear fruit. And he said, “**These things I command you, so that ye may love each other**” (John 15:17). Three times during the last supper Jesus commanded them to love each other.

Then Jesus warned them, saying if the world hates them, they should know that it hated him before them. He said the world loves its own, but they are not of the world, and that is why the world hates them. He said the world would persecute them because of his name, because they did not know the one who sent him. He said, “**He who hates me hates my Father also**” (John 15:23). He said he told them those things, so that they would not be caused to stumble. He told them of persecution to come, and even said the hour was coming when every man who killed them would presume to be offering service to God. He said sorrow had filled their heart because he spoke those things to them, but it was expedient for them that he depart. Otherwise the helper (the Holy Spirit) would not come to them. He said he had many things to say to them, but they could not bear them now. However, when the Spirit of truth came, he would guide them into all the truth.

Then he said, “**A little while, and ye do not see me. Again a little while, and ye will look at me, because I go to the Father**” (John 16:16). They questioned themselves about that, so he said, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, that ye will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. Ye will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will become into joy**” (John 16:20). Then he used the analogy of a woman’s birth pangs, which she forgets afterward because of the joy that a man was born. And again he said, “**And in that day ye will ask me nothing. Truly, truly, I say to you, that as many things as ye may ask the Father in my name, he will give you. Until now ye have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and ye will receive, so that your joy may be made full**” (John 16:23-24). Dear reader, I am persuaded that Jesus was referring to all of his

disciples, including you and me, and not just the eleven with him then; he who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Jesus continued to speak words of encouragement to them. However, when they told of their faith in him, he said, "**Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour comes, and now has come, that ye will be scattered, each man to his own things, and ye will leave me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me**" (John 16:31-32). He said he spoke to them so they might have peace in him. He said they have tribulation in the world, but to cheer up, he had overcome the world.

Then he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and spoke a lengthy prayer in their presence. He said the hour had come, and he asked his Father to glorify him, so that he could glorify him. He told how he had been given authority over all flesh, and he spoke of eternal life. Among other things he said he had finished the work he gave him, and he said, "**Father, glorify thou me with thyself with the glory that I had with thee before the world was**" (John 17:5). He told how he manifested his Father's name to the men he gave him out of the world, and they believed that the Father sent him. He said he was praying about them, but not about the world. He said he was coming to the Holy Father, and he asked him to keep them in his name, so that they may be one, just as he and the Father were one.

He said he spoke those things in the world, so that they may have his joy fulfilled in them. He said the world hated them, because they were not of the world, just as he was not of the world. And he asked his Father to keep them from evil. He said he was sending them into the world, just as the Father sent him. And he said, "**And I pray not about these only, but also about those who believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, just as thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou sent me**" (John 17:20-21). He concluded his prayer, saying, "**Father, whom thou gave to me, I desire that where I am, they also may be with me, so that they may see my glory that thou have given me, because thou loved me before the foundation of the world And righteous Father, the world does not know thee, but I know thee, and these know that thou sent me. And I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known, so that the love that thou loved me may be in them, and I in them**" (John 17:24-26).

After that Jesus went with his disciples to a garden. Judas, the betrayer, knew where it was, because Jesus often gathered there with his disciples. Judas therefore came with a band from the chief priests and the Pharisees, having lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus asked whom they sought, and they said Jesus the Nazarene. When he told them he was the man, they went backward and fell to the ground. When he asked again, and they answered the same way, he asked them to let the other men go. However, Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's bondman, but Jesus told him to put the sword away; he was going to drink the cup the Father had given him. So they arrested Jesus, bound him, and led him away. They took him first to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who counseled the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.

The record says that Peter and the other disciple (John) followed Jesus. The other disciple was known to the high priest, and he went in with Jesus into the courtyard. Peter stood near the door, so the other disciple spoke to the doorkeeper and brought him in. The servant girl who was the doorkeeper asked Peter if he was not also one of his disciples, but he said no.

When the high priest asked Jesus about his disciples and his doctrine, Jesus told him to ask those who heard what he said. That is the objective way to find out such things, but one of the subordinates slapped Jesus, and rebuked him for answering that way. Jesus said to him, "**If I spoke wrongly, testify about the wrong, but if correctly, why strike me?**" (John 18:23). Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas.

On another occasion Peter was asked if he was not also one of his disciples, and he again said no. Then a kinsman of the man whose ear Peter had cut off asked if he did not see him in the garden. Peter again denied it, and straightaway a cock sounded.

From Caiaphas they took Jesus to the Roman Praetorium, but they did not enter so they would not be defiled and kept from the Passover. That is another example of how prejudiced the Jews were against Gentiles. Therefore Pilate went out to them, and asked what accusation they brought. They snapped back, "**If this man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered him up to thee**" (John 18:30). Hence, he told them to take him, and judge them by their law. They replied it was not permitted (by the Romans) for them to kill any man.

Pilate went back into the Praetorium, and asked Jesus if he were the king of the Jews. Among other things Jesus said, “**My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world my subordinates would have fought so that I would not be delivered to the Jews, but now my kingdom is not from here**” (John 18:36). Pilate went out to the Jews, and told them he found not one cause in him. He reminded them of the custom to release one man at the Passover, and asked if they wanted him to release the king of the Jews. They all cried out for Barabbas instead of Jesus. Barabbas was a robber.

After that Pilate had Jesus scourged. The soldiers also mocked him and slapped him. Then Pilate brought him out for them to see. Jesus’ ordeal in the garden, his lack of sleep, and the much physical abuse he endured must have made him very feeble, and perhaps Pilate hoped that would provoke some sympathy. Nevertheless, they cried out to crucify him. Pilate said he found no cause in him. However, they said according to their law he ought to die because he made himself the Son of God. The book says when Pilate heard that, he was more afraid. Therefore, he went in and asked Jesus where he was from. Remember, in those days men believed in gods such as, Zeus, Apollo, and Atlas, some of whom they believed had human offspring. Therefore, Pilate may have feared angering some god, of whom Jesus was a son.

Nevertheless, Jesus did not answer. So Pilate asked if he did not know he had authority to crucify him or release him. Jesus then said, “**Thou would have no authority against me, unless it were given thee from above. Because of this he who delivered me to thee has greater sin**” (John 19:11). Therefore, Pilate again sought to release him, but the Jews then threatened Pilate indirectly. They said he was not Caesar’s friend if he released him, for every man who made himself a king spoke against Caesar. That meant Pilate himself could be charged with treason if he released him.

It was about noon the day before Passover, and Pilate again told the Jews to look at their king. Yet they cried out, away, crucify him. When he asked if he should crucify their king, those hypocrites said they had no king but Caesar. That is the way the devil and his disciples work. They will say anything to get their way. Consequently, he delivered him to be crucified.

Jesus went out bearing his cross to a place called “of a Skull,” and in Hebrew “Golgotha.” They crucified him between two other men. Pilate wrote a

title to be put on the cross: “**JESUS THE NAZAREN, THE KING OF THE JEWS**” (John 19:19). The book says, “**Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, Do not write, The king of the Jews, but, That man said I am king of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written**” (John 19:21-22). There seems to have been continual animosity between Pilate and the leaders of the Jews. They had pressured him to crucify Jesus, but he found a way to mock them with the sign.

The soldiers divided his garments between them, but the tunic was seamless, so they cast a lot for it. Those things also fulfilled scripture (see Psa. 22:18). His mother and her sister, Mary wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene stood near his cross. The book says, “**When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing by, he says to his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then he says to the disciple, Behold, thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own place**” (John 19:26-27). Then he said he was thirsty, but refused the offer of vinegar. After that he said, “**It is finished**” (John 19:30), and he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit.

The Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the cross on the sabbath, so they besought Pilate to have their legs broken (which apparently caused them to suffocate). The soldiers broke the legs of the two other men, but not his because they saw he was already dead. Instead one of them pierced his side with a spear, causing blood and water to come out. Those things were also fulfillment of prophecy (see Psa. 22:16, 34:20, and Zec. 12:10). Then Joseph of Arimathaea, a secret disciple of Jesus, asked Pilate for his body. Nicodemus also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes. They wrapped his body in linen clothes with the spices, and placed it in a new unused sepulcher.

On the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early, while still dark, and saw how the stone had been taken from the sepulcher. Therefore, she ran to Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said they had taken away the Lord, and they did not know where. Therefore, the two men ran together to see. The other disciple came first, but did not go in. When Peter came he went in, followed by the other disciple, and they saw the linen clothes lying. So they departed.

However, Mary stood outside the sepulcher weeping. When she stooped to look into the sepulcher, she saw two agents in white, sitting where the

body of Jesus had lain. They asked her why she wept, and she said she did not know where they took her Lord. When she turned backward, she saw Jesus, but thought he was the gardener. Therefore, she asked him where he was. Then Jesus spoke her name, and she recognized him. He told her not to touch him, but to go tell his brothers "**I ascend to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God**" (John 20:17). So she went and informed them.

At evening that day, the first day of the week, the disciples were assembled with the doors shut for fear of the Jews. Then Jesus stood in the midst, and said, "**Peace to you**" (John 20:19). After showing them his hands and side, they rejoiced. He therefore said to them again, "**Peace to you.**" And he added, "**As the Father has sent me, I also send you**" (John 20:21). Then he breathed on them, and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. And he said, "**If ye forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If ye retain of any, they are retained**" (John 20:23).

Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them. And when they told him they had seen the Lord, he said unless he saw the marks, and put his fingers and hand in them, he would not believe. Eight days later, Jesus again came to them, and he told Thomas to put his finger and hand in the wounds. Thomas then said, "**My Lord and my God**" (John 20:28). Jesus said to him, "**Because thou have seen me, thou have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen, and have believed**" (John 20:29).

The book then says, "**And indeed therefore many other signs Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, so that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name**" (John 20:30-31).

After those things Jesus manifested himself again to them at the sea of Tiberias. Seven of them were together, and Peter said he was going to harvest fish. They went with him, and toiled all night without catching anything. That morning Jesus stood on the shore, but they did not know it was he. When he asked if they had anything eatable, they said no. Then he told them to cast the net on the right side of the boat. When they did, they could not draw it back because of the magnitude of the fishes.

The disciple whom Jesus loved told Peter it was the Lord. Therefore, Peter swam to shore while the other disciples came in the skiff dragging the net of

fishes. Jesus had prepared a fire of coals, with fish on it, and bread. He told them to bring from the fishes they had caught. And after Peter went and drew the net to land, Jesus told them to come and eat breakfast. None of them dared ask who he was, for they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread, and gave to them, with the fish likewise. The book says this was the third time Jesus manifested himself to his disciples after being raised from the dead.

When they ate breakfast, Jesus asked Peter if he loved him more than those things. Peter said, "**Yea, Lord. Thou know that I love thee**" (John 21:15). Jesus told him to feed his lambs. He asked him a second time if he loved him, and Peter said the same thing. Jesus told him to feed his sheep. Then he asked him a third time if he loved him. Peter was grieved because he asked him a third time, and he said, "**Lord, thou know all things. Thou know that I love thee. Jesus says to him, Feed my sheep**" (John 21:17). Peter no longer disputed with Jesus. The humiliation of his denials apparently humbled him, and made him a better man.

After that Jesus said to him, "**Truly, truly, I say to thee, When thou were younger, thou girded thyself, and walked where thou would, but when thou become old, thou will stretch forth thy hands, and another will gird thee, and carry thee where thou do not want**" (John 21:18). That signified what kind of death he would glorify God. Then Jesus told him to follow him. However, when Peter turned around, and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved, following, he asked Jesus about him. Jesus said to him, "**If I want him to remain until I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou me**" (John 21:22). John said that saying went forth among the brothers that he would not die, but Jesus did not say that.

John sometimes referred to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. However, he did not mean the *only* disciple Jesus loved, for in this book he tells of other disciples whom Jesus also loved (e.g., John 11:5). That expression for himself seems to have been motivated by gratitude and not pride.

He concluded the book, "**This is the disciple who testifies about these things, and who wrote these things. And we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things, as many as Jesus did, which if they would be written every one, I suppose not even the world itself to make room for the books being written. Truly.**"

A Description of **Acts**

This is a continuation of the book of Luke, for it addresses Theophilus, and refers to the former treatise, which was Luke's story of Jesus. After the salutation, it begins by saying that Jesus presented himself alive after his suffering (trial and crucifixion) by many infallible proofs, having been seen by the apostles during forty days.

When they were assembled together, Jesus commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. He said, **“Because John indeed immersed in water, but ye will be immersed in a Holy Spirit after not many of these days”** (Acts 1:5). They asked him if he was then going to restore the kingdom to Israel (from the Romans). He told them it was not for them to know times or seasons, which the Father established in his own authority. He said they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and they would be witnesses to him **“both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and as far as of the extremity of the earth”** (Acts 1:8).

After saying those things, he was taken up and received in a cloud. While they were gazing, two men stood by in white apparel, and asked them why they were gazing into the sky. They said Jesus would also come in the same way. Then the eleven apostles returned to Jerusalem and went to the upper floor where they were lodging. And those men continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Next the book says that Peter stood up and told how the betrayal by Judas was a fulfillment of scripture. The book then describes the death of Judas. Then Peter quoted a scripture in Psalms (109:8) indicating a need to find another man for Judas' office. Therefore, they put forth two men, prayed, and gave their lots. They used that means for God to determine the outcome (see Pro. 16:33). The lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Afterward, while they were gathered together fulfilling the day of Pentecost, there developed a sound from the sky as a forceful wind, and it filled the entire house. The book says, **“And there appeared to them dividing tongues, as of fire, and they settled upon each one of them. And they were all filled of the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them**

to declare” (Acts 2:3-4). Being a feast day, there were devout Jews from every nation there. The multitude came together at the sound, and was bewildered because each one heard them speaking in his own language. The book names fifteen nations from which they came. And they were amazed and wondered. However, some mocked, saying they were drunk.

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, and spoke out to them. He said the men were not drunk. He said it was that which was spoken through the prophet Joel. He quoted the words of Joel (2:28-32), which told about God pouring out his Spirit upon all flesh. Then he reminded them about Jesus the Nazarene, who was shown by God among them by miracles, wonders, and signs, but whom they had crucified. Peter said that God raised him up, and he quoted the words of David (see Psa. 16:8-11), which told how God would not give his Holy Man to see decay. Peter said David was not speaking about himself, for he perished and remains buried, but rather about the resurrection of the Christ. And Peter said they were all witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. Then after quoting what David wrote about Christ sitting at the right hand of God (see Psa. 110:1), he said, **“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made him, this Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ”** (Acts 2:36).

The book says when they heard that, they were pierced in the heart, and asked Peter and the other apostles what they could do. Peter said to them, **“Repent ye, and be immersed each of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all those in afar, as many as the Lord our God may call”** (Acts 2:38-39). The book says he testified and exhorted them with many other words, telling them to be saved from that crooked generation.

Then it says, **“Indeed therefore those who received his word gladly, were immersed. And there were added in that day about three thousand souls. And they were continuing steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, and in fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and the prayers. And fear developed in every soul. And many wonders and signs occurred through the apostles. And all who believed were together, and had all things com-**

mon. And they sold properties and possessions, and divided them to all, according as any man had need. And continuing steadfastly, daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they partook of nourishment in gladness and evenness of heart, praising God, and having favor with the whole populace. And the Lord was adding to the church daily those being saved” (Acts 2:41-47).

Next it tells about Peter healing a man at the gate of the temple, the gate called Beautiful. He had been lame from his mother’s belly, and was carried there to ask charity. Peter told him to look at them (John was with him). Then Peter said, “**No silver and gold exists to me, but what I have, this I give thee. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, rise up and walk”** (Acts 3:6). After lifting him up by the right hand, the man’s feet and ankles were strengthened. And the book says, “**And leaping up, he stood and walked. And he entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God”** (Acts 3:8).

Of course the people were astonished when they recognized him, and they ran together in Solomon’s porch. Peter then asked them why they marveled at the man, or stared at them as if it was by their power they made him walk. He said, “**The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his Boy Jesus, whom ye actually delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate who preferred to release that man”** (Acts 3:13). Peter told them how they had denied Jesus and killed him, but God raised him up, as they had witnessed. He said it was faith in his name that the man was made strong and healthy.

Then he said he knew they did it in ignorance, as also did their rulers. He said that way God fulfilled what had been foretold. He told them to repent, and be converted in order to wipe away their sins. He told of Moses who prophesied about Christ (see Deu. 18:15-16). And he said all the prophets, from Samuel on, proclaimed those days for them. He said that God sent his Boy Jesus to bless them in turning away each man from their evils. As they spoke, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came, greatly annoyed because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. Therefore, they threw hands on them, and put them in custody until the morrow. The book says, “**But many of those who heard the word believed, and the number of the men became about five thousand”** (Acts 4:4).

The next day many leaders of the Jews assembled in Jerusalem. And after placing them in the midst, they asked by what power, or in what name, they did that. Peter, being filled with the Holy Spirit, responded. He said if they asked about the man who was healed, it was done in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom they crucified, but God raised from the dead. He said, “**And salvation is not in any other man, for there is no other name under the heaven, that has been given among men, by which we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12).

The book says when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were illiterate and uneducated men, they marveled. And they recognized they had been with Jesus. However, seeing the man who was healed standing with them, they could not contradict. Then after sending them outside, they conferred with each other. They decided to threaten them, and order them not to teach in the name of Jesus. Peter and John replied, “**Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken to you rather than God, judge ye. For we are not able not to speak what we saw and heard”** (Acts 4:19-20). The rulers further threatened them and let them go. The book says the healed man was more than forty years old.

After being released, they went to their own men and reported what happened. Then all who heard lifted up a united voice to God and prayed. They said God created all things, and they quoted what David said in the second Psalm: “**Why do the nations rage, and the peoples meditate vain things?”** (Acts 4:25). They spoke how kings and rulers were against the Lord and his Christ. And they said, “**And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy bondmen with all boldness to speak thy word, by thy stretching forth thy hand for healing, and signs and wonders to happen through the name of thy holy Boy Jesus”** (Acts 4:29-30). Then the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

The book says all who believed were of one heart and soul, and they shared what they had with each other. Some even sold lands or houses, and brought the proceeds to the feet of the apostles. And it was distributed according to needs. It also tells of a man the apostles surnamed Barnabas, which means son of encouragement. He sold a field, and placed the money at the apostles feet.

However, a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold property and kept back from

the price. They brought a certain part, and placed it at the apostles feet. However, Peter asked him why Satan filled his heart to lie to the Holy Spirit. He said, **“While it remained, did it not remain to thee? And after it was sold, it was in thine authority. Why is it that thou have placed this matter in thy heart? Thou have not lied to men, but to God”** (Acts 5:4). When Ananias heard those words, he fell down and expired, and the young men carried him out and buried him. After three hours his wife came, and Peter asked her about the price of the sale. She too lied, and when Peter rebuked her, she also died. The book says a great fear developed in the whole church, and in all who heard those things.

The book says many signs and wonders happened among the people at the hands of the apostles. It says, **“And more who believe were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, so as to bring the feeble to the thoroughfares, and to place them on cots and mats, so that while coming, the shadow of Peter might at the least overshadow some of them”** (Acts 5:14-15). Such things might have puffed up Peter with pride if he had not been humbled before.

However, the high priest and all those with him (the Sadducees) were filled with envy, and they arrested the apostles. However, an agent of the Lord opened the prison doors by night, and told them to go to the temple, and speak to the people all the sayings of that (way of) life. And they did so. When the high priest called the council together, with all the senate of the sons of Israel, he sent to the prison for them. When the subordinates came back and reported they were not there, they were all perplexed. Then a certain man came and said the men were standing in the temple and teaching the people. So the captain went and brought them, but not with violence, because they feared they would be stoned by the people.

When they arrived, the high priest rebuked them. However, Peter and the apostles said they had to obey God rather than men. And they said, **“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye murdered, having hung on a tree. God exalted this man with his right hand, a Pathfinder and a Savior to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins”** (Acts 5:30-31). They said they and the Holy Spirit were witnesses of those things.

The book says when they heard that, they were as being split with a saw, and wanted to annihilate them. However, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a law

teacher, esteemed by all the people, commanded the apostles be taken outside a little while. Then he persuaded the council to release them. He said if their movement was of men it would be overthrown, and he gave some examples of that happening. Then he said if it was of God they could not overthrow it. Hence, after beating them, and commanding them to keep quiet about Jesus, they released them. The book says when they departed they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to be treated shamefully for the name of Jesus. And they continued every day in the temple, and from house to house, teaching and preaching the good news of Christ.

A time came as the disciples multiplied that the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews, because their widows were being neglected in the daily assistance. The twelve said it was not right for them to leave the word of God behind to serve tables. Instead, they recommended selecting seven qualified men to appoint over the need. The multitude was pleased with the idea and did so. Then the book names the seven chosen men, beginning with Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.

The book next tells about the death of Stephen. He was doing great wonders and signs among the people, but some of the Jews rose up disputing with him. However, they were not able to withstand the wisdom and spirit by which he spoke. Therefore, they instigated men to make false charges, saying he spoke blasphemy against Moses and God. They incited the people, the elders, and the scholars. As a result he was arrested, and brought to the council.

When Stephen was asked about the charges, he started reviewing their history, beginning with Abraham. It was a fairly lengthy review, taking about a page and a half in a modern Bible. He mentioned how Joseph was persecuted by his brothers, and how Moses was persecuted by his own people. He mentioned how Moses told the people that the Lord would raise up a prophet like him from among them. He told how the house of Israel forsook God for idols, and he mentioned the tabernacle and the temple. He concluded his review, saying to them, **“Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers, ye also. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold about the coming of the Righteous man, of whom ye now have become betrayers and murderers, who received the law at directions of agents, and did not keep it”** (Acts 7:51-53).

The book says when they heard those things, they were split with a saw in their hearts, and gnashed their teeth against him. I suspect most people who now call themselves Christians would accuse anybody who spoke the way Stephen did of speaking too harshly. However, God did not so judge. For the book says that Stephen, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at his right hand. When Stephen told them what he saw, they cried out in a great voice, held their ears shut, and rushed upon him with one accord. They took him out of the city and stoned him. The book says the witnesses laid their garments beside the feet of a young man called Saul. Just before he died, Stephen asked the Lord not to place that sin to them. Afterward the devout men buried him, and made great lamentation, but Saul had approved killing him.

The effect of Stephen's trial began a great persecution against the church at Jerusalem. The cause was not Stephen's testimony, but the hatred of the Jews toward God's word. The book says the disciples were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. The book says that Saul was ravaging the church, dragging both men and women from house to house, and giving them over to prison. Yet those who were scattered abroad proclaimed the good news, the word.

Philip went down to a city of Samaria, and proclaimed the Christ to them. And the multitudes unanimously heeded what he spoke to them as they listened and saw the signs he did. The book says, "**For of many of those who had unclean spirits, they came out, crying in a great voice. And many who were paralyzed, and who were lame, were healed. And there became great joy in that city**" (Acts 8:7-8).

There was also a certain Simon who had practiced sorcery. He had fascinated the nation of Samaria, claiming he was some great man, and the people heeded him. But then they believed the teaching of Philip, and were immersed, both men and women. Even Simon believed, was immersed, and continued with Philip, being astonished at the miracles and signs. When the apostles at Jerusalem heard about Samaria, they sent Peter and John. They came and prayed that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them. Therefore, they laid hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit.

When Simon saw that, he wanted to buy the power to give the Holy Spirit. But Peter rebuked

him, saying his heart was not straight in the sight of God. And he said, "**Repent therefore from this thine evil, and beg God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart will be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of unrighteousness**" (Acts 8:22-23). Then Simon asked Peter to beg the Lord for him, that nothing of what he spoke would come upon him.

On their way back to Jerusalem they preached the good news in many villages of the Samaritans. Also an agent of the Lord told Philip to go south in a desolate region to the road going from Jerusalem to Gaze. After going he saw an Ethiopian eunuch, a high official of Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship, and was reading the prophet Isaiah in his chariot as he returned. The Spirit told Philip to join to the chariot.

Therefore, Philip ran, and when he heard him reading, he asked if he understood what he read. He asked how he could unless some man guided him, and he invited Philip to sit with him. The passage was, "**He was led as a sheep to slaughter, and as a lamb, mute before shearing him, thus he opened not his mouth. In his lowly condition his justice was taken away. And who will describe his generation, because his life was taken from the earth?**" (Acts 8:32-33).

Then Philip preached the good news of Jesus to him. When they came to water, the man asked what prevented him to be immersed. So they stopped, went down into the water, and Philip immersed him. When they came up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch went his way rejoicing.

Saul, however, was still breathing threat and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the high priest, and requested letters to the synagogues in Damascus, to bind and bring back any there who were of the Way. As he approached Damascus, suddenly a light out of heaven shown around him. After falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "**Saul, Saul, why do thou persecute me?**" (Acts 9:4). When Saul asked who he was, he said he was Jesus whom he was persecuting. And he told him to go into the city, and he would be told what to do.

The men with him heard the voice, but saw no man. When Saul arose, he could not see, so they brought him into Damascus. He was three days not seeing, and he neither ate nor drank. Then the Lord told a disciple named Ananias in a vision to go to

the street called Straight to the house of Judas. He was to seek Saul of Tarsus. He said Saul was praying, and saw a vision of a man named Ananias laying a hand on him so he could receive sight. Ananias told the Lord about the evil Saul had done, and why he came to Damascus. But the Lord said Saul was a chosen vessel to him, to bear his name before Gentiles, and kings, and sons of Israel. The Lord said, "**For I will give him a glimpse of how many things it is necessary for him to suffer for my name**" (Acts 9:16).

Therefore, Ananias went and did as the Lord had commanded him. And immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see. Then he immersed to put on Christ, and received nourishment. And he straightaway proclaimed the Christ in the synagogues, that the man is the Son of God. All who heard were amazed, because they knew about him. He confounded the Jews there, proving that he is the Christ, so after considerable days they plotted to destroy him. However, the disciples let him down through the wall in a hamper by night and he escaped.

When Saul attempted to join with the disciples in Jerusalem they all feared him. However, Barnabas brought him to the apostles, and told how the Lord had appeared to him. Therefore, he was with them, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. However, when he disputed against the Hellenists, they also attempted to destroy him. Therefore, the brothers brought him down to Caesarea to go to Tarsus. The book says the congregations (also called churches or assemblies) throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace. And, going in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

Peter was traveling about, and came to the sanctified who dwelt at Lydda. There he healed a man who was paralyzed, having lain on a bed for eight years. And all those dwelling there who saw him, turned to the Lord. There was also a woman disciple named Tabitha, which was translated Dorcas (a Greek word meaning gazelle), who was full of good works and charities. She had been ill and died. Having heard Peter was in Lydda nearby, they sent two men to urge him to come quickly. So he went and raised her up. The book says it became known throughout the whole of Joppa, and may believed in the Lord.

Next the book tells about the conversion of Cornelius, a centurion. He was a devout man, fearing God with all his house, doing many charities for the

people, and beseeching God always. He saw a vision of an agent of God coming to him. The agent said his prayers and charities had come up for a memorial before God. And he told him to send to Joppa for Simon, who was surnamed Peter. Therefore, Cornelius sent two of his housemen, and one devout soldier who served him.

On the morrow, while those men were approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray. It was about the sixth hour (noon), and he was hungry. A trance fell upon him, and he saw heaven opened, and a container descending to him, like a great sheet bound at four corners. It contained all the creatures of the earth, and a voice told him to rise, kill and eat. But Peter objected, saying he had never eaten anything profane or unclean. The voice responded, "**What God has cleansed, thou shall not make profane**" (Acts 10:15). That happened three times. Then the vessel was taken up into heaven.

While Peter was bewildered about the vision, the men sent by Cornelius inquired at the house about him. Then the Spirit told Peter to go with them, because he had sent them. So Peter invited them in, and went with them the next day, taking some of the brothers from Joppa with him. The following day he entered into Caesarea where Cornelius was waiting for them. When he saw Peter, he fell down at his feet, and worshiped. However, Peter lifted him up, and said, "**Stand up. I am also myself a man**" (Acts 10:26). There were many others with Cornelius.

Peter then told them it was unlawful for a Jewish man to fraternize or visit with a foreign man, yet God demonstrated to him not to call one man profane or unclean. The law Peter referred to was not a law of Moses, it was an addition the proud Jews had made for themselves. Peter then asked why they summoned him. Cornelius told him about his vision, and he said, "**Now therefore we are all present in the sight of God, to hear all the things commanded thee by God**" (Acts 10:33).

Peter answered, "**In truth, I am overwhelmed that God is not partial, but in every nation, he who fears him, and works righteousness, is acceptable to him**" (Acts 10:34-35). Then he told him about the good news of Jesus Christ, and how they witnessed his resurrection. He said Jesus commanded them to preach to the people, and solemnly testify that he is the man designated by God, judge of the living and the dead.

The book says that while Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word.

And the faithful men of circumcision (Jews) who came with Peter were astonished, for they heard them speaking in tongues and magnifying God. Then Peter asked if any man could forbid water for those not to be immersed, since they had received the Holy Spirit as they also. Hence, he commanded them to be immersed in the name of the Lord, and they asked them to remain some days.

The apostles and the brothers in Judea heard that the Gentiles also received the word of God. And when Peter returned to Jerusalem, the men of circumcision contended against him about it. But Peter described for them everything that happened, from his vision to their receiving the Holy Spirit. And he said to them, **“If then God gave to them the identical gift as also to us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, but what power was I to hinder God?”** (Acts 11:17). When they heard those things, they relaxed and glorified God.

Those who had been scattered abroad from the persecution that began against Stephen spoke the word to none except Jews only. However, some came to Antioch and spoke to the Hellenists, preaching good news, the Lord Jesus. The book says the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. When word of them was heard in the ears of the church at Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to go there.

And having seen the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged all, with purpose of heart, to remain in the Lord. The book says that Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. He departed to Tarsus to seek Saul, and brought him to Antioch. And they were assembled in the congregation a whole year, teaching a considerable multitude. It was there when they first called the disciples Christians.

Sometime later Herod the king arrested some of those from the church, and he killed James the brother of John. After seeing that pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Peter was placed in prison and guarded by four quaternions of soldiers (a quaternion is a squad of four). The book says that fervent prayer was being made by the church to God for him. That night while Peter was sleeping, chained to two soldiers, an agent of the Lord came. He told Peter to get up, and the chains fell off his hands. The agent told him to get dressed and follow him. Then he led him past all of the guards and out the gate, which opened spontaneously to them. After advancing one street, the agent withdrew from him.

Peter realized the Lord had dispatched his agent to deliver him from the hand of Herod and the Jews. Then he went to the house of Mary mother of John, surnamed Mark, where a considerable number were gathered and praying. When Peter knocked the door, a servant girl named Rhoda came. After recognizing Peter's voice, she ran, without opening the door, to report that Peter was standing at the gate. The book says, **“And they said to her, Thou are mad.” But she insisted to have it so. But they said, It is his agent”** (Acts 12:15). It is so like us all, to pray fervently, but not recognize when God answers.

Peter continued knocking, so they opened, and were astonished to see him. He told them how the Lord brought him out of prison, and he said for them to report those things to James and the brothers (which James is not known). Then he went to a different place. The next day there was no small stir among the soldiers about Peter. After Herod learned about it, he examined the guards, and commanded them to be led away (what that means is uncertain).

Herod was angry at the Tyrians and Sidonians, but they came to him with one accord, and requested peace, because their country was sustained from the monarchy. At a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on the tribunal, and made an oration to them. The populace shouted that it was the voice of a god and not a man. The book says that an agent of the Lord immediately struck him, because he did not give glory to God. Consequently, after becoming worm-eaten, he expired.

Next the record says that while they were in Antioch serving the Lord and fasting with some other men, the Holy Spirit said, **“Separate to me now Barnabas and Saul for the work that I have called them”** (Acts 13:2). Therefore, having fasted, prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. They sailed to Cyprus, and proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John (John Mark) for a helper.

As they were going in the island, they found a sorcerer, a Jewish false prophet, whose name was Bar-jesus. He was with the proconsul, an intelligent man, who had summoned Barnabas and Saul to hear the word of God. However, when the sorcerer opposed them, Saul (also called Paul), being filled with the Holy Spirit, said, **“O man full of all deceit and all recklessness, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, will thou not cease distorting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, behold, a hand of the Lord is upon thee, and**

thou will be blind, not seeing the sun until a time" (Acts 13:10-11). When it happened, the proconsul believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Afterward those around Paul sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, but John departed for Jerusalem. Leaving Perga they came to Antioch of Pisidia, and entered into the synagogue on the sabbath day. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the synagogue rulers said, "**Men, brothers, if there is among you a word of exhortation for the people, speak**" (Acts 13:15). Then Paul stood up and addressed the group. He spoke about their forefathers, the exodus from Egypt, and the occupation of the land of Canaan. He mentioned David the king and God's promise to him. He said it was from the seed of David that God brought salvation to Israel. Next he told about John the immerser who told of one coming after him, of whom he was not worthy to loose the shoes of his feet.

Then he said, "**Men, brothers, sons of the race of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation was sent**" (Acts 13:26). And he told how they condemned and crucified him, but God raised him from the dead. And he told how he was witnessed for several days by those who came with him from Galilee. Paul said they were proclaiming good news to them, the promise to their fathers that was fulfilled by raising up Jesus. And he quoted the Old Testament about the resurrection of his Holy Man (Jesus). He said it was through him that remission of sins was proclaimed to them. And he warned them against scoffing, by quoting the scripture (Hab. 1:5) which says, "**Behold, ye scoffers, and wonder, and perish, because I work a work in your days, which ye would, no, not believe, if some man should fully narrate it to you**" (Acts 13:41).

The book says when they left the synagogue the Gentiles urged them to speak those saying again at the next sabbath. And many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. The next sabbath almost all the city assembled to hear the word of God. When the Jews saw it, however, they were filled with envy, and contradicted what Paul spoke, and slandered them. Therefore, Paul and Barnabas told them it was necessary for the word of God to be spoken first to them, but since they thrust it away, judging themselves unworthy of eternal life, they would turn to the Gentiles, as God commanded. And he quoted the scripture (Isa.

49:6), which says, "**I have placed thee for a light of Gentiles, for thee to be for salvation as far as the extremity of the earth**" (Acts 13:47).

The book says the Gentiles were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as were appointed for eternal life believed (meaning those whose hearts were right). However, the Jews incited the religious women, and the prominent women, and the principle men of the city to raise up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas. And they cast them out of their boundaries. The record says, "**But after shaking off the dust of their feet against them, they came to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit**" (Acts 13:51-52).

In Iconium they entered the synagogue as usual, and spoke so as for a large number to believe, both of Jews and of Gentiles. But again disobedient Jews aroused the Gentiles against them. Nevertheless, they remained a considerable time speaking boldly in the Lord, who testified to the word by granting signs and wonders to be done by them. However, since a violent movement developed, both of the Gentiles and of the Jews, with their rulers, to denounce and stone them, they fled to other cities in the neighboring region.

While Paul was preaching in Lystra he healed a man who was crippled in his feet from birth. When the multitudes saw it, they shouted that the gods had come down to them as men. They called Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes. And the priest of Zeus wanted to offer oxen with garlands in sacrifice with the multitudes. Then Paul and Barnabas rushed into the crowd to discourage them, telling them about the true God. Later, however, Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and persuaded the crowds, who stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city thinking he was dead. How fickle many people are.

Nevertheless, with the disciples around him, Paul arose and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to the cities where they had been. They preached and strengthened the souls of the disciples, saying it was necessary for us to enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations. They also appointed elders for them in every congregation, and then returned to Antioch from where they began. After arriving they reported to the congregation as many things as God did with them. And they remained no little time there.

Next the book tells about a controversy they had about circumcision. Certain men came from Judea, and taught that circumcision was necessary for sal-

vation. Paul and Barnabas disputed with them. So Paul and Barnabas and some other men were appointed to go to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about the issue. After arriving they reported to the church as many things as God did with them. Some of the believers from the Pharisees said it was necessary to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses. Hence, the apostles and the elders assembled together, and there was much debate about it.

Peter rose up and told how God chose the Gentiles to hear through his mouth the word of the good news, and to believe. And he asked why they wanted to challenge God, to place a yoke on the disciples necks that neither they nor their fathers could bear. He said, **“But through the grace of the Lord Jesus, we believe to be saved, in the same way as those men also”** (Acts 15:11).

After Peter spoke the multitude listened while Barnabas and Paul described how many signs and wonders God did among the Gentiles through them. Then James asked them to hear him. He told how the prophets spoke about God taking Gentiles, and he gave examples from the Old Testament. He concluded, **“Therefore I judge not to trouble those from the Gentiles who are turning to God, but to write to them, to abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood”** (Acts 15:19-20).

They all agreed, and it was decided to send two men, Judas and Silas, to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas taking a letter that described their decision. When they arrived to Antioch they gathered the multitude together and delivered the letter. After reading it, they rejoiced for the encouragement. And after spending some time with them, Judas and Silas returned to the apostles.

After some days Paul suggested to Barnabas they return to help their brothers in every city where they had proclaimed the word, and see how they fared. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark again, but Paul objected because he withdrew the first time. The record says, **“Therefore a provocation developed, so as for them to separate from each other, and Barnabas to sail for Cyprus, after taking Mark, but Paul, having selected Silas, went forth after being delivered to the grace of God by the brothers”** (Acts 15:39-40). It is no sin for brothers to disagree on matters of opinion.

Paul passed through Syria and Cilicia, encouraging the congregations. When he came to Derbe and Lystra he met a certain disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman but a Greek father (the Bible

sometimes refers to all Gentiles as Greeks). He was well reported by the brothers there, and Paul wanted him to go with him. Therefore, he circumcised him because the Jews in those regions knew his father was a Greek.

As they went through the cities, they also delivered to them the decrees that were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. The book says the congregations were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily. However, there were some places that the Holy Spirit forbade them from going. And a vision appeared to Paul one night, in which a Macedonian man implored him to cross over and help them. Paul concluded that the Lord called them to preach the good news to them. Therefore, they sailed to Philippi, the principle city of Macedonia, and were there for some days.

The book says they went on the sabbath day outside the city beside a river, where it was customary for prayer to be. They sat down and spoke to the women who came there. One of them named Lydia, a seller of purple, was listening, and the Lord opened her heart to heed what Paul said. When she and her household were immersed, she urged them to stay with her, so they went.

A time came, as they were going to prayer, when a certain servant girl who had a spirit of divination met them. She had brought her masters much business by soothsaying. She followed Paul and the others, saying, **“These men are bondmen of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation”** (Acts 16:17). Since she did this on many days, Paul became exasperated, and commanded the spirit in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. When it did, her masters, seeing the hope of their business was gone, seized Paul and Silas, and dragged them into the marketplace to the rulers. After charging them with disturbing their city, they were beaten with rods and cast into prison. The jailer was ordered to guard them securely, so he threw them in the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Toward midnight Paul and Silas, while praying, were singing praises to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly a great earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, all the doors were opened, and the bonds of all the men were unfastened. When the jailer saw it, thinking all the prisoners had escaped, he was going to kill himself with his sword. But Paul cried out they were all there. The jailer called for lights, rushed in trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas.

After bringing them out, he asked what he should do to be saved. Paul said, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou will be saved, thou and thy household**” (Acts 16:31). The same hour he washed from their stripes, and was immersed, he and all those of his. Then he brought them into his house, fed them, and rejoiced, having believed in God with all his house.

When it became day, the magistrates sent police to have them released. When the jailer told Paul, he objected, saying, “**Having beaten us publicly, uncondemned men, being Romans, they cast us into prison, and now they thrust us out privately? Certainly not, but after coming, they shall lead us out**” (Acts 16:37). When the police reported what he said, the magistrates feared when they heard they were Romans. Men with Roman citizenship had special rights. Therefore, they went, besought them, brought them out, and asked them to leave the city. However, they went first to Lydia, saw the brothers and encouraged them, and then departed.

They came to Thessalonica where was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul’s custom, he went, and for three sabbaths he discoursed with them from the Scriptures. He explained how it was necessary for the Christ to suffer, and rise from the dead, and that Jesus was the Christ. The record says many were persuaded, including many of the devout Greeks. Again, however, disobedient Jews gathered a mob and rioted the city. They dragged out some of the brothers to the city rulers, and shouted that the men were acting against the decrees of Caesar, asserting another man to be king, Jesus. The rulers took bond from the men and released them.

Therefore, the brothers straightaway sent Paul and Silas by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went to the synagogue of the Jews. The book says, “**But these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, who received the word with all willingness, examining the scriptures daily, if it has these things this way**” (Acts 17:11). Therefore, many of them believed. However, the Jews of Thessalonica heard about it, and they came there agitating the crowds. The brothers straightaway sent Paul to the sea, while Silas and Timothy remained there. The apostles were persecuted by the Jews far more than they were by the Romans.

They brought Paul as far as Athens, and departed with his command that Silas and Timothy come quickly. While Paul was waiting for them, his spirit was aroused within him, seeing the city was com-

pletely idolatrous. He discoursed with the Jews in the synagogue, and with those who worship, and in the marketplace every day with the passersby. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him, and invited him to the Areopagus. That was where they had a public forum. They wanted to know more about that new doctrine. The record says all the Athenians, and the foreigners who dwelt there, spent their leisure in nothing else than to tell or hear something new.

Then Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus, and said, “**Athenian men, I perceive you as deity-fearing in all things. For, passing through and examining your religious objects, I also found an altar on which had been engraved, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye worship unknowingly, him I proclaim to you.**

“**The God who made the world and all things in it, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands, nor is he served by the hands of men, as needing anything, since he himself gives to all life, and breath, with all things. And he made from one blood every nation of men to dwell upon all the face of the earth, having determined prescribed times, and the limits of their occupancy, to search for the Lord, if indeed perhaps they might grope for him and find him, although being not far from each one of us. For in him we live, and move, and exist, as also some of the performers from you have said, For of him we are also offspring.**

“**Being therefore offspring of God, we ought not think the Divine to be like gold, or silver, or stone handiwork of the skill and thought of man. Indeed therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands for all men everywhere to repent. Because he appointed a day during which he is going to judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he appointed, having provided assurance to all men because he raised him from the dead**” (Acts 17:22-31).

When they heard the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, but others said they wanted to hear him again about those things. As he left, some men who joined with him believed, among whom was Dionysius, and a woman named Damaris, and others.

After those things Paul went to Corinth, where he found a Jew named Aquila, whose wife was Priscilla. They were of the same craft, being tent-makers, and he abode with them and worked. He also discoursed in the synagogues every sabbath,

and was persuading Jews and Greeks about Jesus Christ. Silas and Timothy also came down from Macedonia. When those of the synagogue began to oppose and slander him, he shook out his clothes, and said, “**Your blood is upon your heads. I am clean. From henceforth I will go to the Gentiles**” (Acts 18:6).

And he went into the house of Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house adjoined the synagogue. The book says that Crispus, the synagogue ruler, believed in the Lord with his whole household. And many of the Corinthians who heard believed and were immersed. Then the Lord appeared to Paul in a vision at night, and said, “**Fear not, but speak, and be not silent, because I am with thee, and no man will lay upon thee to harm thee, because many people are for me in this city**” (Acts 18:9-10). Consequently, he remained there a year and six months, teaching the word of God.

Now Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, and the Jews united together, attacked Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat. They charged Paul with persuading men to worship God against the law. However, before Paul could speak, Gallio said, “**If therefore indeed it were some crime or evil reckless deed, O ye Jews, I would have tolerated you according to the matter. But if it is an issue about a word and names and the law from you, look ye yourselves, for I do not intend to be a judge of these things**” (Acts 18:14-15). And he drove them out. Nevertheless, all the Greeks took Sosthenes, another synagogue ruler, and beat him in front of the judgment seat, but Gallio would not even judge those things. Paul remained considerable days with the brothers, then departed and traveled to many places, strengthening all the disciples.

Next the book tells about a Jew named Apollos, an eloquent man who was mighty in the scriptures. He came to Ephesus, and was teaching accurately the things about the Lord, but only knew the immersion of John. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him in the synagogue, they took him aside, and expounded to him the way of God more accurately. He then departed and passed through into Achaia, where he gave much assistance to the believers. The record says, “**For he forcibly refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the scriptures Jesus to be the Christ**” (Acts 18:28).

While Apollos was at Corinth Paul came to Ephesus. When he found some disciples, he asked if they had received the Holy Spirit when they

believed. They said they had not even heard if there is a Holy Spirit. When asked into what they were immersed, they said John’s immersion. Paul told them about how John taught they should believe in the man coming after him, in Jesus the Christ. When they heard it, they were immersed in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues, and prophesied. They were twelve men.

As usual he spoke boldly in the synagogue. However, after about three months some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way. Hence, he separated the disciples, and discoursed daily in the school of Tyrannus. The book says it lasted for two years, so that all those in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus. It also says that God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul. They even brought handkerchiefs or aprons from his skin to the infirmed and the demon possessed, and they were restored.

However, there were some wandering Jewish exorcists, who attempted to use the name of Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “**We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul proclaims**” (Acts 19:13). Seven sons of a Jewish chief priest were doing it. However, the evil spirit said, “**I know Jesus and I recognize Paul, but who are ye?**” (Acts 19:15). Then the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped upon them, and overpowered them. Consequently, they fled out of the house naked and wounded. This became known to all those at Ephesus, so that fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

The record also says that a considerable number of those who had practiced magical things brought their books and burned them in the sight of all. The price of them was fifty thousand pieces of silver. Scoffers and unbelievers condemn book burning, but some books are so full of garbage and poison they need to be destroyed. Lovers of evil condemn all book burning. The record says the word of the Lord was growing mightily and was prevailing. It also says that Paul decided in the spirit (his own spirit; see Acts 21:4) to go to Jerusalem, and then to Rome.

Next the record tells about a significant stir that developed about the Way. A certain silversmith named Demetrius made shrines of Artemis, a pagan goddess. And he brought no little work to the craftsmen. He assembled those men, and reminded them of their livelihood. He also pointed out to them how Paul was persuading many that there were no gods

made with hands. He said therefore not only would their livelihood be discredited, but the temple of the goddess Artemis, whom all Asia and the world worshiped, would be defamed.

When they heard that, they became full of wrath, and cried out, “**The great Artemis of Ephesians**” (Acts 19:28). And the whole city was filled with confusion. They seized a couple of traveling companions of Paul, and rushed together into the theatre. Paul wanted to enter the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. When one who was a Jew attempted to make a defense to the crowd, recognizing that he was a Jew, they cried out the same statement for about two hours. The town clerk finally calmed them down, and dismissed the assembly.

After the uproar, Paul summoned the disciples, embraced them, and departed for Macedonia. When he came to Greece, he spent three months there. After which a conspiracy developed against him by the Jews. So he departed with some companions to Troas, where they stayed seven days. The disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread, and Paul discoursed with them until midnight. He intended to depart the next day. While he was speaking a young man went asleep, fell from the third floor, and was taken up dead. However, Paul fell upon him, embraced him, and said his life was in him. And they were not a little comforted about the boy. Having broken bread and eaten, Paul discoursed until dawn, and then departed.

The record next describes their travels to several cities as Paul journeyed to Jerusalem. He made a brief stop at Miletus, where he summoned the elders of the congregation at nearby Ephesus. He said to them, “**Ye know, from the first day in which I stepped in Asia, how I became with you all the time, serving the Lord with all humility, and many tears and trials that befell me by the conspiracies of the Jews. How I kept back nothing of these things that are beneficial, not to inform you, and to teach you in public, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus.**

“And now behold, I, bound in the spirit, am going to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me in it, except that the Holy Spirit testifies from city to city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But I make nothing of the matter, nor do I hold my life precious to myself, so as to fully complete my course with

joy, and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to solemnly testify the good news of the grace of God” (Acts 20:18-24).

Paul told the elders of the Ephesian church they would no longer see his face. He said he had not withdrawn from declaring to them the whole plan of God. Then he told them to take heed to themselves and to all the flock, for after his departure grievous wolves would enter in among them. He said that from among themselves men would rise up, speaking distorted things, to draw away the disciples after them. He said, “**Therefore watch ye, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease warning each one with tears**” (Acts 20:31). He reminded them that his own hands served his needs and those who were with him. Therefore, they ought to so labor to aid the weak, and remember the words of the Lord Jesus who said, “**It is more blessed to give than to receive**” (Acts 20:35).

After he spoke to them he knelt down and prayed with them all. They wept, fell on his neck, and kissed him much, sorrowing especially because he said they would see his face no more. And they went with him to the ship. The book then describes the route they took to Tyre, where the ship loaded the merchandise. They remained with disciples there for seven days. Those disciples told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. That could not have been a command by the Holy Spirit. It probably meant the disciples did not want him to go, because the Holy Spirit informed them how much he would suffer there. God gives us, and his servants like Paul, freedom of choice in many things. Therefore, it was his personal choice to go to Jerusalem, and was not required of him either way.

They continued their journey and arrived at Cæsarea. They entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven appointed to manage the distribution to the widows in Jerusalem (see Acts 6:5). He had four virgin daughters who prophesied. Nevertheless, a male prophet named Agabus came from Judea, and demonstrated to Paul how the Holy Spirit said he was going to be bound in Jerusalem. Therefore, everybody urged Paul not to go, but he said, “**What are ye doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I fare ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus**” (Acts 21:13). They would never have urged him to disobey God. That makes it even more obvious it was his personal choice to go. He had a deep love for his countrymen, and no

doubt hoped he could convince some of them about Christ.

When Paul arrived at Jerusalem he met with James and all the elders, and reported to them what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. They rejoiced, and then said to him, "**Thou see, brother, how many thousands there are of the Jews who have believed, and they are all zealots of the law**" (Acts 21:20). They said those people were informed that Paul taught all the Jews to desert Moses, and not circumcise their children or walk by the customs. Therefore, they advised Paul to go with four other men who had a vow, and be purified with them (in the temple).

They said, "**And all may know, that things of which they have been informed about thee, are nothing, but thou thyself also walk orderly, keeping the law**" (Acts 21:24). They went on to say the Gentiles believers were "**to keep no such thing**" (Acts 21:25). Those words clearly show that while the nation of the Jews remained (it was destroyed AD 70), the Jewish citizens, whether Christian or not, were still bound by their laws. And they clung to the law of Moses. However, with the destruction of their nation, their temple, and all their priestly records, God has made it impossible for the Jews to ever return to Moses' law.

Therefore, Paul went, but near the end of the seven days, some Jews from Asia saw him in the temple, and stirred up the people to seize him. They cried out, "**Men, Israelites, help. This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place. And besides he also brought Greeks into the temple, and has defiled this holy place**" (Acts 21:28). They had seen him in the city earlier with a Gentile, and assumed he brought him into the temple. The book says the whole city was moved. They were attempting to kill Paul, but he was rescued by the Roman soldiers. Nevertheless, the chief captain had him bound with two chains, and commanded he be brought into the fort.

On the steps of the fort Paul asked the chief captain if he could speak to the people. When he allowed him, Paul motioned with his hand to the people, and a great hush developed. Then he spoke to them in the Hebrew language. He explained who he was, and how he had earlier persecuted the Way. He told them how Jesus spoke to him in a vision on the road to Damascus, and how he had been blinded. He told them how Ananias was sent to him afterward, restored his vision, and informed him about

his calling. He said Ananias also told him to be immersed and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord. He then told them of a time he was praying in the temple when he saw a vision of the Lord telling him to go out of Jerusalem because they would not accept his testimony about him. The Lord said he would send him far away to the Gentiles.

They listened until they heard that, then they shouted, "**Away with such a man from the earth, for he is not fit to live**" (Acts 22:22). Such was their contempt for Gentiles. The book says they threw off their garments and cast dust into the air. They acted like savages. The chief captain brought him into the fort, and was going to examine him by scourging, to find out why they shouted against him that way. However, he stopped when Paul told them he was a Roman citizen.

The following day, wanting to know why he was accused by the Jews, the chief captain commanded the chief priests and all their council to come. After being set before them, Paul looked intently at the council, and said, "**Men, brothers, I have been a citizen in all good conscience to God until this day**" (Acts 23:1). The high priest Ananias then ordered those who stood by to strike his mouth. Paul said to him, "**God is going to smite thee, a white-washed wall. Thou even sit judging me according to the law, and violating law, thou command me to be struck?**" (Acts 23:3). When they accused him of reviling God's high priest, Paul said he did not know he was the high priest. And he quoted Exodus 22:28, which said not to speak ill of a ruler of their people.

However, when he noticed one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "**Men, brothers, I am a Pharisee, son of a Pharisee. About the hope and resurrection of the dead I am judged**" (Acts 23:6). I suspect Paul realized a fair hearing with them was impossible, and so (no doubt guided by the Holy Spirit) he used that device to divide them. For when he spoke those words, the record says a great clamor developed between the Sadducees, who deny the afterlife, and the Pharisees who acknowledge it. The conflict was so violent, the chief captain commanded Paul be taken from them, "**lest Paul might be torn apart by them**" (Acts 23:10). Such action by the leading men of the Jews is clear evidence how coarse and barbaric even the leaders of that generation of Jews had become.

The following night the Lord stood by Paul, and said, “**Cheer up, Paul, for as thou have testified these things about me at Jerusalem, so thou must testify also at Rome**” (Acts 23:11). In the morning forty men of the Jews made a conspiracy, putting themselves under a curse to taste of nothing until they had killed Paul. They told the chief priests about it, and asked them to request the chief captain to bring him for further questioning, so they could ambush him. However the son of Paul’s sister heard about it and informed Paul, who then sent him to the chief captain. After the chief captain heard everything, he ordered a large group of soldiers be assembled to escort Paul to Felix the governor at Caesarea. Caesarea was a city built on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea by Herod for the Romans. The chief captain also sent a letter to Felix explaining the situation.

Felix said he would hear Paul when his accusers arrived. After five days Ananias the high priest came with the elders, and a certain orator, Tertullus, who expressed their case against Paul. Tertullus first told how thankful they were for what Felix was doing for their nation. Then he accused Paul of being a plague, who instigated sedition among all the Jews in the world, was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, and also tried to profane the temple. And all the Jews agreed with his charges.

When the governor gestured for Paul to speak, he said, “**Knowing for many years thou being a judge to this nation, I gladly make a defense of these things about myself**” (Acts 24:10). Then he denied stirring up any trouble, and said they could not prove any of their charges against him. He confessed to serving God according to the way they called a sect. He said he believed all things written according to the law and the prophets, and had hope toward God for a resurrection of the dead. He said, “**And in this I fashion myself, having a conscience always nonstumbling before God and men**” (Acts 24:16). He described why he was in the temple worshiping peacefully. And he concluded by telling him what he said before the council earlier, that he was being judged about a resurrection of the dead.

The book says that Felix knew more precisely the things about the Way, and deferred them, saying he would delay his decision until the chief captain came. He allowed Paul to have reduced confinement, and forbade none of his own men to serve him or come to him. Then after some days, he came with his wife Drusilla, summoned Paul, and heard him

about the faith in Christ. The record says, “**And as he discoursed about righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment going to be, Felix, having become afraid, answered, Go now, and having a convenient time, I will summon thee**” (Acts 24:25). He also hoped Paul would give him money to free him (bribery), so he conversed with him more frequently.

However, two years later Porcius Festus replaced Felix. And wanting to do favors to the Jews, Felix left Paul bound. Three days later Festus went to Jerusalem from Caesarea, and the high priest and principle men of the Jews urged him to summon Paul to Jerusalem. They wanted to make an ambush to kill him on the way. However, Festus said he was going back to Caesarea, and they should send men there to accuse him.

After he returned to Caesarea, and sat on the judgment seat, the trial began. The Jews accused Paul, and he denied everything. However, Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, asked Paul if he would be willing to be judged in Jerusalem. Among other things, Paul said to Festus, “**I did nothing wrong Jewish, as thou also very well know**” (Acts 25:10), and then he appealed Caesar. After conferring with the council, Festus answered, “**Thou have appealed Caesar, to Caesar thou will go**” (Acts 25:12).

Some days later, Agrippa the king and Bernice came to Caesarea, and greeted Festus. When Festus told him about the case of Paul, Agrippa said he would like to hear the man himself. Therefore, Festus said he would hear him the next day. The book says that on the morrow Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and entered into the courtroom with the chief captains and prominent men of the city. Then Festus addressed the group. He told how the multitude of the Jews appealed to him, and shouted that the man ought not to live any longer. However, he found nothing worthy of death in him, and when he appealed Caesar, he decided to send him. Then he said, “**Therefore I brought him before you, and especially before thee, king Agrippa, so that, an examination having occurred, I may have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable, sending a prisoner, and not to specify the causes against him**” (Acts 25:26-27).

Next Agrippa told Paul it was permitted him to speak for himself. Paul began by saying he was blessed by making a defense to him, because he was an expert in all things regarding Jews. He told him

all the Jews knew about his manner of life from youth, and how he lived according to the strictest party of their religion. He said it was for the hope of the promise made by God to the fathers that he was there, being judged and accused by the Jews. He said, "**Why is it judged incredible with you, if God raises the dead?**" (Acts 26:8).

He told him how severely he had persecuted the sanctified. He told about his vision on the road to Damascus. He said a voice spoke to him in the Hebrew language, saying, "**Saul, Saul, why do thou persecute me? It is hard for thee to kick against the goads**" (Acts 26:14). Paul said that when he asked who he was, the voice said, "**I am Jesus whom thou persecute. But arise, and stand upon thy feet, for I appeared to thee for this, to appoint thee an assistant and a witness both of things that thou saw, and of the things that I will make visible to thee, delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, to whom I send thee, to open their eyes to turn about from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, for them to receive remission of sins and a lot among those who have been sanctified by faith in me**" (Acts 26:15-18). Paul told Agrippa that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared to both Jews and Gentiles for them to repent and return to God, "**doing works worthy of repentence**" (Acts 26:20). He said that was why the Jews seized him in the temple, and tried to kill him.

While Paul made his defense, Festus said in a loud voice that he was mad. He said much scholarship was driving him into madness. Paul said he was not mad, but spoke sayings of truth and soberness, which the king knew about. Then he said, "**King Agrippa, do thou believe the prophets? I know that thou believe**" (Acts 26:27). Agrippa responded, "**By a little thou persuade me to become a Christian**" (Acts 26:28). Paul said he ever prayed to God for all who heard him that day to become such kind as he was, except for the bonds. Then the king arose and told Festus that Paul could have been released if he had not appealed Caesar.

Afterward Paul was delivered with some other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, and they got on a ship going to Asia. They sailed under lee of Cyprus, and came to Myra of Lycia. The centurion found a ship sailing for Italy, and put them in it. However, the winds made sailing difficult, so they came to a place called Fair Havens. Because of the season, the voyage had become dangerous, and Paul urged them not to continue. He said he perceived

there was going to be injury and much damage. Nevertheless, the centurion was convinced more by the captain and the shipmaster. So when they had a gentle south wind, they sailed near Crete.

Soon afterward, however, a cyclonic wind threw against them, and they were driven. And the book describes their efforts to survive the fierce storm which continued for many days. They unloaded most of what they had on board in order to stay afloat. After being long without food, Paul reminded them of his warning, and then told them to cheer up, for there would be no loss of life, except of the ship. And he told them an agent of God stood by him that night, who told him not to fear, for he had to stand before Caesar, and God had granted him all those sailing with him. He also said they had to fall upon a certain island.

On the fourteenth night the sailors noticed they were approaching land. It was not yet light, and Paul urged them to take food, for they had taken nothing. Then he took bread, expressed thanks to God in their presence, broke in pieces, and began to eat. The others became encouraged and also took food. The book says there were 276 souls on board. When it became day they saw the land, and attempted to drive the ship into a bay with a beach. However, they ran aground, and the ship began to break apart from the waves. Consequently, they either swam or used boards to get to land, and all were saved.

They discovered the island was called Malta. The record says the natives there were very kind to them, and kindled a fire because of the rain and the cold. While Paul was gathering sticks to put on the fire, a viper came out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. The natives thought it was because he was a murderer, and Justice (a pagan god) would not allow him to live. However, he shook it off and suffered no harm. When they saw he was unharmed, they declared him to be a god. The chief of the island lodged them kindly for three days. And when his father became ill, gripped by fever and dysentery, Paul prayed, laid his hands upon him, and healed him. Then they brought all who had infirmities and they were healed.

After three months they set out in a ship that had wintered there, and arrived to Puteoli. After staying with brothers there for seven days, they went to Rome. The centurion delivered the prisoners to the commandant, but he allowed Paul to dwell by himself with a soldier who guarded him. Three days later Paul called together the principle men of the Jews, and explained why he was there. He said it

was for the hope of Israel that he was bound with the chain. They replied, “**We neither received letters from Judea about thee, nor did any of the brothers who came report or speak anything bad about thee**” (Acts 28:21). But they did want to know what he thought, for they said that sect was everywhere spoken against.

Therefore, a day was appointed for him, and more came to him. To whom he testified throughout the day about the kingdom of God, and persuaded them of the things of Jesus, both from the law of Moses and the prophets. Some were convinced and some disbelieved. And since there was discord among them, they departed. But not until Paul said the Holy Spirit spoke accurately about them when

he spoke through Isaiah: “**Go thou to this people, and say, Hearing ye will hear, and will, no, not understand, and seeing ye will see, and will, no, not perceive. For this people's heart was made fat, and they hear heavily with the ears. And they shut their eyes, lest they may perceive with the eyes, and hear with the ears, and understand with the heart, and should turn, and I would heal them**” (Acts 28:26-27).

Then he told them that the salvation of God was sent to the Gentiles, and they would hear. The book concludes saying that Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired lodging. And he preached the kingdom of God, and the things about the Lord Jesus with all boldness to all who came to him.

A Description of **Romans**

Paul began with a salutation to the sanctified in Rome to whom the letter is addressed. He said he was a called apostle, separated for the good news of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ. And he said they also were the called of Jesus Christ. He thanked God through Jesus Christ for them all, that their faith was proclaimed in the whole world. He said he mentioned them unceasingly in his prayers, and longed to see them for mutual edification. He said he often intended to come but was prevented. Paul said he was not ashamed of the good news of Christ, because it is the power of God for salvation to every man who believes, for it is based upon faith.

After that he told how the wrath of God was revealed against all irreverence and unrighteousness of men. Then he gave a remarkable description, which has an uncanny similarity to men of modern times. Paul said they suppress the truth in their unrighteousness. He said what is knowable of God is apparent: “**For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things made, both his eternal power and divinity, for them to be without excuse. Because, although knowing God, they did not glorify him as God, nor were they thankful, but became vain in their reasonings and their heart was darkened without understanding**” (Rom. 1:20-21). He said they professed to be wise but became foolish.

Modern men see the wonders of life and nature, but they deny God, and give glory to some imagi-

nary force they call evolution. They claim all the enormously intricate organizations of the world were made by chance. Except, of course, their own creations. Such men are arrogant fools.

Then Paul described the consequences of their mentality, things that match closely what is happening in pagan America: “**And for this reason God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, to degrade their bodies among themselves, who changed the truth of God into the lie, and worshiped and served the creation against him who created it, who is blessed into the ages. Truly. Because of this God gave them up to shameful passions, for even their females changed the natural use into what is against nature. And likewise also the males, having left the natural use of the female, burned in their lust toward each other, males with males producing shamelessness, and receiving in themselves the recompense of their deviancy that was fitting. And just as they did not approve having God in knowledge, God gave them over to an unfit mind, to do things that are not fit ...**” (Rom. 1:24-28).

Then Paul listed other examples of their spiritual degeneracy, such as fornication, greed, murder, slander, disobedience to parents. I have seen all such things increase greatly in my lifetime. It grieves my soul to see this former Christian nation becoming vulgar and more barbaric in thought, speech, deeds, and appearance.

Paul said the judgment of God was in accordance with truth against those who commit such

things. And he warned that God was going to render to each man according to his works. He said, “**For there is no partiality with God**” (Rom. 2:11). He said those with law would be judged by law, and those without law (a legal system) would also be judged. He said the Gentiles who had no law, do by nature the things of the law, because it is written in their hearts, meaning instinctive. Therefore, their thoughts and conscience will testify for or against them in the day of judgment.

Then he asked Jews, who relied upon the law, boasted in God, and claimed to be wise teachers, if they violated the law. He said they boasted in law, but dishonored God by transgressing it, which caused the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles. And many so-called Christians, by their disobedience, are causing the name of Christ to be blasphemed among non-believers. Paul said men who were uncircumcised, but who fulfilled the law, would judge them. Indeed, he said, “**For he is not a Jew in what is visible, nor is circumcision in what is visible, in flesh, but he is a Jew in what is hidden, and circumcision is of the heart, in spirit not a document, whose praise is not from men but from God**” (Rom. 2:28-29).

Paul then quoted some Old Testament scriptures that describe how sinful all mankind is. He said no man would be made right before God from works of law, for law just revealed their sins. He said the righteousness of God had now been manifested independent of law, and was through faith in Jesus Christ. Since all have sinned, redemption comes through Christ. He was an expiatory sacrifice, which was proof of God’s justice and righteousness. Therefore, boasting is excluded, for Jews and Gentiles alike are made righteous from faith. In other words, no man can boast he is sinless, therefore every man is justly condemned, unless redeemed by Christ (through faith). However, Paul also said, “**Do we then make law void through faith? May it not happen! Instead, we establish law**” (Rom. 3:31). He did not mean the elaborate legal system of Moses, but rather the general rules of right and wrong. You can read more about those things in my essay *Law versus Virtue* on my website.

Continuing with his reasoning, Paul quoted a scripture (Gen. 15:6) that says the faith of Abraham was what made him righteous before God, and not his works. Paul contrasted attempting to earn God’s acceptance by works, like receiving a wage, with acceptance by faith. And he quoted David (see Psa. 32:1-2) who said the man was blessed to whom God

imputes righteousness independent of works. He also told how Abraham was accepted by faith even before he was circumcised. Then he said, “**For the promise to Abraham or to his seed, for him to be heir of the world, was not through law, but through a righteousness of faith**” (Rom. 4:13).

He said if those from law were heirs, then faith was void. In other words, faith is irrelevant if the inheritance is a wage for obedience. He went on to say the promise in that case was also useless, because no man is capable of earning it (for it could only be earned by living completely without sin). Therefore, it is by grace through faith, meaning a free gift from God to all who trust him. That means Abraham is the father of all the faithful, and not just those of the Hebrew race. And he told how Abraham kept his faith that God would give him an heir, even when he and his wife Sarah seemed too old to ever have children.

Paul said it is through Jesus Christ that we have access by faith to this grace, “**and we take pride in hope of the glory of God**” (Rom. 5:2). He said we also take pride in our tribulations, for they produce perseverance, and that character, and that hope. And since character produces hope, it is obvious the faith Paul described is not simple belief. It is a dynamic faith, having trust that leads to obedience, which builds our character.

Paul said that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. He contrasted Adam with Christ, and concluded, “**For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were led sinful, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be led righteous**” (Rom. 5:19). It was because of the obedient self-sacrifice (an expiatory sacrifice) of the sinless Christ that he acquired the right from God to redeem his disciples from condemnation. For Paul told the elders at Ephesus (see Acts 20:28) that Jesus purchased us with his blood. Jesus was the only man able to earn the inheritance of glory from God, which is now for him and, by the grace of Christ, for all who belong to him. Paul said that as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign, through righteousness (meaning faith and obedience), for eternal life through Christ our Lord.

Then he said that just because grace was abundant, even with abundant sin, we should not still live in sin. He said we have been buried with him through immersion, so that we may likewise be raised up to walk in newness of life. He also said our old man was crucified with him, “**so that the body of sin might be inactivated, no longer to**

enslave us to sin" (Rom. 6:6). That means through the power of our personal new spirit, with its desire to be righteous, we now subdue and inhibit our fleshly lusts (inactivate them).

Regarding Christ, Paul said further, "**For that he died, he died to sin once, but that he lives, he lives to God. So also ye, reckon yourselves to be indeed dead to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus our Lord**" (Rom. 6:10-11). He said we should now use the parts of our body as instruments of righteousness and not sin. He said we were once bondmen of sin but have now been set free from it. And he said, "**For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**" (Rom. 6:23).

Then he told how the law has dominion over the man as long as he lives. And he used the illustration of a wife being bound to her husband as long as he lives, but was free when he died. Likewise we became dead to the law through the body of Christ, so as to serve in a renewed spirit, and not an old document. In other words, the sanctified now live by the desire to do right, and not simply by a set of rules (the written law). Paul said although the law had condemned us, the law was not bad. It was sin within us that caused us to break the law, and that condemned us. He said, "**So the law is indeed holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good**" (Rom. 7:12).

Then he told of his own struggle against sin. He said, "**For I do not do good that I want, instead, wrong that I do not want, this I do**" (Rom. 7:19). He said the law of his flesh, which warred against the law of his mind, kept him captive in the law of sin. What I think he meant was that his mind wanted to live a perfect life, but his flesh was too flawed to allow it. Sin, in its most general sense, is any kind of wrong or offence, not necessarily a moral or legal violation. And we all do wrong (sin) at times, even though we may try hard to avoid it. I even sin against myself occasionally with things like cuts and bruises, but not deliberately. It is the nature of this sinful body, which, like Paul, we all struggle with. Paul said, "**I am a wretched man. Who will rescue me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, I of myself in the mind indeed serve a law of God, but in the flesh a law of sin**" (Rom. 7:24-25).

Paul said he served a law of God in his mind, but in the flesh a law of sin. When Paul served the law of God in his mind, it was by the will of his spirit, for he said, "I of myself." When Paul said he served

the law of sin in his flesh he could not have meant committing sin willfully, such as doing any of the kinds of things he earlier condemned: "**fornication, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; being gossips, slanderous, God-hating, aggressors, arrogant boasters, contrivers of evil things, disobedient to parents**" (Rom. 1:29-30). I believe what he meant by serving the law of sin in his flesh was that he could not avoid making offenses or mistakes, and he failed at doing all that he wanted.

There is evidence that Paul had poor vision, a failure of his flesh, which no doubt would have caused him to do some things wrong. But whether it was his vision or not, Paul said he had a weakness of the flesh (see Gal. 4:13). Moreover, he admitted being unskilled in speech (see 2Co. 11:6), which I am confident was not from lack of trying. I believe those are the kinds of things he meant by his flesh serving the law of sin. And although we may suffer the consequences of such things, Paul said those in Christ Jesus are not condemned, since we walk not according to flesh but according to Spirit. In other words as long as we strive to live righteously, and not by the lusts of our flesh, we are not condemned (eternally) even if we fail occasionally (although we will suffer for our wrongdoings in this life). Moreover, as children of God, even if we happen to disobey him willfully, he will chasten us (see Heb. 12) but not reject us as sinners like the rest of the world.

Paul contrasted those who walk according to the mentality of the flesh, living in willful disobedient to God, with those who walk according to his Spirit. He said, "**For the mentality of the flesh is death, but the mentality of the Spirit is life and peace**" (Rom. 8:6). And he told how we can identify the true sons of God, for they will be led by the Spirit of God. In other words, they will live by faith and obedience, although not always perfectly.

Then he wrote words of encouragement. He said if we are children of God, then we are joint-heirs with Christ, provided we suffer jointly. And he said, "**For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not comparable to the glory that is going to be revealed for us**" (Rom. 8:18). He said this creation was made subject to futility, but will itself be freed from its bondage to corruption when the children of God are glorified. He said we and the whole creation groan together waiting for the redemption of our body. Hence, the creation will not be annihilated, but will be transformed, like smelted metal.

Paul said we were saved to hope, and therefore we wait with patience. Moreover, the Spirit helps our weaknesses, and appeals to God for the sanctified. Then he spoke these wonderful words of encouragement: **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to purpose”** (Rom. 8:28). Therefore, dear reader, trust God and take comfort in those words when you wonder why some things happen. Paul also said God foreknew and predestined us for glorification, not meaning individuals, but types of persons, for God is impartial (see Acts 10:34). Hence, we have been predestined for glorification if we live our lives according to the required type.

Paul went on to say that nothing could separate us from the love of Christ. He listed several forms of persecution and sorrows, and said, **“But in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us”** (Rom. 8:37). He said that nothing in creation could separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Then he told how he grieved over his fellow Israelites, those who had been God’s chosen people. As a whole they had rejected Christ. However, Paul said the word of God had not failed, because not all of Abraham’s seed were children of promise. He said, **“That is, the children of the flesh, these are not children of God, instead, the children of the promise are reckoned for seed”** (Rom. 9:8). And he used the illustration of Jacob versus Esau: Jacob was loved, but Esau was regarded inferior. Then Paul defended the justice of God, saying God was like the potter who had the right to make various vessels from the same lump of clay. And he quoted some Old Testament scriptures that prophesied God’s calling of those who were not his people (Gentiles), while only a remnant of the sons of Israel would be saved. He said Israel stumbled by pursuing works of law rather than faith, as was prophesied.

Paul said his heart’s desire and supplication to God was for the salvation of Israel. He said they had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For Christ was the end of law for righteousness, to every man who believes. Moreover, he said the righteousness of faith does not seek to know the deepest mysteries of God (perhaps like demanding to know how God has always existed). Paul said there is no longer a distinction between Jew and Greek, for God is the Lord of all men.

Paul then spoke of the necessity of preaching, and he concluded, **“So faith is from hearing, and hearing by the word of God”** (Rom. 10:17). Unlike the sons of Israel, who were born God’s people, the new men of God are those who hear and believe. Regarding the two, he said, **“And Isaiah is very bold and says, I was found by those not seeking me. I became manifest to those not asking for me. But to Israel he says, The whole day I stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and rebellious people”** (Rom. 10:20-21). However, Paul said that God had not completely rejected his people, for he was also an Israelite. He said there was at that time a chosen remnant, and the rest were hardened.

Next he said, **“For I speak to you the Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am indeed an apostle of Gentiles, I enhance my ministry, if somehow I may provoke my flesh to jealousy and may save some of them. For if the casting away of them is reconciliation of the world, what is the acceptance except life from the dead?”** (Rom. 11:13-15). Then he used the illustration of some branches being broken off, and others grafted in. He said the Israelites were broken off for their unbelief, but if they did not continue in their unbelief they could be grafted in again. And he warned the Roman brothers that they too could be cut off if they did not continue in God’s goodness.

Paul then said that the time was coming when Israel will be saved. He said, **“For as ye once were also disobedient to God, but now have received mercy at the disobedience of these, so also now these have been disobedient for thy mercy, so that they also may receive mercy”** (Rom. 11:30-31). The Hebrews were God’s chosen people for about two thousand years, beginning with Abraham. They have now been rejected (because of their unbelief) for about two thousand years. Perhaps when the two time periods become equal God will open their hearts to accept his Son. Paul also suggested when that happened there would be a great revival, perhaps worldwide (see Rom. 11:15). How I long for such a thing! Paul said God had confined all men in disobedience, so that he might be merciful to all. Then he said, **“O the depth of wealth, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond finding out!”** (Rom. 11:33).

Paul urged his brothers to present their bodies a living sacrifice. He said not to be conformed to this age, but be transformed in their minds. He also said

no man among them should over-think beyond what he ought. And he compared their different gifts (abilities) to parts of the body of Christ. Then he gave a brief list of things righteous, such as loving without hypocrisy, abhorring what is evil, enduring tribulation, not avenging themselves. He told them to bless their enemies, and he quoted from Proverbs (25:21-22). And he said, “**Be thou not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good**” (Rom. 12:21).

Next he told them to be subject to offices of authority that rank higher. He said the legitimate ones were supported by God, and those who rebel against them were opposing the ordinance of God. In other words, offices of authority that promote justice and righteousness were acting on behalf of God. Indeed, regarding the office holder, Paul said, “**For he is a helper of God to thee for what is good. But if thou do what is evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is a helper of God, vengeful for wrath to the man who commits evil**” (Rom. 13:4). Paul said they therefore needed to give those men their due taxes and tribute and esteem. (Wicked, corrupt authorities, however, do not have God’s sanction.) Paul also spoke of loving our neighbor, which fulfills law. He said to walk decently, not in wantonness and strife. He said we should array ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then Paul discouraged arguments about opinions. He said the vegetarian should not condemn the man who eats all things, and vice versa. He said one man prefers one day above another, while another man prefers every day. Each man should be fully persuaded in his own mind, and not condemn the other. Yet all should express thanks to God. However, he also said none of us lives or dies to himself. Therefore we should not cause a brother to stumble. He said, “**It is good not to eat meats, nor to drink wine, nor in whatever thy brother stumbles against, or is caused to stumble, or becomes weak**” (Rom. 14:21). Paul was probably speaking about temporary restraints while the weak brother was learning, and not permanent limits to our liberty. For in his first letter to the Corinthians, he said, “**For why is my liberty judged by another conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I maligned about which I express thanks?**” (1Co. 10:29-30). He said the strong ought to bear the

weaknesses of the frail, and do whatever is good for edification.

He encouraged the Roman brothers to persevere, and to be united together to glorify God. Then he quoted some Old Testament scriptures that prophesied God’s acceptance of the Gentiles, and he spoke of his ministry to them. He also said he had aspired to proclaim the good news where Christ had not been already named; he did not want to build on another man’s foundation. He said he planned to see them in passing on his way to Spain. However, he was currently going to Jerusalem to serve the poor among the sanctified with a gift from the Gentiles. And he asked them to pray for his deliverance from the disobedient in Judea. The Jews were the most vicious of Paul’s enemies.

Next Paul asked them to welcome and support Phoebe, a sister who became a helper of many, including himself. Then he asked them to salute several men and a few women, whom he named. They included Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila, whom he said laid down their own neck for his life. He ended that part, saying, “**Salute each other by a holy kiss. The congregations of Christ salute you**” (Rom. 16:16).

Then he warned them to watch for those who make divisions and stumbling blocks, contrary to the doctrine they learned. He said, “**For such kind serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly. And by their smooth words and elegant speech they deceive the hearts of the naïve**” (Rom. 16:18). Paul said he wanted them to be wise in the good, and pure in the evil. After that he mentioned a few men who saluted them, including Timothy, and Tertius who said he wrote the letter (transcribed it). That another man transcribed the letter is some of the evidence suggesting Paul had poor vision.

Paul concluded, “**Now to him who is able to establish you according to my good news, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to a revelation of the mystery that has been kept secret for eternal times, but that was now revealed, and by prophetic scriptures, according to a commandment of the eternal God that was made known to all the nations for obedience of faith, to the only wise God through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory into the ages. Truly.**”

A Description of First Corinthians

This letter says it is from Paul and Sosthenes the brother to the congregation of God at Corinth. Sosthenes must have transcribed Paul's words here. He may also have been the synagogue ruler mentioned in Acts 18:17. Paul said he was a called apostle, and they were called men, holy men who had been sanctified in Christ Jesus. Paul said he thanked his God always about them, for the grace of God that was given to them, so that they came behind in not one gift.

After more words of encouragement he urged them to be of the same mind, and not have divisions among them. He said he was told by those of Chloe that there were contentions among them. He said, **"Now I say this. That each of you actually say, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye immersed in the name of Paul?"** (1Co. 1:12-13). Paul said he only immersed a few because Christ sent him not to immerse, but to preach the good news (not meaning immersion was unnecessary).

Then he contrasted the message of the cross of Christ with the wisdom of the world. He said, **"For the message of the cross is of course foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is a power of God"** (1Co. 1:18). However, he also said God had made foolish the wisdom of this world. And it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe. For the proclamation of the crucified Christ is a stumbling-block to Jews, and foolishness to Gentiles. Paul said, **"But to them, to the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God"** (1Co. 1:24). For the foolishness of God, he said, is wiser than men.

Then Paul told them to notice that not many of them were wise according to flesh, or powerful, or eminent. He said God chose the foolish things of the world to humiliate the wise, and the weak things to humiliate the powerful. Did you know that humble Christians conquered the Roman empire with only the word of God? Paul said no flesh could boast before God. He said he did not come to them in eminence of speech or of wisdom. He said, **"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling"** (1Co. 2:3). He said his preaching was not in persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of spirit and power, **"so that your**

faith would not be in wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1Co. 2:5).

However, he also said they spoke wisdom among the fully developed, **"but not a wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who come to nothing"** (1Co. 2:6). He said they spoke a wisdom of God in a hidden mystery that was disclosed to them through his Spirit. He said they compared spiritual things with spiritual things, which the natural man does not accept, for they are foolishness to him.

Then he said, **"And I, brothers, could not speak to you as to spiritual, but as to carnal, as to the childlike in Christ. I gave you milk to drink and not solid food, for ye were not yet able. But not even yet are ye able, for ye are still carnal"** (1Co. 3:2). He said their envy and strife and divisions showed they were carnal. He said he planted, Apollos watered, but God caused growth. And he said, **"So then neither is he who plants anything, nor he who waters, but God who causes growth"** (1Co. 3:7). He said they were co-workmen of God. And he used the example of builders, saying they were an edifice of God and the temple of God. And he told them not to boast in men, nor be puffed up one over the other. He asked them what they had that they did not receive, so why did they boast? He told them they were filled, and had become rich.

Then he said, **"For I think God has exhibited us the apostles least, as men sentenced to die, because we became a spectacle to the world, both to agents and to men"** (1Co. 4:9). And he described the miseries and suffering they endured, concluding with the words, **"We became as trash of the world, an offscouring of all things, until now"** (1Co. 4:13). Then he spoke to them as his beloved children, begotten through the good news, and he besought them to follow him. He said he was sending Timothy to remind them of his ways in Christ. And he warned those who were puffed up.

Then he said he had heard about fornication among them. Some man had his father's wife, and they were proud about it, not mournful. He told them to remove the man from among them. He said a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Therefore, they should purge out the old leaven so they may be a new lump. He told them not to associate with fornicators, not meaning those of the world or other such sinners, for they would have to go out of the world for that. He meant any man who was called a

brother that was committing sin. He told them to judge those inside, and let God judge the outsiders.

After that he rebuked them for having lawsuits against each other. He said they should settle such disputes among themselves. He said, “**Or know ye not that the sanctified will judge the world Know ye not that we will judge [heavenly] agents? Then why not mundane things?**” (1Co. 6:3). He said it was even better to be wronged or defrauded. He warned them that the unrighteous would not inherit the kingdom of God, and he listed several kinds, such as idolaters, effeminate men, thieves, slanderers. He said some of them were those things, but they had been washed and sanctified and made righteous in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

Then he said, “**All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under control by anything**” (1Co. 6:12). He said foods were for the belly, but the body was not for fornication, but for the Lord. He told them to flee fornication. He said every sin was outside the body, but he who fornicates sins against his own body. He said their body was a temple of the Holy Spirit within them, and they should glorify God in their body and their spirit.

Then he wrote about marriage. He said it was good for a man not to touch a woman, but because of fornications each man and woman should marry. And he said husbands and wives should not defraud each other (of physical intimacy). However, he said they were not commanded to marry. He even wished all men were like himself (unmarried), but he added, “**However each man has his own gift from God, one in this way, and another after that**” (1Co. 7:7). He said if they had no self-control they should marry, “**for it is better to marry than to burn**” (1Co. 7:9). By burn he may have meant either burn with an unsatisfied appetite, or satisfy it with fornication and then burn in hell.

He said the Lord commanded the married not to separate, but if they did they were not to marry another. Then Paul gave his opinion about being married to an unbeliever. He said they should stay together for the sake of the children and for the hope of saving the unbeliever. However, if the unbeliever separates they were not bound.

After that he wrote about each man’s personal situation in life, whether circumcised or not, whether a bondman or free. He said, “**Brothers, each man, in what he was called, should remain**

in this before God” (1Co. 7:24). Nevertheless, he also said if a bondman was able to become free, he should take advantage of it.

Then he spoke of virgins. He said he had no commandment of the Lord, but he gave his opinion as a trustworthy man. He said because of “the present distress” it was good to remain married or unmarried as the case may be. He spoke of the time being shortened, but what he meant is not clear. He said he wanted them to be without worry. The unmarried were free from cares about a spouse, and so could be devoted to cares for things of the Lord. Paul said he spoke that for their benefit, and not to cast a restraint upon them. Remember, Paul said it was his opinion (see 7:25, 40).

After that he spoke these beautiful words: “**Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.**” He followed them with these: “**If any man presumes to know anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know**” (1Co. 8:1-2). Those are true words of insight appreciated by every wise man.

Then he spoke about things sacrificed to idols. He said an idol was nothing, for there was no other God except one. He said, “**Nevertheless the knowledge is not in all men, but some, with conscience of the idol until now, eat as sacrificed to idols, and their weak conscience is defiled**” (1Co. 8:7). Therefore, he warned against eating such food so as not to cause a brother to stumble. Paul said he would never eat meat again if it caused his brother to stumble.

Then he said, “**Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are ye not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet at least I am to you, for ye are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord**” (1Co. 9:1-2). He went on to say that he and Barnabas had the same right as the other apostles to lead about a sister wife, and also not have to be occupied earning a living. He said it was right for the laborer to be paid, but they did not use that right, so that they would not give any hindrance to the good news of the Christ. He said the Lord commanded those who proclaim the good news to live from the good news, but he used none of those things. He said he was obligated to preach the good news, but his reward was to make it without charge. He said that was what he was proud of. Remember, however, Paul never married, and so he had no family to support.

He said that although he was free from all men, he made himself a servant to all, so that he might gain more of them. He told how he adapted to what-

ever kind he was with, becoming all things to all men, so that he might by all means save some. He mentioned those who ran in the arena, and he told the Corinthians to so run as to seize the prize. And he told how he disciplined himself, lest having preached to others, he himself might become disqualified.

Then he warned them about falling away. He mentioned the Israelites who were led out of Egypt by Moses, and he said many of them sinned and were destroyed. He said those things happened to those men for examples, and were written for our admonition. And he said, "**Therefore let him who seems to stand take heed lest he fall**" (1Co. 10:12). He said there was no temptation that was not common to man, but God would not allow them to be tempted above what they were able; he would make a way for them to escape.

Then he further discouraged them from eating food offered to idols. He said what the Gentiles sacrificed to idols they sacrificed to demons and not to God. And he told them they could not be partakers of the table of the Lord (the ceremonial supper) and of a table of demons. He said all things were permitted for him, but not all things were expedient or constructive. He told them to eat, conscience free, whatever was sold in a meat market, or whatever an unbeliever might set before them. However, if any man told them it was a sacrifice to an idol, then they should abstain from it for his sake and for conscience. Paul said, "**And I say conscience, not the one of himself, but the one of the other man. For why is my liberty judged by another conscience?**" (1Co. 10:29). He said whatever they did, do all to the glory of God, and be inoffensive to all. Paul told them to do just as he strove, not for his own advantage, but that of the many so they might be saved. He said, "**Become ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ**" (1Co. 11:1). He praised them for remembering him in all things and keeping the traditions as he had delivered to them.

Then he said, "**But I want you to know that the head of every man is the Christ, and the head of a woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God**" (1Co. 11:3). And he told them that every man who prayed or prophesied having something on his head dishonored his head. Likewise, every woman who prayed or prophesied with her head uncovered dishonored her head. He said it was the same as being shaven. And if that was an ugly thing (it indeed is), then she should be covered. Paul said further, "**For a man indeed ought not to cover his**

head, being an image and glory of God, but woman is a glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. For also man was not created for the woman, but woman for the man" (1Co. 11:7-9).

He said even nature taught long hair on a man was a disgrace to him, but long hair on a woman was a glory to her, and was a cloak for her head. He did not mean, however, her long hair served as the covering required during prayer and prophesying, for the Greek words are different.

Next Paul spoke of the divisions among them during the Lord's Supper. He said, "**For each man proceeds to eat his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunken**" (1Co. 11:21). He rebuked them, and then described how Jesus began the ceremony during the night of his betrayal. Jesus told how the bread was his body broken for them, and the cup was the new covenant in his blood. Then Paul said, "**Therefore whoever may eat this bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily of the Lord, will be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord**" (1Co. 11:27). And he said a man should examine himself to eat and drink worthily, otherwise he eats and drinks condemnation to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord. He said if any man was hungry, let him eat at home.

Next he spoke of spiritual gifts. He said, "**Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of services, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of functions, but it is the same God who works all in all**" (1Co. 12:4-6). He said the Spirit gave different gifts to different men, such as gifts of healing to one, workings of miracles to another, and prophecy to another. He said, "**But the one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each man individually as it wills**" (1Co. 12:11).

He said as the body was one, having many parts, so also is the Christ. He said the foot could not say it was not of the body because it was not a hand, nor could the ear say that about not being an eye. He asked if they were all one part, where would be the body? He even said the parts that seemed to be more feeble were necessary, and the unpresentable parts had more abundant propriety. He said God had united the body together, having given more abundant worth to the part that lacks, so that there would be no schisms in the body. He said, "**And if one part suffers, all the parts suffer together, or one part is honored, all the parts rejoice together**" (1Co. 12:26). Then he told them they were the body

of Christ, and body-parts individually. He listed several functions, such as apostles, teachers, workers of miracles, and asked if they were all apostles or teachers, and so forth.

He said, “**But be zealous for the better gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way**” (1Co. 12:31). Then he gave a beautiful description of love, agape love. He said if he had great talents, but without love, he was nothing. He said if he made great sacrifices, but without love, it would benefit him nothing. Then he told what love was like: “**Love is patient and is kind. Love does not envy. Love does not brag, and is not puffed up. It does not behave improperly, does not seek the things of itself, is not made sharp, does not contemplate evil, does not rejoice in wrong but rejoices in the truth, covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things**” (1Co. 13:4-7). He said all the gifts would cease, but love never fails. He told how limited we are now, but when the perfect comes, those limited things will cease, and we will see clearly. He said, “**And now remain faith, hope, love, these three, but the greater of these is love**” (1Co. 13:13).

He told them to pursue love, and be zealous for the spiritual things, especially prophecy. And he told how prophecy was better than speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues refers to the ability a man had to speak a foreign language that he never learned. They apparently thought that gift was more desirable. Probably because it was more dramatic. However, Paul said the man who prophesied was greater, unless the speaker of tongues could interpret, for otherwise nobody could understand. He said tongues were a sign, not to those who believe, but to the unbelieving. That means unbelievers could recognize the tongue (the foreign language), otherwise it would not be a sign of anything divine to them. Paul said prophecy (speaking for God) was not to the unbelieving, but to those who believe. He said if they all spoke in tongues, visitors from outside would think they were all crazy. But if all prophesied, an unbeliever could be persuaded that God was really among them.

Dear reader, all of the spiritual gifts existing before the New Testament was available have long since passed away. No man on earth has any such supernatural powers, or ever will again. The meaningless gibberish now uttered that some claim is speaking in tongues is deluded foolishness. It is certainly not a sign to encourage faith in the unbelieving; it discourages them. John said to examine the

spirits, whether they are of God (see 1Jo. 4:1). Pursue truth, not things fanciful.

Then Paul said, “**What is it therefore, brothers? When ye come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification**” (1Co. 14:26). And he told them how to conduct an orderly assembly, for he said God was not of confusion, but of peace. He also told them that the women were to keep silent in the churches and be subordinate. He said if they wanted to learn anything, let them question their own husbands at home. He said it was an ugly thing for women to speak in an assembly. Then he said, “**If any man presumes to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge what I write to you, that they are commandments of the Lord**” (1Co. 14:37).

After that Paul described some of the appearances that Jesus made after his resurrection. He said he was the last to whom Jesus appeared. And with great humility he said, “**For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am. And his grace for me did not become empty, but I labored more abundantly than them all, yet not I, but the grace of God with me**” (1Co. 15:9-10).

Then he defended the accusation by some among them that there was no resurrection of the dead. He said if that were true then Christ had not risen, their faith was empty, and they were still in their sins. He said, “**If we are men who have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men more miserable**” (1Co. 15:19). He said Christ had been raised, and as by Adam all die, by Christ all will be made alive. He said if the dead are not raised, then we should eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. He warned them not to be led astray, for some have ignorance of God.

To the question of how, and with what kind of body the dead are raised, he used the example of a seed. He said what is sown is not made alive unless it dies, and what is sown is a bare grain, to which God gives a body as he wills. And he spoke of the different bodies of animals, and of the heavenly bodies. He said the resurrection of the dead is sown in the perishable, but raised in imperishability. It is sown a natural body, and raised a spiritual body. He said, “**And just as we have worn the form of the earthly, we will also wear the form of the heavenly**” (1Co. 15:49). Then he told them a mystery.

He said not all would sleep, but we will all be transformed and put on immortality. And he said, “**Therefore, my beloved brothers, become ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not empty in the Lord**” (1Co. 15:58).

Next Paul gave instructions about collections for the sanctified, which he would receive when he came, and he told them when to expect him. He also said Timothy and Apollos might come to them. And he said, “**Watch ye, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all things of you be done**

in love” (1Co. 16:13-14). He named some other men, and asked them to acknowledge such men.

He concluded the letter, “**The congregations of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the congregation associated with their house. All the brothers salute you. Salute each other by a holy kiss. The salutation of Paul by my hand. If any man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. Maranatha. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with you. My love is with you all in Christ Jesus. Truly.**”

A Description of **Second Corinthians**

This letter says it is from Paul and Timothy to the congregation of God at Corinth, with all the sanctified in the whole of Achaia. Apparently Timothy transcribed Paul’s words this time. Paul praised God, the Father of Jesus Christ, and said he was the Father of mercies and the God of all encouragement. He said God encouraged them in all their affliction, in order for them to be able to encourage others in affliction. He said whether they were oppressed or were encouraged it was for their encouragement and salvation. He said, “**as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so also of the encouragement**” (2Co. 1:7).

Then he told them about their severe affliction in Asia. They even thought they had the sentence of death. He said, however, it was to show they could not trust in themselves, but in God, for God rescued them. He spoke of their pride in them, and told of his plan to visit them again. He said he had not come yet in order to spare them. He did not want to come in sadness, which was why he wrote. He said, “**For out of much stress and dismay of heart, through many tears, I wrote to you, not that ye would be grieved, but that ye might know the love that I have so much more for you**” (2Co. 2:4). Then he told them the punishment by the many was sufficient for such a man, and they should affirm their love for him (the man who had his father’s wife). He said he wrote to know the proof of them, whether they were obedient in all things. He said whom they forgive, he also forgives.

Paul said thanks were to God who always caused them to triumph in the Christ, making manifest the aroma of the knowledge of him in every place, through them. He said they were not as other men, huckstering the word of God, but as from purity. He

said they (the Corinthians) were their letter of commendation, written on their hearts, known and read by all men.

He said God made them (Paul and the others) qualified helpers of a new covenant, not of a document (like the law of Moses), but of a Spirit (a living force within them). He said the document kills but the Spirit makes alive. Then he contrasted the glory of the writings engraved on stones (given by Moses) with the greater glory of the Spirit. And he spoke of how the minds of the sons of Israel were hardened, unable to see even to that day. Then he said, “**Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty**” (2Co. 3:17). And he said we were all transformed into the same likeness (of spirit) from glory to glory.

Paul said they were not discouraged, nor did they misrepresent the word of God. And he said, “**But even if our good news is concealed, it is concealed in those who are perishing, in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, in order for the light of the good news of the glory of the Christ (who is a likeness of God) not to shine forth to them**” (2Co. 4:3-4).

He spoke of their afflictions, but also of their faith. Therefore they were not discouraged. And he said, “**... even if the outer man of us is perishing, yet the inner man is renewed day by day. For our slight momentary affliction works for us an eternal weight of glory from extraordinariness to extraordinariness**” (2Co. 4:16-17). He said they looked at things not seen, which are eternal, while groaning in this earthly house of our tent, longing to clothe ourselves with our habitation from heaven. He said therefore they aspired to be well-pleasing to the Lord. For we must all appear before the judg-

ment-seat of the Christ, “**so that each man may receive back about the things that he did through the body, whether good or bad**” (2Co. 5:10).

He said the love of Christ holds us together. He died for all so that those who live would no longer live to themselves, but to him. And he said, “**So then if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new**” (2Co. 5:17). He said God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and he committed to them (Paul and the others) the word of reconciliation. Paul said they were therefore ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were calling through them. And he pleaded with them to be reconciled to God.

He said they worked together, as helpers of God, urging them not to receive the grace of God in vain. He described some of their hardships and struggles, yet he also spoke of having great blessings. Then he said, “**O Corinthians, our mouth has been opened to you, our heart has been enlarged. Ye are not limited in us, but ye are limited in your bowels** [their innermost feelings]” (2Co. 6:11-12).

Then he told them not to become unequally yoked with unbelievers. He asked what partnership was with righteousness and lawlessness, or light with darkness. He quoted some of God’s words to the sons of Israel when he promised to be a Father to them if they would be separated and touch no unclean thing. Then Paul said, “**Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in fear of God**” (2Co. 7:1).

Then he told of his great pride for them. He said he had been filled with encouragement, and over-abounded with joy in all their affliction. He told of their great oppression in Macedonia, but were encouraged by the arrival of Titus, who gave a good report about them (the Corinthians). Paul said he had been remorseful for grieving them in the (first) letter, but now he rejoiced that they had been grieved for repentance. And he told of the eagerness it worked in them to correct the matter. He said they (Paul and the others) rejoiced by being encouraged by them. And he said, “**I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything**” (2Co. 7:16).

Next Paul spoke at length about a special collection that was being made for a “service for the sanctified” and a “need of the sanctified.” He first told of the great generosity of the poor congregations of Macedonia, who even begged to be part of it. Therefore, they (Paul and the others) urged Titus to finish

it with them (the Corinthians) also. He said since they abounded in everything, they should also abound in that kindness, although it was voluntary. He told of the example of Christ who sacrificed for them. And since they began by intending a year ago, they should now finish by doing. And he spoke of establishing equity by sharing.

He told of Titus’ eagerness to go, and they sent with him another well-respected brother. Paul said he wanted them (Paul and the others) to be above criticism regarding the handling of that “bounty.” And he told the Corinthians to show the proof of their love, and his boast about them. He said he sent the brothers to be sure they would be prepared, and would not be embarrassed in that confident boast. He said again it was a gift and not an exaction, but he also quoted several sayings about the benefits of giving. He said it not only supplied the needs of the sanctified, but it also brought many thanksgivings to God.

Most of what remains in the letter is a defense Paul gave of his apostleship. He began, “**Now I Paul myself entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who indeed am lowly in presence among you, but am bold toward you when absent**” (2Co. 10:1). He said the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but mighty in God, for casting down every high thing exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought captive into the obedience of the Christ.

He asked if they looked at things according to appearance. He spoke of their authority (Paul and the others), which the Lord gave for building up, and not for tearing them down. Paul had been accused of having weighty and powerful letters, but being weak in bodily presence, and having speech that was disdained. Paul said such a man (his accuser) should realize that what they were in word by letters when absent, they were also when present in the work.

He then spoke of measuring or comparing themselves by themselves. He said those who do such things did not understand. Perhaps it is like saying since the legs are a larger part of the body they are better. Or since a hand is stronger than the tongue it is better. Paul said he would not boast of things immeasurable. And he said it was not the man who commends himself that was approved, but whom the Lord commends.

Then he said, “**O that ye tolerated a little of my foolishness, but tolerate me too**” (2Co. 11:1). He said he was jealous of them with a jealousy of God.

He wanted to keep them as a pure virgin for Christ. He feared, as the serpent enticed Eve he would also corrupt their thoughts from the simplicity in the Christ. He indicated they were too tolerant of men who brought in other things. And he spoke sarcastically about such men: **“For I reckon to come short in nothing of those, superlative apostles. But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet not in knowledge, but in everything made known in all things to you”** (2Co. 11:5-6). Sarcasm or ridicule is sometimes warranted. Both Elijah and Isaiah used it (see 1Ki. 18:27 and Isa. 44:15).

He asked them if he committed a sin by lowering himself so that they might be lifted up, because he preached the good news to them without cost. He said others supplied his need, because he did not want to be a burden to them. He said, **“Why? Because I do not love you? God knows”** (2Co. 11:11). Then he exposed his competitors for what they were, saying, **“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for even Satan disguises himself into an agent of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his helpers also disguise themselves as helpers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works”** (2Co. 11:13-15).

Next Paul said he also wanted to boast a little, but he called it foolishness. He said they were tolerant if some man enslaved them, or devoured them, or seized them, or lifted himself up, or even struck them on the face. Paul said sarcastically, **“I speak as from shame, that we were so weak”** (2Co. 11:21a). He went on to say, **“Yet in whatever any man may be bold in foolishness, I say I too am bold”** (2Co. 11:21b).

Then he told some of his qualifications, within which he said, **“Are they helpers of Christ? (I speak as being mad) I more: in toils, more abundantly; in stripes, countless; in prisons, more frequently; in deaths often”** (2Co. 11:23). And he went on to describe some of the many terrible things he had suffered during his ministry. Besides those external things he told of the daily pressure of his care for all the congregations. And he said, **“Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is caused to stumble, and I am not made fiery?”** (2Co. 11:29).

Then he told about visions and revelations of the Lord. He said he knew a man in Christ who was caught up as far as the third heaven. He said the man was caught up into paradise, and heard inexpressible sayings. Paul said he would boast about such a

man, but not about himself, except in his weaknesses. Paul said if he wanted to boast he would speak the truth, but he refrained lest any man should reckon him above what he saw or heard from him. That suggests Paul was the man who was caught up to the third heaven, but to say so is speculation, for Paul did not say it.

Then he said he was given a thorn in the flesh, an agent of Satan to buffet him, so that he would not be over exalted by the extraordinariness of the revelations. He besought the Lord thrice about it, but God said, **“My grace is sufficient for thee, for my power is made fully perfect in weakness”** (2Co. 12:9). Paul said he would therefore more gladly boast in his weaknesses, so that the power of the Christ would reside in him. He even said, **“Therefore I am pleased in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in restrictions, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong”** (2Co. 12:10). What powerful faith! And should we complain about our lesser troubles?

Then he said, **“I have become foolish, boasting. Ye compelled me, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I came short in nothing of those, superlative apostles, even though I am nothing”** (2Co. 12:11). He said the signs of the apostle were performed among them, in signs and wonders and mighty works. He asked how they were inferior to other congregations, except he did not burden them. And with irony he said, **“Forgive me this wrong”** (2Co. 12:13).

Paul said he was coming a third time, and would still not be a burden to them. He said he would most gladly spend and be spent for their souls, even though more earnestly loving them, the worse he was loved. Then he reminded them that neither he nor Titus nor the brother with him was burdensome to them or exploited them in anything. He said all things were for their edification.

Then he told of his fear that he would come and find many things wrong in them. He said to those that had sinned, and to all the others, he would not spare, **“since ye seek proof of the Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but is mighty in you”** (2Co. 13:3). He told them to examine themselves whether they were in the faith. He said, **“Test yourselves. Or know ye not yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless ye are test-failing something”** (2Co. 13:5).

He said he wrote those things while absent, so that he might not act harshly when present, **“according to the authority that the Lord gave**

me for building up and not for tearing down” (2Co. 13:10). He concluded the letter, “**Finally brothers, farewell. Be thoroughly prepared, be encouraged, think the same way, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.**

Salute each other by a holy kiss. All the sanctified salute you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, is with all of you. Truly.”

A Description of **Galatians**

This letter says it is from Paul, and all the brothers with him, to the congregations of Galatia. After greeting them, and praising our Lord Jesus Christ, he rebuked them because they forsook the good news of Christ for another one. With strong words, he told them, “**But even if we, or an agent from heaven, should preach a good news to you contrary to what we preached to you, let him be accursed”** (Gal. 1:8). And he repeated the same words (1:9). Let no man say uttering a curse is always wrong.

Paul said the good news he preached was not from men, but through revelation of Jesus Christ. He reminded them how he had first persecuted the church. And he said it was three years after his conversion before he met with Peter and James in Jerusalem. The congregations in Judea did not see him, but they heard about his conversion. He said after fourteen years he went again to Jerusalem with Barnabas to report about his preaching among the Gentiles. He said Titus the Greek, who was with him, was not compelled to be circumcised. He said James and Cephas (Peter) and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave them the right hands of fellowship, “**So that we were for the Gentiles, and they for men of circumcision”** (Gal. 2:9).

However, Paul said when Peter came to Antioch, he opposed him to his face because he was blame-worthy. He had first eaten with the Gentiles, but withdrew when certain men from James came, fearing men of circumcision. Paul said the other Jews joined in hypocrisy with him, but he chided Peter about it before them all. Peter obviously accepted the criticism graciously. For near the end of his life he wrote lovingly about Paul (see 2Pe 3:15). Peter and Paul both had the spirit of Christ in them.

Then Paul told how Jesus Christ made us righteous by faith instead of works of law. He said no flesh would be made righteous from works of law (because all men violate it to some degree). He said, “**For I, through law [the law of Christ], died to law [legalism], so that I might live to God** [by

faith]” (Gal. 2:19). Paul said he now lived by the faith of the Son of God who loved him and gave himself up for him. He said if righteousness was through law, then Christ died in vain.

After that he said, “**O foolish Galatians, who bewitched you not to obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was earlier described among you, crucified?”** (Gal. 3:1). He asked them if they received the Spirit from works of law, or from a listening ear of faith. Then he told how the faith of Abraham was reckoned to him for righteousness. And since God told him that all nations would be blessed in him, then those from the faith of Abraham are blessed with him.

Then Paul quoted the scripture that says as many as are from works of law are under a curse (see Deu. 27:26). He said no man is made righteous by law, because no man is able to keep it perfectly. Therefore, every man not from faith is cursed. However, Christ redeemed us (who believe) from that curse. And Paul argued that the law (of Moses), which happened 430 years afterward, did not annul God’s promise to Abraham.

He said the law was added on account of transgressions, until the seed (Christ) would come to whom it was promised. He said the law became their schoolmaster, but now they are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. He said, “**For as many as were immersed into Christ have put on Christ. There is no Jew nor Greek, there is no bondman nor freeman, there is no male and female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”** (Gal. 3:27-28). And those who are Christ’s are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to promise. He said when they were children they were in bondage under the rudiments of the world. However, God sent his Son to redeem those under law, so they might receive the sonship, and become an heir through Christ.

Then he asked them how it was they turned again to the weak and destitute elements to which they desired again to be in bondage. He feared he had labored toward them in vain. He besought them

to become like him, because he was like them. He spoke of a weakness of the flesh he had, yet when he was with them they still received him as an agent of God. He asked if he had become their enemy by telling them the truth.

Then he said they (the men misleading them) were zealous for them, but not honorably. He said they wanted to exclude them, so that they would be zealous for them. And how like that are so many aggressive men who strive for power, putting on a friendly pious front, speaking one way and acting another. Paul said he wished to be present with them then and change his tone, because he was perplexed at them.

After that he contrasted two sons of Abraham: the one from the servant girl (Hagar), and the one from the freewoman (Sarah). He said the man (Ishmael) from the servant girl was born according to flesh, but the man (Isaac) from the freewoman through promise. He said those things were allegorized for the two covenants. The one from mount Sinai gave birth for bondage, which corresponded to the present Jerusalem (in bondage to the law). But the Jerusalem above (in heaven) was free, which is the mother of us all (who believe). He said we correspond to Isaac, being children of promise. And as the man born according to flesh persecuted the man according to the Spirit, so also now. And he encouraged them, saying, "**Stand firm therefore in the liberty in which Christ freed us, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage**" (Gal. 5:1).

He further warned them, saying that if they were circumcised (for admission to the legal system from Moses), Christ would benefit them nothing. They had fallen from grace. He said they were running well, and he asked who hindered them, not to obey the truth. He said the man troubling them would bear the verdict. Then he said, "**O that those who trouble you would even cut it all off**" (Gal. 5:12), meaning go beyond circumcision.

He said they were called to liberty, not for an opportunity to the flesh, but to be servants to each other through love. He said the whole law was fulfilled in one word: "**Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself**" (Gal. 5:14). Then he warned them about the conflict between flesh and Spirit. He said the two were hostile to each other. That is, the Spirit of God within us and the lusts of our flesh are mutually antagonistic.

He said the works of the flesh were apparent, and he listed some of them, such as, adultery, idolatry, jealousies, selfish ambitions, murders, revelings. He warned them that those who practiced such things would not inherit the kingdom of God. Then he listed some of the fruits of the Spirit, such as, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, meekness, self-control. He said those of the Christ had crucified the flesh with its passions and the lusts.

Paul then gave some advice about getting along with each other, such as not being conceited. He said, "**Bear the burdens of each other, and so fulfill the law of the Christ**" (Gal. 6:2). However, he also said each man should bear his own burden. That probably means we should help another man when his burdens become too great for him. And he said, "**But let him who is taught in the word share in all good things with him who teaches**" (Gal. 6:6). Among other things, he said that God was not mocked, for whatever a man sows that is what he would reap. And he gave the example of sowing to the flesh and reaping corruption, versus sowing to the Spirit and reaping eternal life.

Then he said, "**See in how large letters I wrote to you with my hand**" (Gal. 6:11), which is more evidence to suggest he had poor vision. And again he warned that circumcision did not avail anything (spiritually). He ended the letter, "**Finally, let no man cause troubles for me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with your spirit, brothers. Truly.**"

A Description of **Ephesians**

This letter begins, “**Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, to the sanctified who are at Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus.**” Then he said, “**Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,**” which is a greeting he used in most of his letters.

Next he praised the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He said God chose us before the foundation of the world, for us to be holy and unblemished before him in love. And he predestined us for sonship through Jesus Christ in whom we have redemption and forgiveness. Paul said that God made known to us the mystery of his will, to gather together all things in the Christ, things in heaven and on earth. He said those in Christ had been predestined according to God’s purpose for us to be for appreciation of his glory, and the Holy Spirit was a pledge of our inheritance.

Three times Paul spoke of the appreciation of God’s glory. What he seems to have said is that God predestined the sanctified (the disciples of Christ) to bring appreciation of his glory. Everybody underestimates the glory of God, for it is impossible to fully appreciate it. Nevertheless, sinners greatly underestimate it. Indeed, Satan and his disciples even challenged God in heaven. Christ and his Church is God’s brilliant solution to Satan and all rebels against him, a solution that had been a mystery from before the foundation of the world. (You can read more about that in my essay *Jesus, Our Redeemer* on my website.) Hence, Christ and his redeemed bring greater appreciation of God’s magnificent glory.

Paul then said he had heard of their goodness, and he ceased not praying about them and for them. He prayed that God would enable them to see and know the wealth of the glory of his (God’s) inheritance in the sanctified, and the transcending greatness of his power toward us who believe, which he wrought in the Christ—he who was raised far above all others both now and forever. Some of Paul’s sentences are dozens of words long, yet they are rich in meaning. If they first seem unclear, go back and study them carefully. Regarding Christ, Paul said further, “**And he [God] subordinated all things under his feet, and appointed him head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fulfillment of him who fills all in all**” (Eph. 1:22-23).

Paul said that meant them, who had been dead in sins, having walked according to the spirit (Satan) that works in the sons of disobedience. He said they once behaved in the lusts of their flesh, and were by nature children of wrath, but the love of God made them alive with Christ. Among other things, he said, “**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God preordained that we should walk in them**” (Eph. 2:10).

He reminded them how they were once without hope and godless in the world. But the Christ abolished the law of commandments in ordinances, which divided the Jews and Gentiles. Christ reconciled them both in one body to God through the cross, and now they belong to the household of God. Paul said for that reason he was the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of them the Gentiles. And he was given by revelation to understand the mystery of the Christ, for the Gentiles to be fellow-heirs through the good news. And he told how he was a helper “**to make all men see what is the administration of the mystery hidden from the ages in God who created all things through Jesus Christ. So that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the principal offices and the positions of authority in the heavenly things, through the church, according to the purpose of the ages, which he made in Christ Jesus our Lord**” (Eph. 3:9-11).

Paul said he bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that he would strengthen them with power for the inner man, through his Spirit, for Christ to dwell in their hearts through faith, and become aware of the transcending love of Christ. Then he praised God, saying, “**Now to him who is able to do above extraordinary—above all things that we ask or think—according to the power that works in us, to him is the glory in the church in Christ Jesus for all generations of the age of the ages. Truly**” (Eph. 3:20-21).

Paul asked them to walk worthily of their calling, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He told how Christ ascended on high, and gave gifts to men, such as, apostles, prophets, teachers, and others, for edification of the body of the Christ. He said to no longer be childish, but be truthful in love, to cause all things to grow for Christ, the head of the body.

He told them not to walk as the other Gentiles, in the vanity of their mind. He said the callousness of their heart kept them ignorant, and hence, alienated from the life of God. Therefore they gave themselves over to licentiousness to work uncleanness in greed. But the Ephesians did not so learn Christ. Paul told them to put off the old corrupt man, and put on the new man according to God, created in righteousness and piety of the truth. He told them to put off falsehood and other evils, “**And become good toward each other, compassionate, forgiving each other, even as also God in Christ forgave us. Become ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children**” (Eph. 4:32-5:1).

He warned them against fornication and other such sins, saying it was because of those things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. He said, “**For ye were once darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk as children of light**” (Eph. 5:8). Among other things he told them not to associate with the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead to rebuke them. He told them to walk wisely, because the days were evil. He also said for them to speak to themselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, expressing thanks always for all things in the name of Christ to God.

He told them to submit to each other in the fear of Christ. Wives are to submit to their own husbands, because he is the head of the wife as Christ is head of the church. Husbands are to love their wives even as Christ loved the church. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord, and honor their father and mother. Fathers are not to exasperate their children, but rear them in the training and admonition of the Lord. Bondmen are to be obedient to the masters, serving as to the Lord and not to men. “**Know-**

ing,” he said, “that whatever good thing each may do, he will receive this from the Lord, whether bondman or freeman” (Eph. 6:8). He said masters are to do the same things to them, and ease up on the threats, knowing their master is in the heavens.

Then he said, “**Finally my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the full armor of God to enable you to stand against the wiles of the devil. Because our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principal offices, against the positions of authority, against the world-rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual things of wickedness in the heavenly things**” (Eph. 6:10-12).

He told them to take up the full armor of God. He said to gird their loins with truth, put on the breastplate of righteousness, shod their feet in preparation of the good news of peace, take up the shield of faith, take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. He said to pray at every time in spirit, and be alert in all perseverance and entreaty for all the sanctified. And also for him, that utterance be given him to make known the mystery of the good news boldly for which he was an ambassador in bondage.

He said he was sending Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful helper in the Lord, to make known the things about him, and to encourage their hearts. He concluded the letter with these words: “**Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The grace is with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptibility. Truly.”**

A Description of **Philippians**

This letter begins, “**Paul and Timothy, bondmen of Jesus Christ, to all the sanctified in Jesus Christ who are at Philippi, with the guardians and helpers: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**” Paul said he thanked God upon every memory of them for their participation in the good news. He said he had them in his heart, and longed for them all in bowels (deep feelings) of Jesus Christ. He prayed that their love would abound still more and more in knowledge, so they could examine the things that were significant.

He wanted them to know that his bonds had actually advanced the good news, convincing others to be bolder to speak the word. Although some proclaimed the Christ from selfish ambition, Paul said he rejoiced that Christ was proclaimed, whether in pretense or in truth. He said, “**For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain**” (Phil. 1:21). He said that living in flesh was fruit of labor to him, but departing to be with Christ was far better. He said remaining was more necessary because of them. Therefore, he chose to remain.

He asked them to be citizens worthy of the good news of the Christ. He wanted to hear they stood firm in one spirit, and strove together for the faith. He told them not to be frightened by those who oppose. He said, “**Because to you it was granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, having the same conflict such as ye saw in me, and now hear is in me**” (Phil. 1:29-30). He told them to be knit in soul and think in oneness, not with selfish ambition or empty conceit. He told them to consider Christ, who existed in the form of God, but emptied himself and lowered himself, becoming obedient until death. He said, “**Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name above every name ...**” (Phil. 2:9).

He told them to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. He told them to do all things without grumblings and arguments, so they might become blameless children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom they shone as lights in the world.

He hoped in the Lord Jesus to sent Timothy to them soon. He said, “**For I have no man like-minded who will genuinely care for the things about you. For they all seek the things of them-**

selves, not the things of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:20-21). He said he trusted in the Lord that he also would come soon. But he said it was necessary to send his co-workman Epaphroditus to them, who had been ill, near death, but God was merciful. He asked them to receive him in the Lord with all gladness. For he came near death for the work of the Christ to fill up the deficiency of their service toward him (Paul).

Next he said that writing the same things to them was not irksome to him, but safe for them. Then he said, “**Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workmen, beware of the excision. For we are the circumcision, men who worship in spirit to God, and who boast in Christ Jesus, and not being confident in flesh**” (Phil. 3:2-3). Paul was persecuted more severely by the Jews than by any others. And they did more to oppose and undermine his work, which caused him to be very angry about them. Therefore, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he called them dogs and evil workmen.

Paul said that he could have more confidence in the flesh than they, and he listed his qualifications. Paul could have been among the highest of the Jewish elite, but he forsook it all for the Christ. He even became an outcast during his lifetime (see 1Co. 4:13), but he attained greatness with God. He followed the steps of Jesus, and so should we, even if we become outcasts in the world. For we look to a better world. Paul said he suffered the loss of all things, and considered them to be rubbish, so that he might gain Christ and attain to the resurrection of the dead. Then he said, “**Not that I have already obtained or have already been fully perfected, but I press forward, if also I might seize upon that for which also I was seized by Christ Jesus**” (Phil. 3:12).

He told them to become fellow-imitators of him, and watch those who so walk. He said many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ, “**whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly, and the glory in their shame, who mind earthly things**” (Phil. 3:19). He said our citizenship exists in the heavens, from which we await our Savior Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to become similar in form to the body of his glory. And he said, “**So then, my brothers, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord this way beloved**” (Phil. 4:1).

He told them to rejoice in the Lord always, and he repeated the words for emphasis. He told them to be anxious about nothing, but to make their requests known to God by prayer and supplication with thankfulness. He said the peace of God would guard their hearts in Christ.

Then he said, “**Finally brothers, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are commendable, if anything is a virtue, and if anything is praiseworthy, think on these things**” (Phil. 4:8). Those are beautiful words for a beautiful mind. Insofar as we are able we should keep our thoughts on things noble and constructive. It is harmful, indeed dangerous, to mediate on things sordid, obscene, and such like. Purge them from your thoughts as you do garbage in your house, for thoughts lead to actions.

Paul said he rejoiced in the Lord greatly that they had revived thinking about him. He said he was not speaking regarding need, for he said, “**I have learned in what things I am to be content**” (Phil. 4:11). He said nevertheless they did well to share with his affliction, for they were the only congregation that shared in giving and receiving when he departed from Macedonia. He said he had received from Epaphroditus the things from them, which he called an aroma of fragrance, and an acceptable sacrifice well-pleasing to God.

He concluded the letter, saying, “**Now to our God and Father is the glory into the ages of the ages. Truly. Salute every sanctified man in Christ Jesus. The brothers with me salute you. All the sanctified salute you, and especially those of the house of Caesar. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with you all. Truly.**”

A Description of **Colossians**

This letter says it is from Paul and Timothy “**to the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colos-sae**” (Col. 1:2). Paul said they gave thanks to God, always praying about them. He said they heard about their faith in Christ, and love toward all the sanctified. He said they prayed for them to be filled with the knowledge of the will of Christ. He also prayed for them to walk worthily of the Lord, bearing fruit in every good work, and to grow and be strengthened.

Among other things Paul said they gave thanks to the Father who rescued them out of the power of darkness, and transferred them into the kingdom of the Son of his love. He told of the greatness of Christ, saying that all things were created through him and for him. He said, “**And he is before all, and in him all things hold together**” (Col. 1:17). He told the Colossians they were formerly alienated and hostile, but now Christ had reconciled them through his death, to present them holy and unblameable. That is, if they continued steadfast in the faith.

Then he said, “**I now rejoice in sufferings for you, and make complete in my flesh things lacking of the afflictions of the Christ for his body, which is the church**” (Col. 1:24). He said he became a helper to fulfill the word of God, which was a mystery now revealed. And God wanted to make known the wealth of the glory of that mystery

among the Gentiles, which is Christ. Paul said they proclaimed him so that they might present every man perfect in Christ.

Paul said he wanted them to know of the great struggle he had about them, and those at Laodicea, and as many as had not seen his face. It was, he said, “**So that their hearts may be encouraged, having been united together in love, and for all wealth of the full assurance of understanding, to know-ledge of the mystery of the God and Father of the Christ. In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And I say this so that not any man may delude you with persuasive speech**” (Col. 2:2-4). He said that although he was absent in the flesh, he was with them in the spirit, and he rejoiced about their steadfastness in their faith. And he encouraged them to walk in Christ as they had received him.

He warned them not to be taken captive through the love of wisdom and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men and not Christ. He said that all the fullness of the divinity dwells bodily in Christ, who is the head of every principal office and position of authority. He said they had been dead in transgressions, but Christ made them alive together with him, having forgiven us. He said Christ “**erased the handwriting against us in the regula-tions that were hostile to us**” (Col. 2:14). He said Christ nailed it to the cross, which means by his per-

fect atoning sacrifice he removed the requirement of legalism from his sanctified. Moreover, Paul said, **“Having stripped the principal offices and the positions of authority, he exposed them openly, having triumphed over them by it”** (Col. 2:15).

Therefore, Paul told them not to let any man judge them **“in drinking, or in the matter of a festival or a new moon or sabbaths [legalisms], which are a shadow of the things coming, but the body is Christ’s”** (Col. 2:16-17). He said if they had died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why did they submit to rules, **“Do not handle, nor taste, nor touch”** (Col. 2:21) (legalisms) according to the commandments of men.

He told them to seek the things above, where Christ is. He said, **“Put to death therefore your body-parts on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry”** (Col. 3:5). He said such things were why the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. He told them to put off those evil things (he gave some examples), and put on the new man according to an image of him who created them. And he gave some examples of virtuous things, such as, kindness, humility, longsuffering. He said

that above all those things to put on love. He also told them to let the word of Christ dwell in them abundantly. And do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, expressing thanks to the God and Father through him.

He told wives to be submissive to their own husbands; husbands to love their wives; children to obey their parents; fathers to not provoke their children; and bondmen to obey their masters. He also told masters to present the bondmen with what was right and equitable. He told them to continue in prayer, and pray about them also (Paul and his companions).

He said he sent Tychicus to make them know all things about him, and to learn the things about them. He also sent Onesimus. Then he named several men who saluted them, including Luke, the beloved physician. He asked them to salute a couple of men he named. He also said, **“And when the letter has been read among you, cause that it be read also in the congregation of Laodiceans, and that ye also read the one from Laodicea”** (Col. 4:16). There are no known copies that letter. Paul concluded, **“The salutation of Paul by my hand. Remember my bonds. Grace is with you. Truly.”**

A Description of First Thessalonians

This letter says it is from Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, although the words are doubtless those of Paul. He said they thanked God always about them, remembering them in their prayers, and remembering their work of faith and labor of love. He said, **“And ye became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, in order for you to become examples to all those who believe, in Macedonia and in Achaia”** (1Th. 1:6-7). He told how they turned from the idols to serve a living and true God, and await his Son from the heavens.

He told how they (Paul and his companions) were bold to speak the good news of God to them, although they had suffered and been mistreated in Philippi. He said their exhortation was not from error or uncleanness, nor was it to please men. He said they did not come in word of flattery or pretense of greed or seeking glory from men. He said they became gentle among them as a nurse cherishes her own children. He said, **“Thus being desirous of you, we were pleased to impart to you, not**

only the good news of God, but also our own souls, because ye have become beloved to us” (1Th. 2:8). And he reminded them of their labor and hardship not to burden them as they preached the good news.

Paul said they thank God without ceasing, because they (the Thessalonians) received the word as it truly is, the word of God. He said, **“For ye, brothers, became imitators of the congregations of God, which are in Judea in Christ Jesus, because ye also suffered the same things by your own countrymen, just as also they by the Jews”** (1Th. 2:14). And he told how the Jews killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and were persecuting them (Paul and his companions), even forbidding them to speak to the Gentiles so they might be saved. Then he said, **“But wrath came upon them finally”** (1Th. 2:16). What that refers to is not clear.

Paul said they wanted to come, but Satan hindered them. He said, **“For what is our hope or joy or crown of boast? Or is it not even ye, before**

our Lord Jesus at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy” (1Th. 2:19-20). He said they sent Timothy in order to establish them, and encourage them about their faith. He said for no man to be disturbed by their afflictions, **“For ye yourselves know that we are set for this. For also when we were with you we foretold you that we were going to be oppressed, just as it also happened, and ye know”** (1Th. 3:3-4). He said they were encouraged in all their affliction by Timothy’s good report of them. Then he said, **“For what thanks can we repay God about you, for all the joy in which we rejoiced because of you before our God, praying night and day above extraordinary in order to see your face and to mend the deficiencies of your faith?”** (1Th. 3:9-10).

And they asked that the Lord would make them increase and abound in love toward each other, and toward all men. Paul and his companions had great affection for their brothers in Christ. Love for all mankind is the hallmark of Christianity.

He also asked them to walk and to please God as they ought. He said, **“For ye know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus”** (1Th. 4:2). Although there is no legalism in Christianity, there are commandments that must be obeyed. For example, he told them to abstain from fornication. He said God did not call us to uncleanness, but in sanctification.

He said he did not want them to be ignorant about those who were asleep (whose bodies died) so they would not grieve. For as Jesus died and arose, so also those who sleep in Christ, God will bring with him. He said the Lord was going to descend from heaven with a shout, and gather us up to be with him. And he said, **“Therefore encourage each other with these words”** (1Th. 4:18). He also said that day would come unexpectedly, and the world would not escape destruction. But they were sons of light, and not of the night or of darkness. Therefore they should watch and be sober. For God had not appointed them for wrath, but for an acquired possession of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

After that he asked them to acknowledge those who led them in the Lord, and who admonished them. He said to esteem them with exceptional love because of their work. Then he gave some brief rules of righteous living, such as, admonishing the unruly, helping the infirmed, praying without ceasing (which may mean to always keep God in mind), examining all things, and abstaining from all appearance of evil. He asked that God would sanctify them thoroughly, preserving their spirit and body, blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He concluded the letter with these words: **“Brothers, pray about us. Salute all the brothers by a holy kiss. I adjure you by the Lord that the letter be read to all the holy brothers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with you. Truly.”**

A Description of **Second Thessalonians**

This letter begins with the same greeting as First Thessalonians, saying it is from Paul and Silvanus and Timothy. Paul said they were indebted to thank God always about them, because their faith was increasing greatly, and their love for each other abounded. He said all the persecutions and tribulations they endured were evidence of the righteous judgment of God, for them to be considered worthy of the kingdom of God. And he told how God was going to render vengeance to the disobedient. He said he also prayed about them, that God would make them worthy of their calling.

He asked them not to be quickly shaken, nor alarmed, by any message that the day of the Christ had come. He said if they became deceived the defection might come, and the man of sin would be revealed—he who exalts himself against all that is called God or an object of worship, and sits in the temple of God, displaying himself that he is God. Many men have exalted themselves as God in the hearts of others. Paul said he told about those things when he was with them. He also spoke of the mystery of lawlessness, which was according to the working of Satan with all power and marvels of deceit for those who are perishing, because they did not accept the love of the truth. Paul said, “**And because of this God will send them the force of a delusion, for them to believe a lie, so that they might be condemned—all those who did not believe the truth, but who delighted in unrighteousness**” (2Th. 2:11-12). The theory of evolution is a forceful delusion that keeps those who love

unrighteousness in darkness. Those who love light will not be kept deluded.

Paul said they (he and his companions) were indebted to express thanks to God always about them, because God chose them from the beginning for salvation. And he urged them to stand firm, and hold to the traditions they were taught, whether by word or by letter from them. And he prayed that God and Christ would encourage them, and establish them in every good word and work. He also asked the brothers there to pray for them, that the word of the Lord would run and be glorified, and that they be delivered from aberrant and wicked men.

Then Paul said, “**Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for you to withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition, which they received from us**” (2Th. 3:6). He said if any man would not work, neither let him eat. He said he heard some were idle busybodies. He commanded by Christ they work quietly, and eat their own bread. He told the brothers there not to become weary doing well. And he told them not to associate with any man who did not obey their word by that letter. He said not to regard such a man as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother.

He concluded the letter, “**Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace through everything in every way. The Lord is with all of you. The salutation of Paul by my hand, which is a mark in every letter I write this way. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with all of you. Truly.**”

A Description of **First Timothy**

After greeting Timothy, Paul said he had urged him to remain in Ephesus, so that he might command certain men not to teach something different, nor heed myths and endless genealogies, which cause controversies rather than stewardship of God. He said the end of the commandment was love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and non-hypocritical faith. He said some had swerved from those things to empty talk, wanting to be law teachers, but without understanding. Paul said law was not for righteous men, but for the lawless and rebellious. And he gave several examples, such as, man killers, fornicators, homosexuals, and liars.

Paul said he had gratitude to the Christ, who empowered him and placed him in service, although he had formerly been a persecutor. He said he obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. Paul said Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinful men, and Paul called himself the foremost. He said he was an example of the longsuffering of Christ. Then he praised God, saying, “**Now to the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, alone wise, to God is honor and glory into the ages of the ages. Truly**” (1Ti. 1:17).

He exhorted Timothy to make supplications and prayers for all men, and for kings and all who are in prominence, so they might lead a quiet and peaceful life in all piety. He said God wants all men to be saved and come to knowledge of truth. He said he wanted the women to adorn themselves in disciplined decorum, and not with extravagance. And he said women were to learn in silence in all subjection. A woman was not to teach or act autonomously from a man. He said she would be saved through childbearing, if they continued in faith and love and sanctification. Paul was speaking about the role of women, and not that each one had to bear children.

Then he said, “**Faithful is the saying, If any man aspires to supervision, he desires a good work**” (1Ti. 3:1). And he gave the qualifications of the overseer or elder. The man had to be the husband of one wife, virtuous, rule his own house well, and not be a new convert lest he become puffed up. He also had to have a good reputation from those outside. After that he gave the qualifications of helpers or deacons, which are very similar to those of the overseers.

Paul said he wrote those things so that he (Timothy) would know how it was necessary to live in a house of God, which is a congregation of God. Then he said, “**And without controversy great is the mystery of piety. God was manifested in flesh, justified in spirit, seen by agents, proclaimed among nations, believed in the world, taken up in glory**” (1Ti. 3:16). Next he told how the Spirit said that in latter times some would depart from the faith, giving heed to deceitful spirits, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and forbidding to marry, among other things.

He told Timothy that if he laid those things down to the brothers, he would be a good helper of Jesus Christ. But he warned him to reject profane and old wives’ fables. And he said, “**Let no man disparage thy youth, but become an example of the faithful, in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity**” (1Ti. 4:12). He told him to give attention to reading, to exhortation, to teaching. And he told him to hold firm to himself and the doctrine. He said, “**Continue in them, for in doing this thou will save both thyself and those who hear thee**” (1Ti. 4:16).

Next he told him not to rebuke an elder man, but entreat him as a father, younger men as brothers, elder women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. Then he gave instructions about widows, both the younger ones and the older ones. He said the younger ones should marry, and he gave qualifications for enrolling older widows. He probably meant qualified to receive assistance from the church. He said the elders who rule well should be regarded worthy of double compensation, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching. He said the workman was worthy of his wage. He also said to rebuke in the sight of all an elder who sins, so that the others would have fear. Public displays of punishment are a strong deterrence. He also said to keep those things without prejudice, and do nothing from partiality.

Paul gave a variety of other instructions, including one about Timothy’s poor health. And he told him to withdraw from any man who taught something different, and who did not associate with wholesome words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine according to piety. He said such men dote about disputes and word controversies, which only stir strife.

Then he warned about wanting to be rich, and said, “**For the love of money is a root of all the evils, of which some aspiring have wandered from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, piety, faith, love, patience, meekness**” (1Ti. 6:10-11).

He told him to fight the good fight of the faith, and take hold of the eternal life for which he was called. He commanded Timothy to keep the commandment, without spot, blameless, until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. He said Jesus was “**the blessed and only Potentate, the King of**

those who are kings, and Lord of those who are lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in irreproachable light, whom no man has seen, nor can see, to whom is honor and eternal dominion. Truly” (1Ti. 6:15-16).

Paul commanded the rich not to be arrogant or hope in the uncertainty of wealth, but in the living God, and to do good and be generous, so they might take hold of the eternal life. He concluded the letter, “**O Timothy, keep the entrustment, avoiding the profane babblings and objections of the falsely-called knowledge, which some men professing have missed the mark concerning the faith. Grace is with thee. Truly.**”

A Description of **Second Timothy**

After his salutation to Timothy, Paul told him he was grateful to God, as he had unceasing remembrance of Timothy, and longed to see him. He said he remembered his non-hypocritical faith, which was first in his grandmother Lois, and in his mother Eunice. And he reminded him to rekindle the gift of God that was in him through the laying on of his (Paul’s) hands. He said, “**For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of soberness**” (2Ti. 1:7).

Paul told him not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of him his prisoner, but to suffer together with the good news according to the power of God. He told how Christ abolished death, and brought immortality to light through the good news, for which he (Paul) was appointed a herald, and an apostle, and a teacher of Gentiles. He said, “**Because of which reason I also suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to preserve my consignment for that day**” (2Ti. 1:12).

He encouraged Timothy to hold the pattern of sound words that he heard from him. Then he told how all those in Asia had turned away from him. But he blessed the house of Onesiphorus, and told how much he had helped him. He told Timothy to be strong in the grace of Christ, and commit what he had heard from him (Paul) to faithful men who would be competent to teach others also. He told him to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and not be entangled in the affairs of life.

Paul told of his suffering for the good news so that the chosen might also experience salvation in Christ. He said, “**Faithful is the saying, For if we die together, we will also live together**” (2Ti. 2:11). He said to remind them of those things. He told him not to brawl verbally, and to shun profane babblings, things which only cause trouble. He said every man who names the name of the Lord should keep away from unrighteousness. He used an illustration about vessels used for different purposes, and said, “**If therefore any man purges himself from these things, he will be a vessel for esteem, sanctified and useful to the master, prepared for every good work**” (2Ti. 2:21).

He told him to flee juvenile impulses, and shun foolish and uneducated questions, knowing they breed quarrels. He said to correct in meekness those who oppose, hoping God would grant them repentance for recognition of the truth. He also warned about perilous times in the last days, and described how men would be, such as lovers of self and money, arrogant, impious, slanderous, savage, traitors, and the like. Paul said Timothy had closely followed him, and he listed some of his (Paul’s) virtues and some of the persecutions he endured. Then he said, “**And also all those who want to live devoutly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will go forward to worse, leading astray and being led astray**” (2Ti. 3:12-13).

Paul told Timothy to continue in what he had learned. He said the sacred writings were able to make him wise for salvation through faith in Christ.

He said, “**Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for instruction, for reproof, for correction, for discipline in righteousness, so that the man of God may be qualified, having been completed for every good work**” (2Ti. 3:16-17). He told him to preach the word in season and out of season, and “**reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching**” (2Ti. 4:2). He said the time was coming when they would not tolerate sound doctrine, but would accumulate teachers according to their own desires, and would turn the ear away from the truth.

Then he told how the time of his dissolution (death) was imminent. He said he had fought the good fight and kept the faith. Therefore the crown of righteousness was laid up for him by the Lord, and not for him only, but for all who have loved his appearing. He told Timothy to come to him quickly, for only Luke was with him. He warned about Alexander the coppersmith who did many evil things to him, but the Lord stood by him and rescued him from the mouth of the lion. He named some for him to salute, and some who saluted him. He closed, saying, “**The Lord Jesus Christ is with thy spirit. Grace is with you. Truly.**”

A Description of **Titus**

Paul told about his apostleship, and then he greeted Titus. He said he left him behind in Crete so that he should set in order the things lacking. He also told him to appoint elders in every city, and he gave their qualifications. The overseer had to be blameless and virtuous, holding firm the faithful word. They also needed to be able to exhort by the sound doctrine, and correct those who contradict. Paul said, “**For there are also many insubordinate men, vain talkers and deceivers, especially those from circumcision, who must be muzzled, men who subvert whole houses, teaching things that they ought not, for sake of ugly profit**” (Titus 1:10-11). And he quoted the words of a prophet of their own who said, “**Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy bellies**” (Titus 1:12). Paul said that testimony was true. Therefore, he was to reprove them harshly, so they might be sound in the faith.

Speaking about the defiled and unbelieving, Paul said, “**They profess to know God, but in their works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and worthless for every good work**” (Titus 1:16). He told Titus to speak things that were

fitting for the sound doctrine. Then he gave advice for the aged men and women, and for the young women and young men. He described for Titus how he should present himself, having virtuous behavior so that the man of opposition would be ashamed, having nothing bad to say about them. And he told bondmen to be obedient to their masters.

He told how we should deny worldly lusts, and live righteously, awaiting the appearance of Christ, who redeemed us for himself, a special people. He told Titus to remind them to be submissive to rulers and live righteously. He told how sinful they all formerly were, but the kindness of God saved them through Christ, having hope of eternal life. He told him to avoid foolish questions, contentions, and the like. He said such things were useless. He told him to shun the factious man who persisted after admonishing him.

He gave some instructions about a few men, and concluded the letter, “**All those with me salute thee. Salute those who love us in faith. Grace is with all of you. Truly.**”

A Description of **Philemon**

This letter begins, “**Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy the brother, to Philemon our beloved and co-workman, and to the beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the congregation at thy house.**” However, the letter is primarily from Paul to Philemon. Paul said he thanked God, remembering him always in his prayers, having heard of his love and faith.

He said they had much joy and encouragement in his love. Therefore, although he could command him, yet because of love he would rather beseech him, as aged Paul and a prisoner of Christ, for his child Onesimus, whom he begot (spiritually) in his bonds. Onesimus was apparently a bondman who had fled from Philemon. Paul had converted him, and had great affection for him. Therefore, he sent him back, and asked Philemon to welcome him. He

wanted to keep Onesimus as a helper, but he would not without Philemon’s approval. He asked Philemon to receive him now as a brother, saying, “**If then thou have me a partner, accept him as myself**” (Philemon 1:17). He even asked Philemon to charge anything Onesimus might owe him to Paul. And he said, “**Yes, brother, let me have a favor of thee in the Lord. Refresh my bowels in the Lord**” (Philemon 1:20).

Paul said he was confident he would do above what he said, and he asked him to prepare a lodging for him. He hoped by his (Philemon’s) prayers to be granted to him. Then he named a few men who saluted him, and closed the letter, saying, “**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with your spirit. Truly.**”

A Description of **Hebrews**

The author does not identify himself, but he was probably the apostle Paul. The book begins by telling how God spoke formerly by the prophets, but in the last days (of direct revelation) he spoke by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things: “**Who, being the radiance of his glory, and the exact image of his essence, and upholding all things by the word of his power, having made purification of our sins through himself, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heights**” (Heb. 1:3).

The author said the Son was superior to the heavenly agents. Indeed, they are commanded to worship him. He said the Son loved righteousness and hated lawlessness, therefore God anointed him with the oil of gladness above his companions. He told how God, who is permanent, made the heavens and the earth, which are transient. And about the heavenly agents, he said, “**Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth for service for the sake of those who are going to inherit salvation?**” (Heb. 1:14).

He said therefore we should give more earnest heed to the things heard. And he warned against neglecting so great a salvation, which God himself confirmed by signs and wonders. The author said Jesus was made a little something less than the

agents, but has been crowned with glory and honor. He said, “**For it was fitting for him, through whom are all things, and because of whom are all things, having brought many sons to glory, to make the pathfinder of their salvation fully perfect through sufferings**” (Heb. 2:10).

The author quoted several Old Testament scriptures about the Son, including one that refers to us as God’s children. Then he said, “**Since therefore the children have partaken of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might make him who has the power of death impotent, that is, the devil**” (Heb. 2:14). He said the Son was obligated to be made like his brothers (mankind), so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest to make reconciliation for our sins.

The author told how Moses was faithful in all God’s house, but Jesus Christ was worthy of more glory than Moses, as he who built the house has more esteem than the house. He said Christ was a Son over God’s house, “**whose house we are, if only we keep in possession our confidence and pride of hope, firm until the end**” (Heb. 3:6).

Next the author used the example of the Israelites who were led out of Egypt. He told how God said they challenged him, and were always led

astray in their heart. He said they did not know his ways. Therefore, he was angry with that generation, and swore they would not enter into his rest. Then the author said, "**Watch, brothers, lest there will be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in withdrawing from the living God**" (Heb. 3:12). He told them not to be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. And he said, "**Let us be afraid therefore, lest, a promise being left behind to enter into his rest, any of you should seem to have come short**" (Heb. 4:1). He said there remained a sabbath for the people of God, and he warned, "**Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest, so that not any man may fall by the same example of disobedience**" (Heb. 4:11). He was speaking of the time of eternal peace and glory in heaven.

After that he spoke of the power of the word of God, saying, "**For the word of God is living, and potent, and sharper, above every two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division both of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and discernible of the thoughts and intentions of the heart**" (Heb. 4:12). There is nothing on earth more powerful and able to transform the souls of men for righteousness.

Then he told about Jesus as a great high priest. He said every high priest was appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. And Jesus was called by God to be a priest, just as also Aaron. He told how Jesus suffered in the days of his flesh, and he said, "... although being a Son, he learned obedience from the things that he suffered. And having been fully perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation to all those who obey him ..." (Heb. 5:8-9).

Then he rebuked those he wrote to, saying that much subject matter about Jesus was difficult to explain, but they had become sluggish in hearing. He said by that time they ought to be teachers, but they needed milk, and not solid food (referring to knowledge). And he urged them to move beyond the fundamentals. After that he told how it was impossible to restore again to repentance those who had become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and had tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age. He said they were like cultivated ground that produced thorns, whose end was for burning.

He said, however, they were persuaded better things about them. For God did not forget their work and labor of love toward his name, serving the sanctified. But he urged them to be diligent until the

end so they could inherit the promises. He told of God's promise to Abraham. Then he said that Jesus became a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. That was written of the Messiah in Psalm 110:4, which the Hebrews knew about.

Melchizedek was priest of God Most High, who blessed Abraham, and to whom Abraham gave a tenth of the best (see Gen. 14:19-20). There is much mystery about him. The author said he was without genealogy, made like the Son of God, and remained a priest continually. Some think he was the Christ, but I disagree. The author gave reasons for Melchizedek's superiority to Abraham and to the Levites (who were the high priests), thus arguing for the superiority of the priesthood of Christ over the Levitical priesthood. He said Christ became a priest, "**not according to a law of a carnal commandment [like the law of Moses], but according to the power of an indestructible life**" (Heb. 7:16). Jesus' life was indestructible because he remained without sin.

The author said the preceding commandment (the Law of Moses with its priestly system) became annulled because of its weakness, for the law made nothing fully perfect. He said we have a better hope through which we approach God. He said Jesus had become the surety of a better covenant. He said the former priests were many because of death, but Jesus remains into the age (forever). He is always alive to intercede on behalf of those who come to God through him. Moreover, there is no longer a need for continual sacrifices for sins, since he did that once for all when he offered up himself (the perfect and complete sacrifice requiring no other). Furthermore, he said, "**But now he has obtained a superior ministry, by so much as he is also the mediator of a superior covenant, which has been enacted upon superior promises**" (Heb. 8:6).

Then he quoted what Jehovah said in the book of Jeremiah (31:31-34) about a new covenant with the houses of Israel and Judah. Jehovah said he would put his laws in their mind, and write them on their hearts. And all would know him, from their small as far as their great. (They would all know him because each one had to learn about him first. That means it is not a covenant based on biological inheritance, but on willful choice.) Jehovah also said he would no longer remember their sins.

After that the author mentioned the ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary of the first covenant. He described some of the things of the tabernacle (the first house of God). And he told

about the annual blood offering of the high priest in the holy place that contained the ark of the covenant. He said that signified from the Holy Spirit that the way into the holy things was not to be made known while the first tabernacle stood. And that, he said, was a figure for the present time (meaning this life). However, Christ entered into the more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (meaning heavenly) with the offering of his own blood for eternal redemption. Hence he is mediator of a new covenant, with redemption and the promise of the eternal inheritance for those who are called (meaning believers).

He spoke further about the use of blood in the tabernacle service. And he said, “**... almost all things, according to the law, are cleansed with blood, and remission does not occur without bloodshed**” (Heb. 9:22). He said the Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, representative of the true, but into heaven itself. And there is no longer the annual offering for sins, which was merely a reminder of them. For the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins. And he quoted the scripture that says it was not burnt offerings that God wanted, but (he expressed with poetic words) obedient self-sacrifice (see Psa. 40:6-8).

In other words, the bloodshed God requires for remission of sins is figurative; meaning a life of obedient self-sacrifice. He said it was the perfect one-time offering of the Christ that has fully perfected forever those being sanctified. The shedding of Christ’s blood on the cross was the culmination of his perfect life of obedient self-sacrifice. That way he earned the right to redeem his disciples, something nobody else is capable of. It was the wage God gave him for his perfect life of obedient self-sacrifice (see Rev. 5:9). And everybody who wants to be his disciple must strive to live the same way.

The author then repeated God’s words in the book of Jeremiah about putting his laws in their hearts, and no longer remembering their sins. And the author said, “**Now where there is remission of these, there is no more offering for sin**” (Heb. 10:18). He was speaking about eternal condemnation for sin, and not chastening for guilt. For the author later tells how God chastens those he loves.

Then the author encouraged the brothers to have boldness for entrance into the holy things (heaven), and approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and bodies washed in pure water. He said, “**Let us**

hold firm the affirmation of the hope unwavering, for he who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:23).

He said we should examine each other for provocation of love and good works. He said, “**For when we sin willfully after taking the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and of fire, a fervor that is going to devour the opposition**” (Heb. 10:26-27). He mentioned the death penalty of the law of Moses, and said there would be much worse punishment to him who tramples the Son of God, considers the blood of the covenant profane, and treats the Spirit of grace contemptuously. And he warned, “**For we know him who said, Vengeance is for me, I will repay, says the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God**” (Heb. 10:30-31). Dear reader, be wise and hearken to that warning.

Then he reminded them how they endured much suffering after they became enlightened, saying they were “**partly made a spectacle, both by reviling and afflictions, and partly having become companions of those so treated**” (Heb. 10:33). He told how they were compassionate about his bonds, and even accepted with joy the plundering of their possessions, knowing they had a superior and enduring existence in the heavens. He said they had need of perseverance, so that they might receive the promise.

Next he quoted the scripture that says the righteous man will live from faith (see Hab. 2:4). He said faith is the foundation of hoping, the evidence of events not being seen. He said, “**By faith we understand the ages to have been prepared by the word of God. For the things that are seen do not come to be from that which is visible**” (Heb. 11:3). And he gave many examples through history of faithful men, beginning with the antediluvian Abel, Enoch, and Noah.

He mentioned Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob living alien in the land of promise. He mentioned Sarah giving birth beyond the time of age. He said, “**All these died in faith, not having taken the promises, but who saw and greeted them from afar, and who confessed that they were foreigners and sojourners on the earth. For those who say such things show that they are seeking a fatherland**” (Heb. 11:13). He said they aspired for a superior land, a heavenly one. Therefore God was not

ashamed of them, to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

He mentioned the faith of Abraham offering Isaac, his only begotten son, when he was tested. He mentioned the blessings of Isaac and Jacob, and Joseph's command to take his bones when they left Egypt. He mentioned Moses' parents, and Moses himself, who chose the vilification of the Christ over the wealth of Egypt. He told how faith guided them through the Red sea, and brought down the walls of Jericho. He mentioned the faith of Rahab the harlot, who received the spies with peace.

He named several others, saying time would fail to tell of them, how through faith they conquered kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, closed the mouths of lions, quenched the force of fire, escaped the jaw of the sword, were made strong from weakness, became mighty in war, bowed down armies of aliens. He told how some were tortured, not accepting deliverance, some took a trial of mockings and scourgings, and moreover of bonds and imprisonment. Some were stoned, some sawed apart. He said, "**They wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, restricted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth**" (Heb. 11:37-38).

He said all those were well reported through faith, yet did not receive the promise, God having foreseen something superior concerning us, so that without us they would not be made fully perfect. He said that with such a great cloud of witnesses around us, we should put off every weight and cleverly entangling sin, and run by perseverance the contest set before us. And we should look to Jesus the path-finder and perfecter of the faith, who endured the cross, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

He said we should not be weary in our souls, for we had not yet resisted as far as blood, struggling against sin. He said, "**And have ye forgotten the exhortation that reasons with you as with sons, My son, do not disparage the chastening of the Lord, nor become disheartened when punished by him? For whom the Lord loves he chastens. And he whips every son whom he receives**" (Heb.

12:5-6). He said no chastening at the time seems joyful but sorrowful, yet afterward it yields peaceable fruit of righteousness to those trained by it. One of the great mistakes of recent times has been to virtually outlaw corporal punishment.

He told them to therefore lift up the drooping hands and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for their feet. He told them to pursue peace with all men. He warned against any root of bitterness sprouting up to cause trouble. He said they had not come to a fearful burning mountain (as at Sinai when the law was given), but to a festal gathering of firstborn sons enrolled in the heavens, and to God, a Judge of all, and to Jesus a mediator of a new covenant. He warned them not to refuse him who speaks from the heavens (the Christ). He said, "**For our God is also a consuming fire**" (Heb. 12:29).

Then he gave some brief instructions about how to live right, such as, loving strangers, remembering the prisoners (those persecuted for Christ), not defiling the marriage bed, not loving money, remembering those who lead them. He told them not to be carried away by various and foreign doctrines. He told how the sacrificial beasts, whose blood was brought into the holy things for sin by the high priest, was burned outside the camp. He said, "**Therefore Jesus also, so that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered outside the gate. Let us therefore go forth to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. For here we have no enduring city, but we seek that which is coming**" (Heb. 13:12-14). He said they should offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually. And he said not to forget benevolence and fellowship. He told them to have confidence in those who led them, and to pray for the author and his companions. He called for the God of peace to make them fully qualified in every good work through Jesus Christ.

He ended the book, "**And I urge you, brothers, bear with the word of exhortation, for I also wrote to you in brief. Know ye, brother Timothy who was set free is with whom I will see you, if he comes sooner. Salute all those who lead you, and all the sanctified. The men from Italy salute you. Grace is with you all. Truly.**"

A Description of **James**

James said he was a bondman of God and Christ, and was writing to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion. Much of what he wrote is good advice about living. He first advised, “**Consider it all joy, my brothers, when ye encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces perseverance**” (James 1:2-3). He told them to let perseverance have a perfect work, so they might be perfect and complete.

Then he said if any of them lacked wisdom, he should ask God who gives to all generously, and it would be given him. However, he must ask in faith without doubt. He told the lowly brother to boast in his exaltation, but the rich in his lowliness. He said the rich man would fade away among his pursuits. After that he said, “**Blessed is a man who endures temptation, because, having become approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to those who love him**” (James 1:12). He also said no man should say he was tempted by God, for God tempts no man, and cannot himself be tempted. He said each man is tempted by his own lust. When lust is conceived it gives birth to sin, and when sin is complete it brings forth death. Then he warned, “**Be not led astray, my beloved brothers**” (James 1:16).

He said every good gift and every perfect endowment was from the Father of lights. Then he said every man should be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. He told them to put off all filthiness and profusion of evil, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save their souls. He told them to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving themselves. He said the religion of a man with an unbridled tongue was futile. He said, “**Pure religion and undefiled from God and the Father is this, to go help the orphaned and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world**” (James 1:27).

Then he told them not to have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ in favoritism. He said it was wrong to give a special welcome to a rich man, but slight a poor man. He told how (as a class) God chose the poor of the world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, but the rich were oppressive and blasphemous. He said when they respect personages, they work sin. And he said to them, “**So speak ye, and so do ye, as men who are to be judged by a**

law of liberty. For the judgment is merciless to him who did no mercy” (James 2:12-13).

He also spoke about faith and works: “**What is the benefit, my brothers, if some man should say to have faith, but has no works? Can the faith save him? And if a brother or sister may be unclothed, and may be destitute of daily food, and some man of you would say to them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and fed, but ye would not give them the things necessary for the body, what is the benefit?**” (James 2:14-16).

He said faith without works is dead. He taught against salvation by faith only (belief without works), for he said, “**Thou believe that there is one God, thou do well. The demons also believe, and shudder**” (James 2:19). And he told how Abraham’s works perfected his faith. He said, “**Ye see therefore that from works a man is made righteous, and not from faith only**” (James 2:24). He also gave the example of Rahab the harlot, and again he said that faith without works is dead. Belief in faith only is one of the great errors of modern times; millions of souls have been led astray by those who teach it.

After that James said we all stumble in many things. And he said the man who did not stumble in word was a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body. He told how hard it is to control the tongue, and what a great fire it can kindle. He said, “**By it we bless the God and Father, and by it we curse men, who were made according to a likeness of God**” (James 3:9). He said that ought not be.

Then he said for the wise and understanding among them to show by good behavior his works in meekness of wisdom. And he condemned envy and selfish ambition, saying where those things were was instability and every evil deed. He said wars and fightings were caused by their pleasures warring in their body-parts. He said they envy and cannot obtain, so they fight and make war. He said they did not have because they either did not ask, or asked wrongfully, to spend it on their pleasures.

He said friendship of the world is hatred of God, and whoever wants to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. He told them to be subordinate to God. And he told the sinners to cleanse their hands, purify their hearts, and be sorrowful, turning their laughter into mourning.

He told them not to boast about the future, for their life was like a fleeting vapor. And he told the rich to weep and howl for their miseries that were approaching. He told how they cheated their workmen, lived in luxury, and oppressed the righteous. He told his brothers to be patient like the farmer waiting for his crops, and he mentioned the prophets and Job. And he told them not to swear, but simply say yes or no.

He gave instructions about using the elders of the congregation to pray for those who were

depressed, and for their sins. He said a working supplication of a righteous man was very powerful, and he gave the example of Elijah who prayed it would not rain. It did not rain for three and a half years. He prayed again, and it rained.

James concluded, “**Brothers, if any man among you may be led astray from the truth, and some man converts him, let him know that he who converts a sinful man from his wandering way, will save a soul from death, and will hide a multitude of sins.”**

A Description of First Peter

The letter begins, “**Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the chosen who are sojourners of the Dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia ...**” He praised God, who begot us again, according to his abundant mercy, for a living hope, an imperishable inheritance in the heavens, by the resurrection of Christ. And he said, “**In which ye greatly rejoice, although made sorrowful in various trials. Since it is now necessary for a little while, so that the proof of your faith, much more precious than gold that perishes, and though proven by fire, may be found for praise and honor and for glory at the revealing of Jesus Christ**” (1Pe. 1:6-7).

He mentioned how the prophets foretold the sufferings in Christ, and the glories after those things. And he told them to gird up the loins of their mind, be sober, and hope entirely for the grace brought to them when Christ is revealed. He said as children of obedience they should not fashion themselves in the former desires of their ignorance, but to be holy as God is holy. He said, “**And if ye call on a Father, him who judges impartially according to each man’s work, live the time of your sojourn in fear**” (1Pe. 1:17). He said they were redeemed from their vain behavior by the precious blood of Christ.

He said they were men who had purified their souls in obedience of the truth, and they should love each other fervently from a pure heart. He said that having put off all evil and deceit and evil speaking, as newborn babes, they should long for the genuine intellectual milk, so they might grow by it. He said they should be living stones like Christ, who was rejected by men, but chosen by God as the chief corner stone. He called them a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for an acquired possession (we were purchased by Christ).

He told them to abstain from the fleshly lusts, which warred against their soul. He said, “**Having your behavior good among the Gentiles, so that, upon which they speak against you as evil-doers, they may glorify God in the day of visitation, from having observed your good works**” (1Pe. 2:12). He said because of the Lord they should submit to every human establishment, whether a king or governors sent by him for vengeance of evildoers and praise of well-doers. He said they were free men, but should not use their freedom as a cover-up of evil, but as bondmen of God.

He said, “**Respect all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Respect the king**” (1Pe. 2:17). He told household servants to submit to their masters, even if they suffered wrongfully (God will avenge). And he mentioned the suffering of Christ as an example. He told wives to be subordinate to their own husbands, and he mentioned Sarah, who obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. He told husbands to apportion worth to the female as joint-heirs of the grace of life. He said they were the weaker vessel.

Then he said, “**And finally, all be like-minded, sympathetic, brother-loving, compassionate, friendly, not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but instead giving praise, knowing that ye were called for this, so that ye might inherit a blessing. For he who wants to love life, and see good days, let him restrain his tongue from evil, and his lips not to speak deceit. Let him turn away from evil, and do good. Let him seek peace, and pursue it. Because the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and his ears to their supplication, but the face of the Lord is against men who do evil things**” (1Pe. 3:8-12).

Those words about loving life are similar to what is written in Psalm 34. Peter said even if they suffered for righteousness they were blessed. He said, “**Having a good conscience, so that, in what they speak against you as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed, those who revile your good behavior in Christ**” (1Pe. 3:16). And he mentioned the example of the suffering of Christ, who is now at the right hand of God in heaven. He mentioned how Noah was saved through water, and in the same way immersion now saves us. He said they should not live in debauchery, but be serious and sober for the prayers. And he told them to have fervent love for each other, “**because love will cover a multitude of sins**” (1Pe. 4:9). And he said for them to use whatever gifts they had as good stewards of the manifold grace of God, so that God may be glorified in all things through Christ.

Then he said, “**Beloved, ye should not be surprised at the fieriness in you, which occurs for a trial to you, like a strange thing happening to you**” (1Pe. 4:12). He told them to rejoice that they

were partakers in the sufferings of the Christ, so they might rejoice with exceeding joy when his glory is revealed. He said they were blessed if they were reviled for the name of Christ. And he spoke of the judgment.

Then, as a fellow elder, he exhorted the elders among them. He told them to tend the flock of God among them, not domineering, but becoming examples. Likewise the younger men should be subordinate to the elder men. And all should be subordinate to each other with humility. And he warned, “**Be sober, be vigilant. Your opponent the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom to devour**” (1Pe. 5:8). He said the same sufferings were accomplished in the world by their brotherhood. And he said the God of all grace would strengthen them.

He said he wrote to them by the faithful brother Silvanus; Peter was illiterate (see Acts 4:13). He concluded, “**Salute each other by a kiss of love. Peace to you, to all those in Christ Jesus. Truly.**”

A Description of Second Peter

The letter begins, “**Simon Peter, a bondman and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received an equally precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.**” He said the precious and greatest promises had been given to us, so that we might become companions of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption in the world in lust.

He told them to apply all eagerness, and furnish in their faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, piety, brotherly affection, and love. He said, “**For these things existing in you and abounding, it leads to not being idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ**” (2Pe. 1:8). He told them to be diligent to make their calling and selection sure, and so be furnished with the entrance into the eternal kingdom of Christ.

He said he would not neglect to always remind them about those things. He said the putting off of his tent (death) was imminent, as Jesus indicated to him (see John 21:18). Therefore, he would endeavor to provide the memory (by letters) of those things to apply. He said they were not men who followed in cunningly devised myths, but were eyewitnesses of the majesty of Christ. And he told about hearing the

voice of God on the holy mountain (see Mat. 3:17), that said “**This is my Son, the beloved in whom I am well pleased**” (2Pe. 1:17).

Then he said, “**Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture comes to pass of a personal interpretation**” (2Pe. 1:20). The goal of interpreting the word of God is to reveal truth; it cannot be a personal matter. Scientists learned that about discovering the laws of nature long ago. Peter said holy men of God spoke by the Holy Spirit. And he warned them about false prophets developing among them, who would sneak in pernicious denominations, even denying the Master who bought them (Jesus). He said many would follow their wantonness, because of whom the way of truth would be blasphemed.

He told how God delivered (heavenly) agents who sinned to chains of darkness, having been cast into hell. And he told about the great flood, and about Sodom and Gomorrah. He also told how God rescued righteous Lot, who was anguished over their lawlessness. He said God holds in reserve unrighteous men for the day of judgment, especially “**those going rear of flesh in a degenerate lust [homosexuals], and who despise lordship. Reck-**

less, self-willed men, they do not tremble when speaking evil of dignities” (2Pe. 2:10). He said they were like irrational beasts, born for capture and destruction.

He said those men were waterless wells, and clouds driven by a fierce wind, for whom the gloom of darkness has been reserved. He said they use swollen things of vanity to entice (to sensuality) those who had escaped from those living in error. He said they promised freedom, but were themselves bondmen of corruption. He said those who had escaped the defilements of the world by knowledge of Christ, but had again become entangled in those, were worse off. They were like the dog returning to his own vomit, and the washed sow wallowing in mire.

He warned them of scoffers that would come afterward, wanting to know where was the promise of his coming. He said the heavens and the earth were being preserved for fire in a day of judgment

and destruction of irreverent men. He said, “**But beloved, let not this one thing be ignored by you, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day**” (2Pe. 3:8). He said the Lord was not slack about his promise, but was patient, not wanting any to perish, but all to go forward to repentance. And he warned them of the coming fiery disintegration of the earth.

He said, “**But we anticipate a new heavens and a new earth according to his promise, in which righteousness dwells**” (2Pe. 3:13). And he encouraged them to be diligent, and consider the longsuffering of our Lord, salvation. He mentioned their beloved brother Paul, whose letters had some things hard to understand, which the ignorant twist, as also the other scriptures, to their own destruction. And he told them to keep watch, and grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, to whom is the glory both now and into the day of the age (forever).

A Description of First John

The author does not identify himself. However, the ancient church patriarchs said this and the next two letters were written by the apostle John. And I see no reason to dispute it. Like Hebrews this letter contains no salutation. It simply begins, “**What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon, and our hands touched, concerning the Word of life (and the life was made known, and we have seen, and testify, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father, and was made known to us), what we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that ye also may have fellowship with us. Even also our fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we write these things to you, so that our joy may be made full.”**

He said God was light with no darkness. And if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Christ cleanses us from every sin. He said if we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he will forgive and cleanse us.

John said he wrote those things so that we might not sin. And if any man does sin, Jesus Christ is our advocate with the father. He said, “**And he is the atonement for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world**” (1Jo. 2:2). He said if we

keep his commandments then we know that we know him. And if any man says he knows him, but does not keep his commandments, he is a liar. He said whoever claims to abide in him ought to walk just as that man (Jesus) walked.

John next spoke somewhat of a riddle. He said, “**Brothers, I write no new commandment to you . . . Again, a new commandment I write to you**” (1Jo. 2:7-8). He said the old commandment was the word (the teachings of Christ) they heard from the beginning. Perhaps he meant it was a new commandment in the sense that Jesus’ emphasis on love was new. John said that any man who loves his brother abides in the light, but he who hates his brother is in the darkness.

After that he wrote words of encouragement separately to each of four groups, whom he called, little children, fathers, children, and young men. Then he told them not to love the world or the things in the world. He said if any man loves the world, the love of the Father was not in him. Next he spoke of the antichrist, and told who he was. He said, “**Who is the liar if not he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son**” (1Jo. 2:22).

John said every man doing righteousness has been begotten of him. Then he said, “**Behold what**

kind of love the Father has given to us, that we may be called children of God. Because of this the world does not know you, because it did not know him” (1Jo. 3:1). He said when he is made known we will be like him, because we will see him as he is. And every man having this hope purifies himself, just as that man is pure.

He said every man doing sin does lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness. He said every man who is sinning has neither seen him nor known him. And he said whoever is doing righteousness is righteous, just as that man is righteous. He said whoever is doing evil is of the devil, and the Son of God was made known so that he might destroy the works of the devil.

He said the message they heard from the beginning was that we should love each other. And he told them not to marvel if the world hates them. He said, “**We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers**” (1Jo. 3:14). He said every man hating his brother was a man-killer. He said love meant laying down our lives for the brothers, because he laid down his life for us. He said we should share with a brother in need, and love in deed and truth, not in word only. He said whatever we may ask we will receive from him, when we keep his commandments and do things pleasing in his sight. He said his commandment was that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love each other.

Then he said, “**Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but examine the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world**” (1Jo. 4:1). He said every spirit not confessing Jesus Christ has come in flesh is not of God. He said, “**They are of the world. Because of this they speak of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us. He who is not of God does not hear us**” (1Jo. 4:5-6). That is a very simple test of who is of God or not.

And again he said we should love each other. He said whoever does not love does not love God, because God is love (agape love). He said if we love each other, God abides in us. He also said, “**Fear is not in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear holds punishment, and he who is afraid has not been fully perfected in love**” (1Jo. 4:18). We are commanded to fear God (see Luk. 12:5 and 1Pe. 2:17). What John must have meant was the dread of being harmed, and not the healthy fear of anything of great power, like power lines or dynamite. Then he said we love him because he first loved us.

John said, “**By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we may keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome**” (1Jo. 5:2-3). And he said the victory that overcomes the world is our faith. He said if we accept the testimony of men (and it is impossible not to), the testimony of God is greater. John said whoever does not accept God’s testimony about his Son has made him a liar. He said, “**And this is the testimony, that God gave eternal life to us, and this life is in his Son**” (1Jo. 5:11). The miraculous life and resurrection of Christ, and his gift of eternal life to us, is God’s testimony.

John said he wrote those things to those who believe in the name of the Son of God, so they might know they have eternal life. He also said if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us, and whatever we ask, we know we have our requests. Then he spoke of sins toward death, and those not toward death, the meaning of which is not clear. Perhaps a sin toward death is one that leads to eternal condemnation, for we all sin from time to time. John said we were of God, and the whole world is set in the evil. How true it is.

A Description of **Second John**

This letter says it was written by the elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom he loved in truth. That may refer to a church and not an individual, because she is unnamed. After the greeting, he said he rejoiced exceedingly that he found her children walking in truth. He mentioned the commandment they received from the beginning, that they should love each other. He said, “**And this is love, that we should walk according to his commandments**” (2Jo. 1:6).

He said many deceivers had gone forth into the world, those not acknowledging Christ. He said that

was the deceiver and the antichrist. He said to watch so they would not lose what they wrought, but might receive a full reward. Then he said, “**If any man comes to you, and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into a house, and do not speak to him to rejoice**” (2Jo. 1:10). He said he had many things, but did not want to write. He hoped to come and speak mouth to mouth. He concluded, “**The children of thy chosen sister salute thee. Truly.**” The chosen sister may refer to another church.

A Description of **Third John**

The letter begins, “**The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.**” John said he prayed for him to prosper and be healthy. He said he rejoiced exceedingly having heard of him, and that he walked in truth. He said, “**I have no greater joy than these things that I hear my children walking in truth**” (3Jo. 1:4). He said it was a faithful thing, whatever he would work for the brothers and for strangers, who testified about his love. For they went forth on behalf of the Name.

John said, “**I wrote to the congregation, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first of them, did not accept us**” (3Jo. 1:9). He said if he comes he will remember his works, prating against them with evil words, and also expelling the brothers out of the congregation. He said he had many things to write, but hoped to see him, and speak mouth to mouth. He concluded, “**Peace to thee. The friends salute thee. Salute the friends by name.**”

A Description of **Jude**

The letter begins, “**Jude, a bondman of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to the called, sanctified in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ.**” He said he needed to exhort them to earnestly content for the faith that was once for all delivered to the sanctified. He told about certain irreverent men who sneaked in, and were perverting the grace of God into licentiousness, as well as denying both God and the Lord Jesus. He reminded them how God afterward destroyed the people he saved out of Egypt. He also mentioned how the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, “**who went rear of queer flesh**” (Jude 1:7), underwent the punishment of eternal fire.

He said such men revile whatever they have not seen. He said, “**But whatever they understand naturally, as the irrational beasts, in these things they are corrupted**” (Jude 1:10). He uttered woe

against them, and said they were such things as, waterless clouds, wild waves of the sea, and wandering stars. He said, “**These are grumblers, fault-finders, going according to their lusts, and their mouth speaks overblown things, marveling personages for the sake of advantage**” (Jude 1:16). He reminded them that the apostles of our Lord Jesus warned about scoffers during the last time.

He encouraged them to build themselves up in their most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, keep themselves in the love of God, and await the mercy of our Lord Christ for eternal life. He ended, saying, “**Now to him who is able to keep them non-stumbling, and to present before his glory, unblemished in gladness, to the only wise God our Savior, is glory, majesty, dominion and power, both now and into all the ages. Truly.**”

A Description of **Revelation**

This is the last and the most difficult book in the Bible, for it is filled with symbolism. Hence, there are numerous theories about what many of the things in it mean. It can be said with confidence, however, that the book is about a great war, a war of super-cosmic scope. It is a war between God and his followers, and the many forces of evil, both spiritual and material. And we are all inescapably a part of it.

The book begins, “**The Revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave him to show his bondmen what must happen quickly. And he signified it, having sent by his agent to his bondman John who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, as many things as he saw. Blessed is he who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and who keep the things written in it, for the time is near.**”

John addressed the book to the seven congregations in Asia. He said he was their brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance in Christ. He said he had been on the isle called Patmos because of the word of God. He said he became in spirit on the Lord’s day (commonly believed to be Sunday), and he heard a great voice behind him like a trumpet. It told him to write in a book what he saw, and send it to the seven congregations, which were then named.

John said he turned to see the voice, and saw in the midst of seven golden lampstands somebody resembling a son of man. Then he described his appearance. He said he was clothed down to the foot, and girded about with a golden belt at the breasts. He said, “**And his head and hair were white as wool, white as snow, and his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet resembling highly refined metal, as in a furnace having been fiery hot, and his voice as the sound of many waters, and having in his right hand seven stars, and a sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth. And the sight of him was as the sun shines in its strength**” (Rev. 1:14-16).

John said he fell at his feet as dead (he must have fainted), but he laid his right hand on him, and said, “**Fear not, I am the first and the last, and he who lives. And I became dead, and behold, I am living into the ages of the ages. Truly. And I have the keys of death and of Hades**” (Rev. 1:17-18). Hence, that heavenly man was Jesus Christ. And since he is the exact image of the essence of God

(see Heb. 1:3) then John’s description of him reveals something about what God looks like, namely a magnificent supernatural man. That should not be surprising, because we are his offspring made in his image. Those are facts from scripture; any arguments otherwise are speculation.

He told John the seven stars in his hand were the agents of the congregations, and the seven golden lampstands were the congregations. Then he told him what to write to each of them. Jesus spoke to each congregation as if it were an individual. Now the gender of the Greek word for congregation is feminine, but since the English language is different, I will refer to each congregation as “it” and not “her.” Otherwise in English it would sound as if Jesus was speaking only to women. In historic (non-feminist) English, masculine terms can refer to males only or to both genders, depending upon the context, while feminine terms are specific to females. And I write with historic English.

The first thing Jesus said to each congregation was to describe something about himself, which was different each time. Then each time he said, “**I know thy works.**” And after judging each one, and giving different instructions to them, he said, “**He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the congregations.**” Notice that although Jesus had a body he referred to himself as the spirit. For those of the heavenly realm are called spirits, including God, since it is a spiritual realm. That does not mean the inhabitants of heaven (including God) are all spirits without bodies. A common error is to believe God is a spirit only, not having a body. At the end of his instructions for each congregation, Jesus described a different reward for him “who overcomes.”

The first congregation he spoke to was the one in Ephesus. He described some good things about it, but said it had left its first love. He told the church to repent and do the first works, otherwise he would move its lampstand out of its place.

The second congregation was in Smyrna. He said he knew their poverty, but said they were rich. He told them not to fear the trial they were going to suffer a while from the devil.

The next congregation was in Pergamos. He said it dwelt where Satan’s throne was, but he no doubt meant on earth and not just that one place. He com-

plimented its endurance, but he had a few things against some of them. He told it to repent or he would war against them with the sword of his mouth.

Next was the congregation in Thyatira. He also complimented them, but rebuked them for tolerating the woman Jezebel who called herself a prophetess and taught them to sin. He said since she refused to repent, he was going to afflict her and all with her. He told the others to hold firm what they had until he came.

The fifth congregation was in Sardis. He said it had a name of being alive, but was dead, and he warned them to repent. He said it had a few names who were worthy, and they would walk with him in white.

The sixth congregation was in Philadelphia. He complimented them because they remained faithful, and he said, "**Because thou keep the word of my perseverance, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole inhabited world, to try those who dwell upon the earth**" (Rev. 3:10).

The last congregation was in Laodicea. He said it was lukewarm, and he was going to spew it from his mouth. He said it boasted of being rich and needing nothing, but knew not that it was wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. He counseled it to buy from him gold refined from fire, so they could cover and treat themselves. He said, "**As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent**" (Rev. 3:19).

The list of things Jesus said about himself to those churches is as follows:

- "**These things says he who holds the seven stars in his right hand, he who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands**" (Rev 2:1).
- "**These things says the first and the last, who became dead, and lived**" (Rev 2:8).
- "**These things says he who has the sharp two-edged sword**" (Rev 2:12).
- "**These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet resembling highly refined metal**" (Rev 2:18).
- "**These things says he who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars**" (Rev 3:1).
- "**These things says the Holy, the True, he who has the key of David, who opens, and none**

will shut it except he who opens, and none will open" (Rev 3:7).

- "**These things says the Truly, the faithful and true witness, the primacy of the creation of God**" (Rev 3:14).

The list of all the blessings that Jesus mentioned to him who conquers is as follows:

- Be allowed to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God.
- Be given a crown of life.
- Not be hurt by the second death.
- Be given the hidden manna.
- Be given a new name that nobody else knows.
- Be given power to rule over the nations.
- Be given the morning star.
- Be clad in white garments.
- Not have his name blotted from the book of life.
- Have his name confessed by Jesus before his Father and his agents.
- Will make him a pillar in the temple of his God.
- Will write on him the names of his God, the new Jerusalem, and Jesus' own new name.
- Jesus will dine with him, and will grant him to sit with him on his throne.

Next John said, "**After these things I looked, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will show thee what must happen after these things**" (Rev. 4:1). He said he straightforwardly became in spirit, and saw a throne in heaven, and him sitting upon it. He said there were twenty-four thrones around the throne, with twenty-four elders clothed in white and having golden crowns. He said lightnings and voices and thunders proceeded out of the throne. And there were seven lamps of fire before it, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Then he described four beings around the throne, one like a lion, one like a young bull, one with the face of a man, and one like a flying eagle. He said they never ceased praising God. The twenty-four elders also fell down and worshiped him, saying, "**Thou are worthy, our Lord and God, the Holy, to take the glory and the honor and the power, because thou created all things, and because by thy will they are, and were created**" (Rev. 4:11).

Then he saw a book at the right hand of him on the throne. It was written inside and out, and was sealed with seven seals. At first nobody was found worthy to open the book, and John said he wept

much. However, one of the elders said the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, overcame to open the book. Then John saw in the midst of the throne, a Lamb standing, like it had been killed. It had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

When he took the book the four beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before him, and they sang a new song. They said he was worthy, because he was killed, and he purchased "us" (his disciples) from God by his blood out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. They said he made them kings and priests to our God. After that John looked, and heard as a voice of many agents all around the throne and the beings and the elders. The number of them was thousands and ten thousands, and they praised the Lamb. And every creature in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, praised him who sits upon the throne and the Lamb into the ages of the ages. The four beings said the Truly, and the elders fell down and worshiped.

When the Lamb opened one of the seals there was a white horse, and "**he who sits on it having a bow**" (Rev. 6:2). He was given a crown, and went forth conquering. After opening the second seal, there was a fiery red horse, and its rider was given a great sword so that he would take peace from the earth, and they would kill each other. When the third seal was opened there was a black horse, whose rider had a balance in his hand. When the fourth seal was opened there was a green horse, and his rider was named Death. And authority was given him over a fourth part of the earth to kill.

When the fifth seal was opened John said he saw under the altar the souls of those who had been killed because of the word of God, and because of the testimony of the Lamb that they held. And they cried out, saying, "**Master, Holy and True, how long do thou not judge and avenge our blood from those who dwell on the earth?**" (Rev. 6:10). They were told to still rest a time, until the time of their fellow bondmen, and brothers, and those going to be killed as they too, would be fulfilled.

When the sixth seal was opened a great earthquake and some other terrible things occurred, and the sky departed as a scroll being rolled up. And the men of the earth, the great and small, hid themselves in the caves and rocks to hide from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of his wrath had come.

After that John saw four agents standing at the four corners of the earth, restraining the four winds. Another agent cried out not to harm the earth, sea,

or trees, until the bondmen of God were sealed on their foreheads. The number of those sealed was 12,000 each from the twelve tribes of Israel, totaling 144,000.

After that John saw a great multitude that none could number, out of every people, clothed in white robes, standing before the throne and the Lamb. They praised God and the Lamb. And all the agents, elders, and the four beings, fell down and worshiped. John said those in white robes were those who came out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. He said because of that they are before his throne, and serve him continually. He said they would suffer no more, for God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

When the seventh seal was opened there was silence in heaven "**like half an hour**" (Rev. 8:1). Then there were seven agents standing before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. John told about a golden censer, and incense with the prayers of the sanctified, which ascended, and fire from the altar that was cast to the earth.

When the first trumpet sounded hail and fire mixed with blood were cast upon the earth, and a third part of it was burnt up. After the second agent sounded, something like a great burning mountain was cast into the sea. And the third part of the creatures there died, and the third part of ships were destroyed. After the third agent sounded a great star fell from heaven burning like a torch, and the third part of the waters developed into wormwood oil, killing many men who drank from the waters. When the fourth agent sounded, the third part of the sun, moon, and stars were darkened. Then John said he looked, and saw an eagle flying, saying in a great voice, "**Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth from the remaining sounds of the trumpet of the three agents who are going to sound**" (Rev. 8:13).

When the fifth agent sounded John saw a star fall from the sky, and the key of the pit of the abyss was given to him. When he opened the pit, smoke ascended out of it, darkening the sun and the air. Locusts came out of the smoke, and they were given power like scorpions to torment men who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. John described their appearance, and said one woe was departed, two more were to come.

When the sixth agent sounded John said he heard a voice telling the sixth agent to loose the four agents bound at the great river Euphrates. They were loosed for a time to kill the third part of men.

John said the armies of horsemen there were ten thousands of ten thousands, and he described the horses that killed the men. He said the rest of the men still did not repent of their evil deeds.

John saw another mighty agent come down out of heaven, which placed his right foot on the sea, and his left on the earth. He also raised his right hand to heaven, and swore by the Creator that time would be no more. That agent said when the seventh agent sounded, the mystery of God was finished. Then a voice from heaven told John to take and eat the book that had been opened in the hand of that agent. He was told it would make his belly bitter, but would be sweet as honey in his mouth. John said he was also told to prophesy again to many peoples.

After that John told of the Lord's two witnesses who would prophesy for three and a half years clothed in sackcloth. He said they had authority to devour their enemies with fire and to bring plagues. Then the beast that ascends out of the abyss would kill them. And those on the earth would rejoice and celebrate, because those two prophets tormented them. However, after three and a half days the spirit of God would revive them, and they would ascend up into heaven. After which many would be killed by a great earthquake. The rest would fear and give glory to God. John said the second woe departed, and the third woe was coming quickly. Then the twenty-four elders fell on their faces and worshiped and thanked God.

After that John saw a great sign in heaven. It was a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars upon her head. And she cried out with birth pains. He saw another sign in heaven, which was a great fiery dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. He cast the third part of the stars of the sky upon the earth, and stood before the woman waiting to devour her child. John said she gave birth to a son, who was going to tend all nations with a rod of iron, and he was taken up to God and to his throne. Hence, the child must have been Jesus. The woman fled into the wilderness, to a place prepared by God, for three and a half years.

After that John said war developed in heaven. Michael and his agents fought the dragon. John said, **"And the great dragon was cast out, the ancient serpent, called the Devil and Satan, he who leads the whole world astray. He was cast out to the earth, and his agents were cast out with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now it came to pass, the salvation, and the power, and**

the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. Because the accuser of our brothers was cast out, who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony. And they loved not their life to the point of death. Rejoice because of this, O heavens, and ye who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has little time" (Rev. 12:9-12). When the dragon saw he was cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male, but God protected her. However, the dragon went to make war on the remnant of her seed, those keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus.

After that John stood on the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rising up out of it. It also had ten horns and seven heads, but it had ten diadems on its horns. On its heads were names of blasphemy. John said it was similar to a leopard, a bear, and a lion. He said the dragon gave to it his power, his throne, and great authority. One of its heads appeared to have a deadly wound but was healed. The whole earth worshiped the dragon and the beast. And they wondering who could war against the beast. The beast blasphemed God and those who dwell in heaven. It was also given to make war with the sanctified, and to overcome them. Then John spoke words of encouragement for the sanctified.

After that John saw another beast coming up out of the earth. It had two horns similar to a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. And it made all on earth worship the first beast. It also did great signs to lead men astray, and told them to make an image of the first beast. It also made all who would not worship the image be killed. And it made all give them marks on their right hand, or on their foreheads, so that no man could buy or sell who did not have the mark. John said the number of the beast was 666.

Then John said he saw the Lamb standing on the mount Zion with 144,000 having its name and the name of his father on their foreheads. And he heard them sing a new song before the throne. He said they had been redeemed from the earth. He said they had not defiled themselves with women, and they follow the Lamb.

Next John said he saw three agents. One proclaimed to the inhabitants of the earth to fear God and worship him. The second said Babylon the great had fallen, who had given all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. The third

said that any man who worships the beast and its image, and who receives its mark would be tormented with fire and brimstone into the ages of the ages. Then John said, “**And I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, says the Spirit, so that they may rest from their toils, and their works follow with them**” (Rev. 14:13).

After that he said he saw a white cloud, and like a son of man sitting upon it, having a golden crown and a sharp sickle. He said another agent came out of the temple, and cried out to him on the cloud to put forth his sickle and reap, because the harvest of the earth was ripe. Therefore he did. Then another agent with a sickle came out from the temple in heaven and also reaped. John said he cast the vintage into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And blood came out up to the bridles of horses, as far as two hundred miles.

Then John said, “**And I saw like a glassy sea mingled with fire, and those who were victorious over the beast and over its image and over the number of its name, standing on the glassy sea, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the bondman of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the nations. Who will, no, not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, because thou alone are holy? Because all the nations will come and worship before thee, because thy righteous deeds were made known**” (Rev 15:2-4).

Next John said he saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous. He said it was seven agents having the seven plagues, which were the last, ending the wrath of God. Then he saw those who were victorious over the beast and its image and the number of its name, having harps of God, and singing praise to God.

After those things John saw the seven agents coming from the temple having the seven plagues. One of the four beings gave the agents seven golden bowls containing the wrath of God, and a voice from the temple told them to pour them out on the earth. When the first agent poured, a bad and evil sore developed on the men having the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image. When the second was poured, the sea became like the blood of a dead man, and every living soul in the sea died. The third bowl caused the springs of waters to become blood. And John heard the agent praise God for

being righteous to judge them that way. He said they deserved it, because they had shed the blood of his sanctified and prophets. And the altar said, “**Yea, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments**” (Rev. 16:7). The fourth agent poured his bowl on the sun, and men were scorched with great heat. Yet they blasphemed the name of God, and did not repent to give him glory.

The fifth agent poured out on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom became darkened. They too blasphemed God from their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their works. The sixth agent poured out on the great river Euphrates, which dried up the water to prepare the way of the kings. Then he saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon. John said they were spirits of demons, doing signs to gather the kings of the world to the battle of the great day of Almighty God. And he gathered them to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

The seventh agent poured out upon the air, and there were lightnings, thunders, voices, and a great earthquake. Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And John said great hail fell down, and men blasphemed God because the plague of it was exceedingly great.

After that John said one of the agents who had the seven bowls came to him, and said, “**Come, I will show thee the judgment of the great whore who sits upon the many waters with whom the kings of the earth fornicated, and those who inhabit the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication**” (Rev. 17:1-2). He took John into a wilderness, and he saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast containing names of blasphemy, and having seven heads and ten horns. She was adorned luxuriously, and had a golden cup containing abominations and the filthy things of her fornication. Upon her forehead was a name written, “**MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF WHORES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH**” (Rev. 17:5). She was also drunk from the blood of the sanctified and the witnesses of Jesus. John said he wondered with great amazement when he saw her.

Then the agent said he would tell him the mystery of the woman and the beast that carries her. However, his explanation is very difficult to understand. He said the seven heads were seven mountains, and there were seven kings. He said the horns were ten kings who would war against the Lamb, but he would conquer them. He said the waters were

peoples and nations. He said the ten horns would eventually hate and destroy her. For God would give it in their hearts to do his will. He said the woman was the great city having reign over the kings of the earth. What all of that means, however, is very controversial.

After those things another agent came down out of heaven having great authority. And he cried out in a mighty voice that Babylon the great had fallen and became a habitation of demons and every unclean spirit. Another voice from heaven said, "**Come out from her, my people, so that ye may not participate with her sins, and that ye may not receive from her plagues. Because her sins have reached as far as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities**" (Rev. 18:4-5). He said, "**In an amount she glorified herself and lived wantonly, give her so much torment and grief, because she says in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and will, no, not see grief**" (Rev. 18:7). The voice said her plagues would come in one day, and she would be utterly burned with fire. Then he described in much detail the loss of all her wealth, and how all associated with her would mourn and lament when they saw her destruction.

John said after those things he heard a great sound of a large multitude in heaven, saying, "**Praise the Lord, the salvation, and the power, and the glory of our God! Because true and righteous are his judgments, because he has judged the great whore who ruined the earth by her fornication, and he has avenged the blood of his bondmen from her hand**" (Rev. 19:1-2). And other praises were given to God.

They also mentioned the marriage of the Lamb. His wife was given fine linen, which John said were the righteous deeds of the sanctified. And John was told, "**Write, Blessed are those who have been called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb**" (Rev. 19:9). He was told those were true saying of God. John said when he fell down to worship the agent, he forbade him, for he was a fellow bondman. He told him to worship God.

After that John said he saw heaven opened, and a white horse whose rider was called Faithful and True, and he judges and makes war in righteousness. His eyes were a flame of fire, and on his head were many diadems having names written. He was clothed in a garment dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God. The armies of heaven followed him on white horses. John said further, "**And a sharp two-edged sword comes out of his**

mouth, so that he would smite the nations by it. And he will tend them with a rod of iron. And he treads the winepress of the wine of the wrath of the anger of the Almighty God. And he has on his garment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:15-16).

John said another agent cried out to all the birds to gather to the great supper of God, and feed on the flesh of all men, both great and small. Then he saw the beast, and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war with him who sits upon the horse and with his army. But the beast, and the false prophet who did the signs to lead astray those with the mark of the beast, were thrown alive into the lake of fire. The others were killed by the sword that comes from his mouth (of him on the horse), and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Next John said he saw an agent come down from heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain. He seized the dragon, the old serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, who leads the whole world astray, and bound him a thousand years so he would no longer lead the nations astray. John said he saw thrones, and the souls of the martyred of Jesus, and those who did not worship the beast or its image. They lived and reigned with the Christ the thousand years. He said the rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years were ended.

John said when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed out of his prison. And he will lead astray the nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them to the battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They surrounded the encampment of the sanctified and the beloved city, but fire came forth from heaven and devoured them. Then the devil was also cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and the false prophet were. John said, "**And they will be tormented day and night into the ages of the ages**" (Rev. 20:10).

After that John said he saw a great white throne, and him who sits upon it. He saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened, one of which was (the book) of life. John said the dead were judged from the things written in the books, according to their works. And if any man was found not written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Next John said he saw a new sky and a new earth, for the first ones passed away. He also saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It had been prepared as a bride

adorned for her husband. And he heard a great voice from heaven, saying, “**Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And there will not be any more death, nor grief, nor crying, nor will there be any more anguish, because the former things are gone**” (Rev. 21:3-4).

John said God told him that he who overcomes would inherit those things, and would be a son to him. But cowards, and the unbelieving, and the sinful, and abominable, and murderers, and all such evil men, would have their part in the lake of fire, which is the second death.

Then one of the seven agents who had the seven bowls of the last plagues told John he would show him the woman, the bride of the Lamb. And he showed John the great city, holy Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. And he described the beauty of it, with its gold and precious stones. He said there was no temple, because God and the Lamb were the temple of it. It also did not need the sun, for the glory of God and the Lamb illuminated it. He said they would bring the splendor and the worth of the nations into it. However, nothing profane or abominable would enter into it, because they were not written in the Lamb’s book of life. He also showed John a pure river of water of life, coming out from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Then the agent told John that those words were faithful and true.

Next the Lord said, “**Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to render to each man as his work will be. I, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those doing his commandments, so that their right will be to the tree of life, and they may enter in the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every man who loves and makes a lie.**

“**I, Jesus, have sent my agent to testify these things to you for the congregations. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he who hears, let him say, Come. And he who is thirsty, let him come. He who desires, let him take the water of life freely**” (Rev. 22:12-17). That probably means God is inviting every soul who desires the hope of eternal life in heaven to partake of it. However since salvation is available only through Jesus, we must be an obedient disciple of Christ to have that hope. And it must be done in this life, for there is no promise of hope afterward.

Then John told of a curse against any man who adds to, or takes from, the words of the prophecy of the book. He ended the book with these words: “**He who testifies these things says, Yea, I come quickly. Truly. Yea, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus is with all the sanctified. Truly.**”

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