

The Bible - Its 66 Books In Brief

Leslie M. Grant

Old Testament	1
The New Testament	21

Old Testament

Foreword

These brief outlines of the 66 Books of the Bible first appeared on the pages of the "Lord Is Near" - a daily Scriptural meditation calendar - which is available through many Christian Bookstores or from the publishers of this book (Believers Bookshelf).

Leslie Grant has, in his usual concise and straightforward style, set forth the highlights of each book of the Bible. Individuals, Bible students and teachers alike, will find these outlines to be very helpful in gaining an overall view of the Scriptures. It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will use these outlines to stimulate all who read them to a fuller and deeper study of God's Holy word.

- [Genesis](#) [Exodus](#) [Leviticus](#) [Numbers](#) [Deuteronomy](#)
- [Joshua](#) [Judges](#) [Ruth](#) [1 Samuel](#) [2 Samuel](#)
- [1 Kings](#) [2 Kings](#) [1 Chronicles](#) [2 Chronicles](#)
- [Ezra](#) [Nehemiah](#) [Esther](#)
- [Job](#) [Psalms](#) [Proverbs](#) [Ecclesiastes](#) [Song of Songs](#)
- [Isaiah](#) [Jeremiah](#) [Lamentations of Jeremiah](#)
- [Ezekiel](#) [Daniel](#) [Hosea](#)
- [Joel](#) [Amos](#) [Obadiah](#)
- [Jonah](#) [Micah](#) [Nahum](#) [Habakkuk](#) [Zephaniah](#)
- [Haggai](#) [Zechariah](#) [Malachi](#)

Genesis

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'

Genesis 1:1

Genesis means "beginning." It deals with creation and life, giving the seeds of all that is later developed throughout the entire Bible. Genesis beautifully depicts the simplicity of early life upon earth; but the beginning of sin and corruption is also seen there together with God's abhorrence and judgment of evil. Genesis symbolizes the life-giving work of God begun in a soul - a new birth - with promise of fruit to come.

The book specially revolves around the lives of seven outstanding patriarchs:

1. In *Adam* are seen lessons of *life* and *death*. He is the figure of Christ, for he was the head of a race; but a contrast to Christ, for death claimed him, whereas Christ is a Living Head.
2. *Enoch* teaches us of *walk* and *translation*. He walked with God, and "by faith was translated," a type of saints to be raptured at the coming of the Lord.
3. *Noah* illustrates *work* and *salvation*. His work was a work of faith, and his salvation was into a new world, a type of those believers saved through the Tribulation for the millennial earth.
4. *Abraham* tells us of *faith* and *separation*. His altar speaks of the first, his tent of the second. By God's call he became a pilgrim.

5. Isaac shows the principles of *submission* and *continuance*, for in general his was an obedient, consistent life.

6. Jacob illustrates *discipline* and *anticipation*. God's dealings are seen in his life in securing Jacob's subjection and leading him on to worship as death approached.

7. Joseph: *suffering* and *exaltation* is the theme of his life. a precious example for faith in all ages.

Exodus

And Jehovah said, I have seen assuredly the affliction of my people who are in Egypt ... And I am come down to deliver them.

Exodus 3:7,8

Exodus means "Going out." Deliverance is its great theme. Here we find Israel grown to a great nation, but under bondage to the Egyptians as slaves. After much trouble and anguish, and after God's sending many dreadful plagues upon Egypt, Israel is liberated. First in chapter 12, the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel of the houses was typical of our redemption from the guilt of our sins by the blood of Christ. Secondly, the parting of the Red Sea and Israel's safely crossing before the Egyptians were trapped and drowned is a type of our redemption by the power of God from the bondage of sin and of the world, a redemption accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ.

A second section of the book, beginning with chapter 19, deals with the giving of the law and the building of the tabernacle, together with the institution of a special priesthood in Israel. While today believers are in no sense under law, yet the giving of the law symbolizes God's authority being established among a redeemed people. The high priest is a type of Christ, linked with the family of priests, who typify all saints today in the Church of God, believers who worship God by the Spirit, rather than by carnal forms. But the tabernacle service illustrates beautifully also the grace by which God cares continually for His people, delighting to have them near Himself on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ.

Leviticus

This is what Jehovah spoke, saying, I will be hallowed in them that come near me, and before all the people I will be glorified.

Leviticus 10:3

Leviticus is named for Levi, whose name means "joined." It is a book that deals with God's holy principles in joining His people to Himself as worshippers. Therefore we are first faced with the offerings necessary for approaching God: the burnt offering, meat offering, peace offering, sin offering, trespass offering - all pictures of the one offering of Christ in its various aspects. The priesthood too is prominent. Aaron is a type of Christ, the Great High Priest; his sons are a type of all believers of this present church age who are called "a holy priesthood," and "a kingly priesthood" (I Pet. 2:5, 9).

Various other laws also appear in this book. Defilement would disqualify one from approaching God until such time as the defilement was cleansed away by God's appointed means. The eating of unclean meats was forbidden; this symbolizes the refusal of that which is morally unclean. And leprosy, typical of the corruption of sin at work in an individual, would render him unfit for drawing near to God. So would other ceremonial uncleanness, but only because they are typical of moral uncleanness or spiritual uncleanness. We no longer observe the type, but the reality which the type is intended to impress upon

us.

Chapter 23 lists the seven feasts of Jehovah to be kept by Israel, not for their own pleasure, but in the worship of God. All of these point to the greatness of God's own work in His dispensational dealings. The great theme of Leviticus is that of drawing near to God in holy worship.

Numbers

According to the commandment of Jehovah they were numbered by Moses, every one for his service, and for his burden, and numbered by him, as Jehovah had commanded Moses.

Numbers 4:49

This book gives the numbering and ordering of Israel on their march through the wilderness. God gave directions for their service and warfare as they were on their way to the land of Canaan. All were given their own particular place by God, whether each of the twelve tribes, whence were chosen the soldiers; or whether Kohathites, Gershonites, or Merarites, the families of the tribe of Levi, who were appointed to serve the priests in caring for the tabernacle and its service. In these details we see a picture of God's great wisdom and care in ordering all the affairs of the lives of His saints for their history in the world, a world which in experience we find to be a wilderness.

Their history is one of almost forty years of general weakness, failure, complaining, and disobedience. It has been too sadly repeated in the Church today. Yet God's unfailing care and faithfulness shines beautifully above their failure. This is prominent in the history of Balaam (ch. 22 - 24), in which is seen God's defending of His people against every effort of the enemy to put them down.

Joshua and Caleb (ch. 14:6-9) are refreshing examples of unswerving devotedness, however, in contrast to the general disobedience; and they remind us strongly that we need not be failures. A true sense of God's numbering and ordering, and placing us where He sees fit, in whatever service pleases Him, will give us steadfast endurance, whatever others may do.

Deuteronomy

And thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or not.

Deuteronomy 8:2

Deuteronomy means "repetition of the law." It is mainly an address by Moses to Israel, in which he faithfully reviews their history, bringing everything out in the light of God's own glory. He shows in that history not only God's approval of their acts of obedience and His disapproval of faithlessness and disobedience, but also the marvellous grace, patience, and wisdom of God in the ways of His government. So they are to remember that God has led them, and all the way in which He has led them. Far from exalting them in the world, He has humbled them, and put them to the proof as to whether or not they would be obedient. He had allowed them to hunger, and fed them with manna, that they might realize their dependence upon Him and upon the truth and sufficiency of His Word.

The book also confirms and emphasizes the responsibility of Israel to diligently do the will of God in view of giving account to Him. In this way it puts us in mind of the judgment seat of Christ; and being a book of great detail, it reminds us that the details of our lives are far more important than we might like to think, for these will receive close attention when we stand before the Lord in that day.

Joshua

Every place whereon the sole of your foot shall tread have I given to you, as I said unto Moses.

Joshua 1:3

Joshua means "Jehovahâ€ Savior," the same name as Jesus in the Greek language. This is a book of militant conquest and victory. Israel is seen calmly dependent upon God, not rushing eagerly to battle, but with quiet deliberation taking each step as led by the Word of God. They enter the Promised Land by the divine stepping of the river Jordan, a type of the death and resurrection of Christ as linked with His people. Each enemy in turn must give way to God's power among His armies. Though there were painful setbacks for Israel because of their lack of faith, yet the general theme is that of taking possession of the land God had given them, and this by dispossessing their enemies.

The book compares with Ephesians in the New Testament, for the land of Canaan speaks of "heavenly places," the present blessed sphere into which believers are brought "in Christ Jesus." Our blessings are in heavenly places (Eph. 1:3); our position is there (ch. 2:6); and our conflict is there also (ch. 6:12). And in order for us to take proper possession of our possessions, we must have on "the whole armor of God," by which to resist and defeat the hosts of Satan, who would hinder our enjoying what is rightly ours. Therefore, the Word of God is to be our meditation "day and night" (Josh. 1:8). And Joshua is a type of "Christ in you," that is, in all His saints, leading them in victory over all the enemy's power. By faith let our feet tread in that good land, and make it experimentally our own.

Judges

In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Judges 21:25

Judges is a sad contrast to Joshua. It deals with the time in which a succession of judges followed Joshua as governors of Israel in their land. But its main theme is that of Israel's failure to take possession of all their land. Instead, through indifference or weakness (or both), they did not drive out the enemies of God, so that those enemies often and again brought Israel into subjection to them. Again and again, through disobedience to God, they were overcome by enemies*, yet on every such occasion God in wonderful mercy raised up a deliverer for them.

This reminds us of those books in the New Testament, such as Galatians and I Corinthians, written because of the need of serious reproof and correction. Though we may in some degree be enjoying the pure truth of the living Word of God, our inheritance â€ that great land of the heavenly places with its innumerable blessings â€ remains very largely unpossessed by the saints of God. Lack of faith, lack of spiritual energy, lack of genuine love for Christ, has left us too indifferent to the precious fulness of the possessions that are properly ours.

The last verse of the book of Judges, quoted, above, emphasizes Israel's unthankful independence in those days, each man doing right in his own eyes. A spirit of insubjection to proper authority will leave any of us just as barren of spiritual prosperity.

Ruth

And Ruth said, Do not entreat me to leave thee, to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

Ruth 1:16

The name Ruth may mean "satisfied" or "beauty," either of which seems very appropriate. This is a refreshing book, written during the time of the judges, like a bright, sparkling jewel set in a very dark background. Naomi, who with her husband and sons had left Israel. God's place for them, is eventually in Moab bereaved of her husband and both sons. She is a picture of the nation Israel out of their land, desolate and without hope.

Ruth however, her daughter-in-law, is a Gentile, a Moabitess, disqualified as such from entering the congregation of Israel for ten generations. Yet Ruth is a type of the Jews also, in the same degraded place as the Gentiles - not God's people. But in her we see a new, precious, lowly faith awakened in the God of Israel, so that if in Naomi Israel's desolate, hopeless state is seen, in Ruth is seen the fresh faith of the godly remnant of Israel.

And Boaz ("in him is strength"), a mighty man of wealth, is a type of the Lord Jesus. He by grace encourages Ruth in such a way that eventually, because he is a "kinsman - redeemer", she is brought happily into the commonwealth of Israel by marriage to him. And Naomi too shares the joy and blessing of the results of this.

1 Samuel

But Jehovah said to Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; for I have rejected him; for it is not as man seeth; for man looketh upon the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh upon the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7

Samuel is the first of the prophets who were raised up by God because of the solemn failure of the priesthood. Priests were successional, not so prophets; theirs was a call strictly and personally by God. But Samuel's faithful care for Israel was not rightly appreciated, and they demanded a king. God allowed them their own way, and gave them the type of king they desired, Saul, a man head and shoulders taller than all the people. He began well, but rapidly declined from any purpose of obeying God; and God decreed in chapter 15:26 that his reign must cease.

In chapter 16 David was anointed king by Samuel, yet did not take the throne; for God allowed Saul to hold this for some time. Saul turned viciously against David, determined to put him to death. In this David is a type of Christ, though anointed as God's king, yet suffering rejection, waiting patiently for the time that God Himself would so order events that he might take the throne.

So today God allows human government its sway, while He has purposed that only Christ can be trusted with the place of sovereign authority in the world. The book ends with the sad history of the death of Saul and his sons. Man in the flesh cannot be suffered to remain.

2 Samuel

The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me, The ruler among men shall be just, ruling in the fear of God.

2 Samuel 23:3

This book describes the kingdom of David. Raised only to the throne of Judah at first, he reigned in Hebron for seven and a half years; then over the other tribes of Israel also for thirty-three more years. He is a type of Christ in gradually subduing by conquest all the nations surrounding Israel. This is seen

particularly in the first ten chapters.

From chapter 11 onward, however, we see a sad and startling contrast to this, as the same King David utterly fails in representing Christ. So we are faced with the painful lessons of his acting contrary to the blessed principles of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the governmental consequences of this are shown in such a way as to impress us deeply with the faithfulness and truth of a God who cannot ignore the disobedience of His own.

David's son Absalom, in callous hatred toward his father, becomes an unhappy type of Antichrist, with an attractive appearance and personality, and words as smooth as butter. God however preserves David, and Absalom comes to a humiliating end. Yet David's kingdom did not recover its vigor of earlier days.

Thus David, though a true believer, beloved of God, teaches us clearly that man, even at his best, cannot be trusted with a place of prominence and authority over men. How pertinent a book to warn Christians against seeking place of authority in government!

1 Kings

There has not failed one word of all his good promises which he spoke through Moses his servant.

1 Kings 8:56

First Kings introduces the kingdom of Solomon over Israel, a type of the glorious kingdom of the Lord Jesus in its settled state of millennial peace and prosperity — not in its powerful conquests. Its wealth and glory have been unsurpassed in history. Solomon was given the honor of building the temple of God, a building of marvellous magnificence, the center of Israel's worship and unity. God has never, and will never authorize the building of any other temple than in the same location.

But Solomon sadly failed to bear the responsibility of such honor. Though a believer, his personal life degenerated deeply through unholy marriages and other self-indulgence contrary to kingly dignity. And when he died, the kingdom of Israel was split cruelly in two, with ten tribes revolting from Judah and Benjamin. This rift has never been healed nor will be until the Lord Jesus takes the throne over Israel.

The book then deals largely with the history of the succession of kings who ruled over Israel, the ten tribes, in Samaria. Their kingdom passed from family to family through many conspiracies and rebellions. This was totally contrary to God, of course, and not one of these kings appears to have been even a believer. The kings of Jude (the line of David) are also mentioned, but with much less detail. The prophet Elijah appears in chapter 17, a stern witness against Israel's wickedness; and other prophets also intimate to us the fact of the kings proving a failure.

2 Kings

And the children of Israel did secretly against Jehovah their God things that were not right; and they built them high places in all their cities.

2 Kings 17:9

This book continues the history of the two separated kingdoms, with the prophet Elisha replacing Elijah as God's witness, both of truth and grace. Other prophets also witnessed and suffered for their faithfulness. The book of Kings give special prominence to the ministry of the prophets, in contrast to the books of Chronicles where the priests and Levites are more often noticed.

Again, no believing king is found in Israel (the ten tribes), in spite of the grace of the prophet Elisha. Israel's growth in evil leads to the invasion of the land by the king of Assyria, who carries them captive out of their land. Since that time the ten tribes have been lost sight of, and only God knows where to find them and bring them back to their land, as He will do in days yet to come.

Judah continued in the land some time longer, and the reigns of two godly kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, stand out beautifully in contrast to the general downward trend. Yet both these reigns ended in the sadness of human failure; and eventually Judah was carried captive by the Babylonians.

This is another book of solemn admonishment in its application to us. It again emphasizes equity and truth in government, showing that the true place of man is one of thorough subjection, rather than of prominence and authority, which in every case proved beyond the capacity of men — even godly men — to be entrusted with. How all this cries out for the coming of the one true and faithful King, the Lord of glory!

1 Chronicles

Jehovah, for thy servant's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness, to make known all these great things.

1 Chronicles 17:19

This book is a summarizing of God's ways of grace toward Israel in reference mainly to the reign of David, the man after God's own heart. The two books of Chronicles are therefore similar to Deuteronomy, for they are a review from the standpoint of God's grace. Saul's reign is not even mentioned, but only his sad end in battle. For Saul is typical of man in the flesh, who can receive or exemplify nothing of the grace of God. David is a type of Christ, in whom that grace is preciousely manifested. No mention is made either of David's reigning seven and one-half years in Hebron over Judah alone, but only of his reigning over all Israel; for the grace of God embraces all of His people, not merely a part.

The glaring moral evils that affected the house of David are silently dropped from the record here: David's grievous sin, that of Amnon his son, and the proud rebellion of Absalom. On the other hand, much is said of David's preparation for Solomon of the plans and great provision of materials for the building of the temple. This, too, was for the display of the glory and grace of God.

David's history then is seen here, not as a biography of the man, nor even officially as king, but as typical of Christ; so that those events are dwelt upon that show him most strikingly in this character.

2 Chronicles

If my people, who are called by my name, humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from the heavens, and forgive their sin, and heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14

Here the gracious summing up of God's ways in connection with the kings is continued. Solomon's magnificent kingdom is seen here beautifully typifying the reign of the Lord Jesus in the peace of millennial glory. Nothing is therefore said of his grievous deviation from the path of obedience to God; his marrying many wives and being badly influenced by them.

The dividing of the kingdom, however, in the days of his son Rehoboam must be taken note of, for grace

does not set aside God's government. Rehoboam is forbidden to attempt to bring the ten tribes back again by force. The ten tribes set up a new center at Samaria and a new king, not even of Judah. They are therefore only referred to in this book in connection with the history of Judah; for God's grace must be shown only in connection with His chosen line, that is, the line of the true Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. This stands out beautifully in the histories of Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

Such a review, that so magnifies the blessed counsels of the grace of God, is a precious intimation of the character of the judgment seat of Christ for the believer. If the books of Kings show us the obnoxious history of man, Chronicles, on the other hand, shows how God's grace transcends man's sin.

Ezra

For we are bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us before the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God and to repair the ruins thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.

Ezra 9:9

Ezra, meaning "help," is written by a scribe of this name, and is an account of a restoring work of God in bringing back some of the Jews to Jerusalem; a first group coming with Zerubbabel (ch. 2:2), with the object of rebuilding the temple. This was at the commandment of Cyrus, king of Persia, for the Medes and Persians had by this time conquered the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus decreed that the vessels of the temple (previously carried away by Nebuchadnezzar) should be restored to the about to be rebuilt temple. There were hindrances in the building, but God, using the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, eventually enabled the completion of this, as chapter 6:15 shows.

Another group of Jews later returned with Ezra during the reign of Artaxerxes; and he, being a priest of the line of Aaron, was sent both to give help in the service of the rebuilt temple and to establish magistrates and judges who knew the law of God to rule in the land.

This is a necessary book for our own days, when those who desire a return to the true worship of God according to Scripture can expect opposition. Their faith will be rewarded, however, if they are steadfast and stand firmly for the true principles of God.

Nehemiah

Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared; for the day is holy to our Lord; and be not grieved, for the joy of

Jehovah is your strength.

Nehemiah 8:10

Nehemiah (his name meaning "comfort of Jehovah") writes the history of his connection with the remnant of the returned captivity. He followed Ezra by about thirteen years in going to Jerusalem, stirred through news he had received of the decayed condition of the city. God gave him favor with Artaxerxes, king of Persia, whose cupbearer he was. He obtained authority to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

A man of faith and energy and a capable administrator, he was able to organize the Jews for the labor of rebuilding the wall and imbue them with willingness both to work and to fight for God's interests in the city. His firm decision, his wise avoidance of the enemy's cunning snares, and his short, earnest prayers cannot fail to attract every interested reader. Yet the authoritative influence of the Persian government is

felt throughout and cannot be ignored.

Nehemiah is a book specially helpful in our own day. It illustrates the fact that true devotedness to God on the part of His saints, and their purpose of heart to build a wall of separation from the world and its evils, will meet with bitter opposition from the enemy. Yet however small and despised such a testimony may appear in men's eyes, their firm, lowly faith in a day of confusion is precious to God.

Esther

For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went forth throughout the provinces; for the man Mordecai became continually greater.

Esther 9:4

Esther means "I will be hidden," and the book deals with the Jews during the time of their captivity, outside their own land, hidden among the nations, yet cared for providentially by the God whom they had disobeyed. Yet God's name is not found in the book: He is also hidden. He cannot link His name publicly with them, for their dispersion is chastening because of disobedience. Moreover, these had chosen to remain in Persia despite God's having opened the way for them to return to Israel: they had no real concern for returning to God's place for them when others had done so.

Still, His overruling hand in mercy and protection is beautifully seen here. It is typical of the blessing that is to come to the now scattered children of Israel after much cruel affliction and persecution.

Esther herself may remind us of the beauty that God sees in His people in spite of their failure and departure: and Mordecai is a type of Christ, first, in protecting the Gentile king from those who plotted his death; and then in becoming greater and greater among the Gentiles after having first been marked out for

How well this illustrates, too, the dealings of God with any true believer who becomes careless and disobedient in his ways. He has no real communion with God. No joy in the Lord's presence, yet God cares for him by means of trials that have in view his restoration in submission to the Lord.

Job

I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Job 42:5,6

Job (meaning "the cry of woe") is poetic, and has long been honored for its superb language. Job evidently lived about the time of Abraham. Though the most righteous man on earth, he was allowed by God to suffer intensely under the hand of Satan. His three friends assumed that to merit such suffering Job must have been guilty of flagrant hidden sin, and in their speeches they seek, gently at first, then more cruelly, to extort some such confession from him. Job protests his own innocence, and feels that God's dealings with him are without reason.

This very feeling indicates the reason, however, for it was necessary that God should bring down Job's proud self - righteousness.

After his three friends are silenced, Elihu, a younger man, speaks truly for God such words that so affect

Job's conscience that he has no answer. Elihu is a definite type of the Lord Jesus, the Interpreter of God's ways.

Then God Himself speaks to Job out of a whirlwind. He points to many marvels of creation which demonstrate that the Creator's wisdom must be infinitely higher than man's conception, and that in comparison, man's wisdom is pathetic ignorance. Job takes to heart the lessons involved in this and says, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." This is the grand turning-point, and Job is afterward blessed more greatly than ever before. Job is a most valuable book to teach us true self-judgment and submission to the hand of God.

Psalms

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, and standeth not in the way of sinners, and sitteth not in the seat of scorers.

Psalm 1:1

Psalms, like Job, is poetic, a collection from the pens of various writers inspired of God — David, Asaph, Moses, Heman, Ethan, and possibly others unknown. Yet they are

arranged in perfect order by the overruling of the Spirit of God. How full of comfort they are, in dealing with the feelings of the heart in circumstances of every kind, bringing

the answer of God to every need of the soul.

Pre-eminently, they speak of Christ, and here we find His own feelings, in concern for the glory of God and for the blessing of souls; in suffering as the lowly Man of sorrows, as persecuted by men; in suffering the anguish of the cross, the forsaking of God; in the joyous results of that cross; of anger, too, against the wickedness of man — indeed, feeling as various as the circumstances with which He deals. To consider His feelings is a marvellous balm for the feelings of our own hearts.

It must be remembered, however, that the Psalms are written from a Jewish point of view, and the blessing of Israel, together with her afflictions, sorrows, and chastening, is most prominent in the book. Thus it is prophetic of the history of Israel through all her troubles

until she is established in the glory of the millennial kingdom. Yet this does not in any way detract from the spiritual blessing to be found there for ourselves: it is a book of infinitely sweet values and comfort for our souls.

Proverbs

He that is wise will hear, and will increase learning; and the intelligent will gain wise counsels: to understand a proverb and an allegory, the words of the wise and their enigmas.

Proverbs 1:5, 6

Proverbs is also poetic, written by King Solomon in his younger years, a book of wise instruction in reference to every department of personal life and conduct. Its great, outstanding truth is simply this: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Its warnings against subtle evils are accompanied by instruction as to the means of avoiding these evils.

It presents things in their true light, so that the reader may form a proper, clear judgment. It goes to the root of matters also and shows the motives that produce certain actions, thus exposing to the reader the actual workings of his own heart. It deals with the thoughts, the mouth, the lips, the tongue, the ear, the eye, the hand, the foot, as all connected with the conduct of the individual. It shows faithfully the results of thoughts, words, or actions, good or bad; that is, the reaping of what is sown. And how clearly it teaches that only the true knowledge of the Lord Himself can preserve the soul in ways of truth.

These things therefore are principles becoming to the kingdom of Solomon, established in peace, and therefore closely related to the principles of the Kingdom of God, as in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. Chapter 25, however, begins with proverbs copied by the men of Hezekiah, and is therefore a provision of God for times when the kingdom was in a state of division and ruin. They are thus particularly precious also for our day, the kingdom of heaven being in a state of degeneration.

The book provides an excellent course in psychology.

Ecclesiastes

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that it had cost me to do them; and behold, all was vanity and pursuit of the wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:11

Ecclesiastes ("the preacher"), written also by Solomon but in his older years, is a striking contrast to Proverbs. By inspiration of God he declares the results of all human wisdom, of earthly advantages and aspirations, of indulgence in everything that wealth and wisdom could procure which might show fair promise of producing utmost happiness on earth. Being himself in a position to test this to the full — wiser and wealthier than all other men

— he learns by bitter experience that "all is vanity and pursuit of the wind."

Let us carefully remark that this is simply taking advantage of every material thing "under the sun," that is, considering things only from an earthly viewpoint. Hence it teaches us that, apart from the revelation given of God, man's history is hopeless misery. How wonderful the contrast in the New Testament's presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ, of His revelation of the glory of God, of the eternal inheritance of the saints in light!

This book then cannot be regarded as teaching doctrines as revealed by God, but as showing man's thoughts and conclusions apart from the higher revelation of God's thoughts.

Therefore, it only stresses more strongly that we must look far higher for the full truth that will meet the need of the heart. This is fully provided in the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus, in whom is revealed all the glory of God, as is so beautifully seen in the New Testament. But Ecclesiastes provides the best course obtainable on the subject of philosophy.

The Song of Songs

While the king is at his table, My spikenard sendeth forth its fragrance.

Song of Songs 1: 12

Written by Solomon also, this is a poetic book that deals with the personal communion of the soul with the Lord Jesus. Being highly figurative in its language, it must be interpreted with godly care and sobriety. The above verse finds its precious counterpart in the anointing of the Lord Jesus by Mary of Bethany with her precious ointment of spikenard, the symbol of fragrant worship that delights the nostrils of God.

The deep delight of the bride in contemplating the beauties and glories of the Bridegroom is a refreshing picture of Israel's eventual joy in the Lord when gathered back to their land and restored into permanent favor in the millennial age. Certainly this has a spiritual application now also to the Church, the heavenly bride of Christ; yet the book does not teach any fully settled, eternal relationship of the Church with Christ, as does Ephesians. Therefore, its help for us is mainly in connection with experiences in regard to personal communion with the Lord.

The Bridgroom's delight in the bride also is surely no less precious, and is more striking in view of her many imperfections in contrast to her Beloved. But it is divine grace that imparts to her such beauty as rejoices His heart. It is a book for quiet, diligent Meditation in the secret of the Lord's presence.

Soon deepest joy our inmost souls shall fill, Soon Thine own joy be more exceeding still, Soon we shall see Thee, thine enraptured bride, Soon, to Thy great delight, be at Thy side.

Isaiah

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that announceth glad tidings, that publisheth peace; that announceth glad tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Isaiah 52:7

Isaiah, meaning "Save Thou, Jehovah," stands fittingly at the head of the prophets, being most remarkable for its stirring gospel themes. Like the Epistle to the Romans, however, it begins with the stern and faithful exposure of man's guilt (Israel's guilt, in the case of Isaiah), and uses conditions then present to typify its prophecies of future conditions and judgments.

The first thirty-five chapters show God's dealings in a general way with Judah, Israel, and the nations, in allowing no cover-up or excuse for sin, but exposing it in pure truth.

Then four chapters (36-39) are occupied with history, illustrating both the faithfulness of God in the preservation of His people, and the failure of the people to rightly value the marvels of His grace.

But the ministry of sovereign grace begins with chapter 40, as from here on the remedy for Israel's condition is presented in its various aspects. The following note from F. W. Grant is most helpful here: "From chapter 40 to 48 Israel is seen as the servant, and unfaithful; then from chapter 49 to 60 Christ is the Perfect Servant, and standing under the load of the sins of others; and finally, from chapter 61 to 66, the remnant (of Israel) are now seen and accepted as the servants" (Numerical Bible).

This book, though couched in Old Testament language, will help us to gain a right perspective of the blessed gospel of God's grace.

Jeremiah

Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy words were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by thy name, O Jehovah, God of hosts.

Jeremiah 15:16

Jeremiah ("Jehovah will cast forth") has been called the weeping prophet. Called of God evidently at a young and tender age, he prophesied during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, and following the capture of Judah and Jerusalem apparently altogether about forty years. He was of the priestly family, but like John the Baptist was more a prophet than a priest. The deep sorrow of his soul over the condition of the kingdom of Judah is evident, but he faithfully delivers the stern message of God to the effect that the Chaldeans would take Judah captive.

Yet, though he was grieved to the point of anguish, the fact that he penned the above verse is precious; the word of God had penetrated into the depths of his being, and in this he found joy and rejoicing of heart, for he knew the reality of the name of Jehovah his God upon him. Here is joy and strength amid sorrow and weakness. He had the heart of a priest and the faithfulness of a prophet.

When Zedekiah was taken captive and Judah made tributary, Jeremiah was allowed to remain in the land, as were others, under the authority of Gedaliah. But further disobedience of the remaining people led to further trouble. Jeremiah continued to prophesy, but his words were refused even by the preserved remnant. His last chapter is strictly history, but such as proves the truth of his prophecies.

Jeremiah is an excellent book to encourage continuance in the face of grief and opposition.

The Lamentations of Jeremiah

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, whom Jehovah hath afflicted in the day of his fierce anger.

Lamentations 1:12

This is a book of deepest pathos, written after the captivity of Judah, the city of Jerusalem having been reduced to desolation. Yet the very language of the prophet bears clear witness to the tender concern of the Lord for His people in all their afflictions. If in one respect the sorrows of Israel are considered as caused by the malice of enemies (and God will take full account of this), yet too, Jeremiah rightly feels these to be from the hand of God in chastening Judah for her sins. This is suited language for those exercised properly before God, in brokenness and confession.

Jeremiah being a priest, he is one who knew in reality what it meant to "eat the sin offering" (cf. Lev. 6:25,26); that is, to feel in his own soul the sin of God's people as though it were his own, and to confess it as such. The book has a most important bearing for saints of God today, especially as showing our own becoming attitude in view of the sorrow and confusion of the public testimony of the Church of God on earth. The ministry of this book should find a real place in our souls' experience. Not that these things should in the least discourage us, or make us morose, but they should develop in us a more serious, humble attitude, which involves a willingness to face the truth honestly as it is.

Ezekiel

And behold, thou art unto them as a lovely song, a pleasant voice, and one that playeth well on an instrument; and they hear they words, but they do them not.

Ezekiel 33:32

Ezekiel ("He will be strengthened of God"), like Jeremiah, was also a priest, but he prophesied outside the land of Israel, in captivity. He prophesied first against both Judah and Israel, depicting their bondage, suffering, and humiliation in various graphic ways. God makes him a virtual object lesson for

Israel: he must himself feel the bitterness of those things of which he prophesies. Here is another priest, therefore, who in an earnestly practical way "eats the sin offering," having to feel, not only the sin of God's people, but the governmental judgments of God against that sin.

Yet even this humiliation and anguish fails to touch the hearts of his people. But he has been before warned that they will not hearken to him. And still, he is allowed no alternative but to speak out.

From chapter 24 to 32 he turns to pronounce the judgment of surrounding Gentile nations; then he returns to deal with his own nation again, prophesying however of the grace of God that will eventually restore that afflicted nation through the midst of sore judgments.

Chapters 40 to 48 then give the description of the future temple and the divisions of the land in the millennial kingdom.

Ezekiel is a book most helpful for strengthening the soul to stand firmly for God, even when alone and when faced with continual opposition.

Daniel

Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; For wisdom and might are his. And it is he that changeth times and seasons; He deposeth kings, and setteth up kings; He giveth wisdom to the wise, And knowledge to them that know understanding. It is he that revealeth the deep and secret things.

Daniel 2:20â□□22

Daniel ("My judge is God") also prophesied in captivity. He earned a place of honor and respect among the Gentiles by the simple, firm reality of his faith in the Living God that produced a life of consistent godliness, of wise and circumspect conduct, with no compromising of truth.

To the end of chapter 6 historical matters of deep interest are given. These provide clear insight into the character of the kingdoms of Babylon and of the Medes and Persians. They also show us God's preserving care of the godly remnant of Israel among the Gentiles. Besides being histories these accounts are also prophetic of events to take place in the future.

But from chapter 7 to the end of the book the subject matter is that of distinct prophetic visions given to Daniel. These visions involve the great empires of the world and Israel's connection with them, and the eventual triumph of the Lord of glory over all the nations, on behalf of His own people.

How excellent a book to teach us that prophecy is only properly understood through godly exercise coupled with a faithful walk, and that God expects of His own a vital interest in His prophetic revelations!

Hosea

O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to Jehovah; say unto him, Forgive all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips.

Hosea 14: 1,2

Hosea ("To save") is again an earlier prophecy, given during the reigns of several kings of Judah, ending with Hezekiah. His first chapter is a brief survey of God's dealings with Judah and Israel (Israel is called

"Ephraim" also in this Book, for it was this tribe that led Israel in rebellion). God indicated first the unfaithfulness of each in turn, and that they have been reduced to the same level as Gentiles "not my people" yet He affirms His sovereign grace in restoring them as "sons of the living God." Both Judah and Israel will again be united under one Head.

Then the body of the book is engaged mainly with Israel (or Ephraim). It consists of a vigorous and scathing exposure of the debased corruption of the ten tribes, while Judah is only incidentally noticed.

The last chapter, however, beautifully shows God as the resource and remedy for Ephraim's ruined condition God, in fact, as in the blessed Person of His Son, though this is in measure veiled, and not as clearly stated as in the New Testament. The chapter also calls tenderly for Ephraim's return to the Lord God, a call that produces precious results.

How needed is this book, not only to warn against a wandering heart, but to show how to recover from it.

Joel

And Jehovah uttereth his voice before his army; for his camp is very great; for strong is he that executeth his word: for the day of Jehovah is great and very terrible; and who can bear it?

Joel 2:11

Joel ("Jehovah is God") gives no indication of the time of his prophecy, but his subject is the Day of the Lord with its great and sore judgments. A devastating invasion of insects had left the land of Israel famine-stricken; and Joel uses this as a vivid illustration of the invasion of Israel in the last days by the King of the North and his confederate armies, who, though proud, fierce, and ungodly, are yet the means God will use for the punishment of His people Israel. Covering the land like swarming parasites, they will at least accomplish the bringing of Israel to her knees before God. And when this end is reached, the Lord Himself will judge these Gentile nations unsparingly, and deliver the afflicted children of Judah and Israel.

The signs and wonders spoken of will take place *before* the coming of the Day of Jehovah (ch. 2:30, 31); that is, during the first three and one-half years of Daniel's "week"; therefore before "the Great Tribulation" which begins at the middle of the week of seven years. The pouring out of God's Spirit, mentioned in the previous verses (vv. 28, 29) is "afterwards," that is, in the millennial age of blessing. Peter's quotation of this (Acts 2:18-21) does not infer a complete fulfilment at that time, but simply a present application.

The book of Joel illustrates the solemn warning that they who sow the wind will reap the whirlwind.

Amos

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.

Amos 9:11

Amos (meaning "to burden") received his prophecy in the days of Uzziah, who reigned in Judah at the time that Jeroboam II reigned in Israel, and "two years before the earthquake," which evidently left a great impression. Likely the prophecy was known before the earthquake came, so that when it did come, this would lend serious significance to the prophecy.

The book is impressive for its orderly, deliberate condemnation of evil, especially in Israel, and the resulting measured judgments of God. The evil is exposed in a calm, judicial way, rather than in burning anger; and the punishment from God is perfectly adjusted to the guilt.

First, various nations are summoned, as it were, for judgment; the Syrians, Philistines, Tyre, Ammon, Moab, and Edom. But if God must in justice judge the nations, then Judah and Israel must also be brought before His throne, and judgment be meted out in perfect truth and impartiality. Yet the prophecy, in common with all prophecy, ends with the victory of God over evil, and the eventual restoration of Judah and Israel by the power and grace of God.

The book then is excellent for showing us that God must just as calmly and decidedly judge our own ways as the ways of others, while He yet in grace delights to restore.

Obadiah

Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith Jehovah.

Obadiah 4

Obadiah ("Serving Jehovah") writes the shortest book of the Old Testament; and he prophesies entirely against Edom. This is, of course, the family of Esau, Jacob's brother. His hatred and violence against Israel was a dreadful result of pride and self-righteousness, which could not bear his brother's receiving blessing from God.

Let us notice that God takes account, not only of their flagrant outward wickedness, but of the secret motives of the heart: "How is Esau searched! his hidden things sought out!" (v. 6). Their gloating over the suffering of Israel is sternly denounced, and their taking advantage of Israel's misfortunes to strengthen themselves. The fearful judgment of God is the result of all this.

Edom is actually the same name as Adam, but somewhat disguised. The nation stands therefore for the flesh, and "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." The flesh may appear in various plausible forms, pleasing to the natural senses, and appealing to the rationalizing minds of men. In our day the strong humanist movement is a marked example of this proud, empty, fleshly pretension that will fall under the awesome judgment of God, while the despised people of God will be delivered.

The book of Obadiah then would lead us to a very serious self-judgment of our ways and of the secret thoughts and feelings of our hearts.

Jonah

When my soul fainted within me, I remembered Jehovah; And my prayer came in unto thee, into thy holy temple.

Jonah 2:7

Jonah ("A dove") is more than anything a personal history of the prophet in connection with God's sending him to prophesy against Nineveh, the Assyrian capital city. He shows us, not the secret workings of the heart of an unbeliever, but those of even a chosen servant of God. How humbling is the exposure, but the prophet himself must faithfully write it all for our benefit.

When given a message from God, he first flees from the responsibility of delivering it. But the discipline of God in his being cast into the sea and swallowed by a great fish brought his soul low indeed. Yet in

spite of so traumatic an experience, when he is brought back by God and driven to obey, then he would fain take the credit for the message, and think more of his reputation as a prophet than of God's rights to show mercy to a repentant city. Does it not teach us how guarded we should be in every service for the Lord, that we should seek no recognition or place for ourselves, but rather obey out of love for Himself and for the souls of others?

Let us notice, too, that Jonah records the fact that God has the last word with him; and the very fact of his writing an unvarnished account of the whole distressing history is a clear indication that his soul was in the end truly benefited by it all.

Micah

And many nations shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and Jehovah's word from Jerusalem.

Micah 4:2

Micah ("Who is like God?") shows the Lord coming forth in judgment, not only of Israel, but of all the nations. The condition of Judah and Israel is seen to be an indication of the condition of "all the peoples" — the "earth, and all that is therein." So that, if in Amos God must judge Israel when once He begins to judge the nations; in Micah He must judge the nations if Israel must be judged. For Israel is but a sample of all mankind: now that she is proven guilty, this is proof of the guilt of all the world (cf. Rom. 3:19). God can therefore alone execute judgment, and He is infinitely capable of so doing.

Later, too, the remedy is seen only in God, who pardons iniquity because He delights in mercy. He turns His people to Himself, and casts all their sins into the depths of the sea. The blessing of Israel will mean great blessing also for the nations, who will find delight in the mountain of Jehovah at Jerusalem.

Chapter 5 contains a great prophecy of the coming of the Messiah, the Protector of His people when the Assyrian of the last days attacks them.

The Book then shows beautifully that when all else fails utterly, God is the eternal Rock: — "Who is like God?"

Nahum

Jehovah is slow to anger, and great in power, and doth not at all clear the guilty: Jehovah, — his way is in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

Nahum 1:3

Nahum ("Comfort") is a vigorous prophecy of the judgment of Nineveh, which, being the capital of Assyria, stands for that empire, the King of the North in a coming day. While Egypt denotes for us the world in its complacent independence of God, Assyria indicates the world's vicious opposition of Him. The prophecy was doubtless occasioned by the cruelty of Assyria when Sennacherib ("He that dasheth in pieces" ch. 2: 1) invaded Israel, and was partially fulfilled when Nineveh was destroyed: but it looks on to God's judgment of the King of the North in the latter days. Notice that the determined rapacity of this enemy is fully matched by the unbending rigor of the judgment of God.

Yet, while the first few verses of the Book describes the indignation and fierceness of His anger, this is followed by the marvellous comfort of verse 7: "Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him." He is slow to anger, perfect in calm deliberation; for He does not

desire to condemn. But He will judge evil, whether by whirlwind or storm: and here the wisdom of "His way" will be seen.

Let us learn well then from this prophet both the awful strength of God's wrath, and the blessed strength of His protection.

Habakkuk

He stood, and measured the earth; He beheld, and discomfited the nations; And the eternal mountains were scattered, The everlasting hills gave way: His ways are everlasting.

Habakkuk 3:6

Habakkuk ("Ardently embraced") is a prophecy that particularly deals with the deep exercises and sorrows of a godly Israelite in considering the shame and degradation of his own nation, their being taken captive by "the Chaldeans, that bitter and impetuous nation." This contemptuous enemy is the Babylonian Empire is the very picture of the world in its religious corruption and confusion, that is, in its gross misuse of the blessings of God. Little wonder that a godly soul is deeply distressed by Israel's captivity to such a type of evil. Has not the same dreadful enemy today enslaved the professing Church'?

Yet these sorrows cause the prophet to more "ardently embrace" the promises of God. They lead him to a thorough confidence in God's sovereign power and grace. He recognizes that God takes the measure of earth itself, and therefore everything in it: the nations He will painfully humble: the mountains (higher authorities) He will scatter, though men think them eternal; and hills (lesser authorities) will bow before Him. This being true, then however great may be the destitution and desolation to which Israel is reduced, the prophet can truly say, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord" (ch. 3:18).

This is a book of precious help to those who, faced with evil and trying conditions, sorrow before God.

Zephaniah

Jehovah thy God is in thy midst, a mighty one that will save: he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will exult over thee with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17

Zephaniah ("Treasured of Jehovah") prophesied in the days of Josiah, a godly king whose faith and energy had produced a marked revival in the outward state of Israel. But this book takes no notice of this revival: instead it launches immediately into a declaration of the sweeping judgment of God, His utterly consuming everything from the land. The apparent revival was outward only: the actual condition of the nation at heart remained the same as before, and this became evident immediately after Josiah died. Whatever seeming improvement may have developed, God had already ruled that His judgment would go out in every direction, Judah and Jerusalem being clearly the center of it.

However, the book also dwells beautifully upon the effects of these judgments in producing great blessing in a coming day. The people will be turned to a pure language, and the Lord God will be in the midst of the once guilty city, saving that afflicted nation, rejoicing over her, resting in His love, His long labor with her finished; and the mourning of His heart over her turned to exultant singing.

Attention to this prophecy would surely preserve us from the prevalent error that present - day measures of revival may forestall the judgment of God upon Christendom. No! The coming of the Lord is imminent.

Haggai

For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts.

Haggai 2: 6,7

Haggai ("My feasts") was written after the Jews' return to Jerusalem from the captivity. Its subject is the temple, once destroyed, but its foundations built again on a smaller scale. The prophet presses upon the people the shame of their laxity in reference to the house of God and its building, urging them to consider their ways. A true prophet, he seeks to "shake" them from their selfishness in running every man to his own house, while God's house was neglected. For very soon the Lord would shake everything in heaven and earth; and "the desire of all nations." That is, Christ, the great Messiah, would come, through whom God's house would be filled with glory.

Four distinct messages are given in the book. The first comprises chapter 1 and gives solemn reproofs. Thankfully these produced good effects in leaders and people, in their being stirred to build. The second (ch. 2: 1-9) gives refreshing encouragement in its precious prophetic vision of Christ. The third (ch. 2:10-19) insists upon the purity and separation becoming to God's house, and urges godly consideration. The fourth (ch. 2:20-23) is prophetic of the overthrowing of all oppressing kingdoms, and of blessing established in the person of Jehovah's Servant, the Messiah, typified by Zerubbabel, ruler of Israel.

This book should surely exercise us now as regards God's present - day interests in His "spiritual house", the Church of God.

Zechariah

And it shall come to pass in that day that I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone unto all peoples: all that burden themselves with it shall certainly be wounded, and all the nations of the earth shall be assembled together against it.

Zechariah 12:3

Zechariah ("Jehovah remembers") writes at the same time as Haggai, but he deals with the city Jerusalem. He reminds the people of God's displeasure with their fathers as the reason for former inflictions and bondage, an evident warning of what the city would yet suffer if they were "as their fathers."

The prophecy then goes on to show how the eyes of God take account both of the guilt of Jerusalem and the guilt of those nations who "burden themselves" with it. It is God's earthly center, and He will not tolerate the proud interference of men, whether in antagonism, or in patronizing protection of the city. It is God who will deal with and purge her: the great Messiah Himself, whom they had pierced, will appear in the city and produce a profound repentance that nothing else could produce (ch. 12:9-14). Then He will go forth and fight, and Judah will fight with Him against their oppressing enemies. And Jerusalem shall be the great center of all the earth, with every nation yielding allegiance to her, the city of the great King (ch. 14).

Let this speak to our own hearts today to the effect that God's center for His Church is not on earth, but in heaven. It is, indeed, the blessed person of the risen Lord and He will tolerate no rivals to, nor substitutes for, this glorious Center.

Malachi

Then they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another; and Jehovah observed it, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name.

Malachi 3:16

Malachi ("My messenger") shows us the miserably self - complacent condition of the Jews who had returned from the captivity. Their energy had very soon deteriorated into a state of callous indifference to the claims of God, a state of self - pleasing. It is a deeply pleading word from God, in which He reproves their gross contempt for Him expressed in various ways. Yet with brazen defiance they reply as though they were entirely without blame! Hence, this is God's last word to Israel until four hundred years later, when John the Baptist was sent from God. Israel, refusing to listen to God, would be left to reap the bitter results of their own haughty choice.

Yet how precious it is that there were still those who in heart "feared Jehovah," though no doubt only a small remnant within the remnant who had returned to Judah. They are given no distinctive name, for it is the Lord's name that was precious to them. But they spoke often one to another of the things of God, and this was a delight to His heart. He assures us it was not forgotten, but written in a "book of remembrance."

How fitting that this last book of the Old Testament shows Jehovah concerned with, not merely actions, but the thoughts and motives of hearts. And they are promised the rising of the Sun of Righteousness - Christ yet to come in power and great glory.

The New Testament

Foreword

These brief outlines of the 66 Books of the Bible first appeared on the pages of the "Lord Is Near" - a daily Scriptural meditation calendar - which is available through many Christian Bookstores or from the publishers of this book (Believers Bookshelf).

Leslie Grant has, in his usual concise and straightforward style, set forth the highlights of each book of the Bible. Individuals, Bible students and teachers alike, will find these outlines to be very helpful in gaining an overall view of the Scriptures. It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will use these outlines to stimulate all who read them to a fuller and deeper study of God's Holy word.

- [Matthew](#) [Mark](#) [Luke](#) [John](#) [Acts](#)
- [Romans](#) [1 Corinthians](#) [2 Corinthians](#)
- [Galatians](#) [Ephesians](#) [Philippians](#) [Colossians](#)
- [1 Thessalonians](#) [2 Thessalonians](#) [1 Timothy](#) [2 Timothy](#) [Titus](#)
- [Philemon](#) [Hebrews](#) [James](#)
- [1 Peter](#) [2 Peter](#) [1 John](#) [2 John](#) [3 John](#)
- [Jude](#) [Revelation](#)

Matthew

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:29, 30

Matthew ("Gift of Jehovah"), the first book of the New Testament, is necessarily written from a Jewish point of view, and preserves admirable continuity with the Old Testament. It presents the Lord Jesus Christ as the long looked for Messiah of Israel; His genealogy therefore is traced to David and Abraham. This genealogy is that of Joseph, therefore establishing official title to the throne.

But Matthew is also the only book of Scripture that uses the phrase "the kingdom of heaven." This shows us that, while under law the authority of the kingdom of Jehovah had been committed to the Jews, and Jerusalem therefore had been its headquarters, yet because of Israel's utter failure, God was revoking this, and His kingdom now would have its headquarters in heaven. He had once spoken on earth among the Jews: now He was speaking from heaven. For this reason Matthew often speaks of the kingdom of God as "the kingdom of heaven." The Gospel marks a most striking and complete change in the dispensational ways of God; for the Christ, the true King, has come and has in fact returned to heaven.

Consistently with this, we must expect Matthew to insist upon thorough subjection and obedience to the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus — not to law, but to One higher than law. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." Emphasis therefore is placed upon works, works of faith, of course; because authority (not grace, as in Luke) is Matthew's great subject. How good if such lessons implant themselves deeply in our hearts.

Mark

For also the Son of man did not come to be ministered to, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many.

Mark 10:45

Mark ("a defence") gives a terse, energetic account of the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he portrays Him as the perfect Servant of God. His language is direct and simple, and his description of events is in chronological order, that is, in the order in which they actually happened. None of the other Gospel writers follows this order, but each uses an order that is appropriate to his particular theme. But the lowliness and unwearying service of the Lord Jesus shines out beautifully in this Gospel, as rapidly passing from one scene to another, He meets the need of unnumbered souls, at the perfect time and in perfect manner.

His death, too, is the sacrifice of One perfectly devoted to the will of God, a service to meet the deepest needs of the souls of men.

The sin-offering character of His sacrifice is seen here not simply that He has borne our sins, but that He has taken the full judgment against sin, the dreadful root of sins, the very principle of all that has opposed God. And He has served God in absolute devotion in this matter, even to the dread necessity of being abandoned by God in those hours of unalleviated agony.

Observe Mark's frequent use of the words "Immediately," "straightway," "forthwith," "anon". In this precious character of Servant the Lord Jesus is not only to be admired for His devotion, but to be followed as an Example by those who are saved by His grace.

Luke

And he said to them, Why are ye troubled? and why are thoughts rising in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see me having.

Luke 24: 38, 39

Luke ("a light") is the only known Gentile employed to write Scripture. Here Christ is presented beautifully as "the Son of Man," every part of the book combining to set forth the reality and perfection of His manhood. Here we have His birth announced and described, His increasing in wisdom and stature, His accessibility as One tenderly interested in the welfare of mankind, His "desire" of eating with His disciples, His forgiving words from the cross, His demonstrating to His disciples the reality of His bodily resurrection, His ascension bodily to heaven.

If authority is seen in Matthew, and service in Mark, it is grace that shines so brilliantly in Luke, grace that comes not only to Israel, but overflows to Gentiles as well. This will be seen strikingly here in the parables and miracles of the Lord Jesus.

Hence too, that grace which delights to bless, and to lift the soul into the presence of God, cannot be satisfied with anything less than the warm, unhindered communion of His saints.

This is involved in the peace-offering character of His sacrifice, which is predominant in Luke. It emphasizes that work as bringing God and man together in peace and concord, God receiving His portion of the food of the offering, the Priest (Christ) receiving His portion also, and the offerers also having their portion to partake of all as it were eating together.

John

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an onlyâ□□begotten with a Father), full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

John ("Jehovah is gracious giver") is a Gospel unique in its majestic glory. Here the Lord Jesus is manifested as Himself the Creator, the eternal, onlyâ□□begotten Son of God, sent from the Father to fully reveal His glory. This is much more than authority, service, or grace, but the light and love of the eternal God. He is here the Object of our adoring worship.

The Gospel is not therefore synoptic (that is, providing a general view of the Lord's life and works on earth), as are the other three, but draws special attention to His person and to His words, as witnessed even by His enemies: "Never man spoke thus, as this man speaks" (ch. 7:46).

The miracles and parables here recorded also provide clearest witness to His personal divine glory. It is here that we find those words from His lips, "Before Abraham was, I am" (ch. 8:58). And the seven "I Am's" of John's Gospel are well known.

The calm, noble dignity of the record of His crucifixion surely draws our rapt attention, too; for here is seen the burntâ□□offering character of His service, the burning speaking of everything ascending as a sweet savor to God â□□the sacrifice predominantly for God's glory.

The sweet simplicity of the book gives it a wonderful drawing power for the most unintelligent; and yet its more hidden depths of meaning have awakened the unfeigned admiration of the most profound scholars.

Acts

And with great power did the apostles give witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Acts 4:33

The Acts of the Apostles is a history of the way in which divine wisdom ordered events to gradually lead souls out from God's previously established dispensation of law into the full liberty of the "dispensation of the grace of God.

The power and working of the Holy Spirit is beautifully seen here, as the apostles are used of God for the establishing of Christianity.

The work begins at Jerusalem with the descent of the Holy Spirit in chapter 2, but spreads out; and when Israel as a nation has, by their martyrdom of Stephen (ch. 7) coldly refused this second call of grace (for they had before rejected their blessed Messiah Himself), then the apostle Paul is raised up of God a special messenger to Gentiles, and the grace of God extends to the whole world. Thus the Church of God is formed by the power of the Spirit of God, both Jewish and Gentile believers being baptized into the one body.

Let us notice, too, the great care of our God in this book to preserve a true and vital unity of this work and of the saints in every place.

The reality, the simplicity, the freshness of these early days, the godly maintenance of order and unity without the necessity of human organization and arrangement, gives most blessed instruction for our souls. All this beautifully shows us the sufficiency of Christ as the gathering Center of His people, and

the sufficient power of the Spirit of God for every spiritual activity, whether worship, communion, service, or testimony.

Romans

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:24

Romans ("strong ones") gives truth that stands at the foundation of Christianity. Here God is the Sovereign Judge, absolute in righteousness, discovering and exposing the sin of all mankind, allowing no excuse, sparing no evil of whatever degree, so that all are brought in "guilty before God".

Yet in pure righteousness also He offers complete justification from guilt, for this is based on "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus," who Himself is seen as the great Substitute in the bearing of sin's penalty by the sacrifice of Himself. Every true believer in Him is thereby cleared from every charge, and constituted righteous before God.

The significance of the cross is seen, too, in reference to deliverance from the power of indwelling sin. The truth is so presented as to meet the sinner where he is at the outset, and lead him through soulâ□□exercise out of bondage and darkness into liberty and light, establishing the feet in paths of righteousness.

In chapters 9, 10, and 11 God's counsels and ways concerning Israel are shown to be consistent with these truths now revealed in Christianity. God is the great Victor, and hence all who trust Him are blessed.

From chapter 12 on, instructions are given as to practical conduct based upon the solid and eternal foundation of God's justifying grace.

How grand a book to establish and settle the soul, and to encourage every godly virtue!

1 Corinthians

But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews an offence, and to all nations foolishness; but to those that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ God's power and God's wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1: 23, 24

1 Corinthians (Corinth means "satiated") is an Epistle written to correct the disorders allowed at Corinth in the early Church. The Epistle lays down solid, practical principles of assembly government and order, most necessary for the Church of God worldwide.

This authoritative universal application is pressed in chapters 1:2; 4:17; 11: 16, and 14:33, 37.

Corinth was a center of Greek philosophy, but of moral corruption: hence the world's wisdom is discarded in chapter 1, and chapter 2 replaces it with God's revelation by His Spirit.

Human wisdom cannot order the path of the Assembly of God, but the Word of God applied by the Spirit of God to hearts and consciences is sufficient to maintain thorough order according to the mind of God. In chapters 1 and 2 intellectual pride is rejected; from chapter 3 to 7 fleshly corruption is as fully judged; and chapters 8 to 10 guard against fellowship with any demon influence through idolatry.

The unity of the, body of Christ, but in separation from unholy associations, is stressed throughout the

book. Yet the unity is seen to be displayed in a precious diversity of gifts which call for godly exercise. The importance of sound doctrine is a vital matter, too, and chapter 15 strongly stresses the truth of the resurrection of Christ, and that of His saints at His coming, as being basic to the testimony of the Assembly of God.

1 Corinthians is a valuable book to encourage appreciation and concern for every member of the body of Christ and to strengthen collective testimony.

2 Corinthians

Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of

Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6

Second Corinthians deals, not with the order of the assembly, but with ministry in connection with the assembly, the manifestation in practical life and service of the Spirit's presence in the assembly. Paul is himself the example of this self-denying labor, spending and being spent for the sake of the saints of God. His sufferings because of his devotion to the ministry of Christ, his persecution from the world, the cruel attacks by false brethren, the resentment even of saints for whose blessing he longed, his deep anguish of soul, his sorrows, his distresses, his tender affections, his sympathies, his compassions — all of these stand out in this touching Epistle.

But his sufficiency is of God, the great God, whose light has shone in His heart, manifesting the transcendent glory of His Being in the face of Jesus Christ. Though in an earthen vessel, it is a treasure to be manifest in ministry to all who will hear. This ministry of the glory of Christ is to Paul of such surpassing blessedness that he is borne on wings of infinite grace through all the trials of the way, and says, I am filled with encouragement; I over-abound in joy under all our affliction."

Marvellous then is this book's encouragement to steadfast consistency in ministering to others, in spite of whatever the effort of Satan may be to discourage the heart and weaken the hands.

Galatians

But far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 6:14

Galatians, written to the assemblies in the region of Galatia, is an earnest remonstrance against the evil doctrine that works of law form the standard for a believer's walk and conduct. While being saved by grace through faith, yet they had added law as the principle of maintaining their salvation, and this mixture is abominable to God, the God of all grace.

The apostle shows that the blessed Person of Christ, not law, is the standard of a believer's walk, and the Spirit of God the power for a walk with God. The cross of Christ is presented powerfully as cutting off all expectation of good coming from man under law; and by it the believer is crucified to the world, cut off therefore from the very realm in which legality is the ruling principle. He is seen now connected with a "new creation," and therefore to walk no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

The death of Christ, too, is seen in chapter 4 as our redemption from the bondage of law, in order that

we should be brought into the dignity and liberty of sonship before God, a position that could never have been known in the Old Testament, but is true of all saints in this dispensation of grace.

How needful a book Galatians is to preserve us from selfishness, from confidence in the flesh, and from innumerable evils that are engendered by a legal attitude.

Ephesians

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.

Ephesians 1:3

Ephesians (Ephesus means "one desire") is an Epistle of no reproofs. It declares in fullest terms the grand counsels of God concerning the saints of God in this present dispensation of grace, their present "spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ," their position "in Christ" as "seated together in the heavenlies".

Christ, in accordance with the glory of His person and the infinite virtue of His work, is the decreed Center of the blessing of all the universe: and "in Him" we have obtained an inheritance. He is seated upon His Father's throne, and there represents us perfectly: we are "in Him." Jewish and Gentile believers form "one body," united to Christ the Head in glory.

As well as being the body of Christ, the Church is seen too as the household of God, a building growing to a holy temple in the Lord for a habitation of God; and as eventually to be presented as a bride fitted for her Husband. Such truths were not known nor prophesied of in former ages, but are now revealed through apostles and prophets. Our conflict also is seen to be "in the heavenlies", against spiritual hosts of wickedness, Satanic powers, engaged in opposing our discernment and enjoyment of the truth as to our rightful heavenly possessions.

No book is more important than Ephesians as regards cultivating a character conformable to our true union with Christ in the proper home of our souls, heaven itself.

Philippians

But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Philippians ("Lovers of horses" or "of the race") is a pastoral epistle, encouraging and refreshing. It is written to an assembly afflicted by poverty, which had yet maintained a devoted affection for Paul since being converted through his labors eleven years before.

The epistle presents **true Christian experience** as a racecourse leading on the glory of God. Paul is himself the example of this experience, and though in prison, the vibrant yet peaceful joy of the apostle permeates the whole book. The secret is simply that in a practical way Christ is everything to him:

- in chapter 1, Christ his very Motive in life;
- in chapter 2, Christ his Example;
- in chapter 3, Christ his Object;
- in chapter 4, Christ his Strength.

Chapter 2 contains a magnificent declaration of the greatness of the willing humiliation of the Lord Jesus, from the place of highest glory to that of deepest suffering and the death of the curse. This is then followed by God's blessed answer in exalting Him as Man to the place of highest preeminence (vv. 5â–11).

Such a Person engaging the affections and admiration of the apostle Paul, he not only bears patiently with every unpleasant adversity, but rejoices in seeing in each of these an occasion of fuller blessing and of greater glory to the Lord Jesus.

This grand triumph of faith makes the book of sweetest value in encouraging similar faith in our own souls.

Colossians

Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.

Colossians 1:12, 13

Colossians ("monstrosities") has much in common with Ephesians. It does not, however, at all present the saints as seated in heavenly places, but rather considers them as still walking through a wilderness world. Yet provision for the journey is heavenly, and the blessed fulness of this provision in the person of Christ is beautifully seen. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (ch. 2:9).

In connection with this fulness, the word "all" is constantly used. And this was needful in warning them against the dangers of philosophy on the one hand, and of religious mysticism on the other: the one an appeal merely to intellect, and the other a gross insult to intellect, though often found curiously intermixed, a monstrosity indeed with two heads in contradiction. The pre-eminence of Christ is of course the blessed answer to this.

Christ is seen as Head of all creation, and also as Head of the body, the Church. He will reconcile all things in earth and in heaven; but He has now reconciled all believers. He has provided both the ministry of the gospel and that of the Church through the apostle Paul. In all of this there is double provision: that toward the world, and that for His saints.

Nourishing, heavenly food then is found in this book â–that which will preserve us from evil in its most refined forms.

First Thessalonians

And for this cause we also give thanks to God unceasingly that, having received the word of the report of God by us, ye accepted, not men's word, but, even as it is truly, God's word, which also works in you who believe.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

1 Thessalonians ("victory over falsity") from point of view of time is the first of Paul's epistles. It is full of freshness, energy, and warmth. Pastoral in its character, it is addressed to "the church of the Thessalonians," thus exemplifying true shepherd care, not only of individuals, but of the assembly of God. This assembly, formed during a very brief visit to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1â–4), amid circumstances of bitter persecution, had become a model to the others for their godly energy of faith in sounding out the Word of God (1 Th. 1:7, 8). Faith, love, and hope are beautifully seen throughout this

book and the Second Epistle as well.

The coming of the Lord is a most prominent subject. In chapter 1: 10 this is seen as deliverance from the coming wrath of tribulation. In chapter 2:19 it is connected with the joy of Paul's seeing his own converts in the glory above. In chapter 3:13 it has in view the confirming of saints unblameable in holiness. In chapter 4:15-18 it is a precious prospect to give present comfort to those in sorrow. In chapter 5:23 it is seen as an ultimate total sanctification of spirit, soul, and body.

But the above verse shows the reason for the devoted energy of the Thessalonians. The word of God to their souls was real: it was God who had spoken: they accepted that word as such. It is by this that true results are produced. Is the book then not most encouraging and stimulating?

Second Thessalonians

But our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us, and given us eternal consolation and good hope by grace, encourage your hearts, and establish you in every good work and word.

2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17

2 Thessalonians, like 1 Thessalonians, is pastoral in character, but deals with those subtle influences that so soon threatened to rob this young assembly of its fresh, ardent affection for the Lord, its vigorous faith, and its endurance of persecution. Faithfully the apostle warns of the future coming of the Antichrist, but that even then already the mystery of iniquity was at work to undermine what was of God. Therefore, added to the refreshing encouragement of the First Epistle are faithful admonitions, the seasoning of salt, to preserve the testimony of God.

Letters, purporting to have come from Paul, had told the Thessalonians that the Day of the Lord had come - a crafty deceit of the enemy by which he sought to undermine their confidence as to Christ's coming first for the Church, before the awesome day of His judgment of the world. Paul corrects this, and chapter 2 is a most striking prophetic Scripture about the Day of the Lord, which cannot take place until the Church has been removed to heaven.

In contrast to the evil works and words of Antichrist, the saints are encouraged to be established in every good work and word. It is a book therefore to endue us with spiritual discernment and firmness as regards those things that would tend to lower Christian testimony. Again, the Lord's coming is prominent in every chapter.

First Timothy

And confessedly the mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh, has been justified in the Spirit, has appeared to angels, has been preached among the nations, has been believed on in the world, has been received up in glory.

1 Timothy 3:16

1 Timothy ("honoring God") is written to an individual, a young man for whom Paul evidently had deep affection. Being of a timid, retiring nature, and yet gifted by God, he needed to be stirred up to a sense of responsibility as regards proper behavior "in God's house, which is the assembly of the living God."

His ministry was given, not for its independent exercise, but for the sake of the welfare of the Assembly, the body of Christ. He is called upon also to see that sound doctrine is maintained in the local assembly, and that order is kept by the instrumentality of faithful elders and deacons.

The assembly too was to be a place of prayer (ch. 2); and in chapter 3 is stated to be the pillar and base of the truth — a witness of God's being made manifest in flesh, is true, blessed Manhood, the Spirit of God publicly justifying Him in His descent upon Him at His baptism, and in the power of this anointing seen in His life. It is also a witness to the act that in Christ God had appeared to angels, who had never before seen Him. And He has been preached to Gentiles, providing a world-wide gospel for all mankind. "Believed on in the world," whether by many or few makes no difference, but faith has responded to such a revelation. "Received up in glory" completes this list of blessed facts to which the assembly bears witness.

Second Timothy

Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but suffer evil along with the glad tidings, according to the power of God.

2 Timothy 1:8

2 Timothy deals also with individual responsibility in connection with the Church. But Paul writes this epistle from prison. It is in fact his last epistle, written knowing that he is about to be put to death for his witness to the Lord. Here he no longer speaks of "the house of God," but of "a great house" (ch. 2:20); for that which had once been God's house in some measure of purity and truth had degenerated to the point of allowing gross error and vessels to dishonour. Also, all in Asia had turned away from Paul, doubtless no longer desiring his teaching.

But he is not discouraged. Indeed, with a rejoicing heart he encourages this young man to strengthen him against his own natural timidity. Timothy is to be unashamed of the testimony of the Lord, to rightly divide the word of truth, to make full use of all that blessed truth in acting with firmness and decision for God. He is not to neglect any of it, whether in the work of an evangelist or in ministry to the people of God. The second chapter shows the believer in eight important aspects of life and is excellent for any soul who honestly desires to serve the Lord today.

Thus for days of departure and spiritual carelessness this book holds grand encouragement for the upright heart. It declares the blessedness of God's provision in view of His foreknowledge of present conditions, so that whatever may be the dishonor done to God's name in professing Christendom, one may yet be true to the meaning of Timothy's name, "honoring God."

Titus

The word is faithful, and I desire that thou insist strenuously on these things, that they who have believed God may take care to pay diligent attention to good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

Titus 3:8

Titus ("nurse") is again individual, but its subject is not exactly that of godliness in maintaining the truth in the Church of God (as in Timothy), but rather the truth producing godliness and order in the Church. If there is truth, it is "according to godliness."

Titus had remained in Crete for the purpose of appointing elders in each city there. Paul and Barnabas had done such work, as Acts 14:23 shows, and Paul had delegated authority to Titus to do it. He may also have delegated such authority to Timothy, though this is not stated; but he did write Timothy as to the qualifications of an elder or overseer. There is of course insistence here on godliness if one were to be appointed to such work.

Today there is no one who has authority to make such appointments, yet the saints should easily recognize men of such qualifications, and respect their experience and judgment, apart from any appointment.

Let us notice the insistence too on godliness in the various relationships of the saints of God toward one another, and that Titus was exhorted to be an example to them all. Those who had believed God were to be earnestly exhorted to pay diligent attention to good works. This is not simply refraining from wrongdoing, but engaging in that which is positively beneficial for the sake of others. "Nursing" souls along these lines is valuable work.

Philemon

For we have great thankfulness and encouragement through thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Philemon 7

Philemon ("one who kisses") is not, strictly speaking, an epistle to an individual, for others also are addressed: a sister who may likely be the wife of Philemon; and a brother, Archippus, spoken of as "our fellowâ€"soldier," a man particularly gifted with ministry from the Lord (cf. Col. 4:17); and also the assembly that met in the house of Philemon. Though written in a personal strain, yet it was made a matter of interest and concern to all the assembly.

It is a beautiful example of divine grace seeking to awaken in hearts of saints a true rejoicing in the salvation of a runaway slave who, converted through Paul in prison, is now sent back by the apostle to Philemon, his master. And Paul desires him to be received, not only by Philemon but by his wife, by one who labors in the Word, and by the assembly. Grace delights in fullest restoration, not merely in partâ€"way measures.

But Paul wisely and kindly appeals to Philemon on the basis of the grace that He knew had already deeply influenced this dear brother in his refreshing the bowels of the saints. The great thankfulness and encouragement felt by the apostle because of this would surely dissolve any resentment that Philemon might have felt towards Onesimus.

The meaning of Philemon's name is a lovely indication of the joy of reconciliation; and the book surely would draw out the most tender sentiments of delight in the restoring grace of God.

Hebrews

How much rather shall the blood of the Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God, purify your conscience from dead works to worship the living God.

Hebrews 9:14

Hebrews ("passengers") mentions no writer (though the writer was no doubt Paul), but begins with God and shows the New Testament revelation to be consistent with and yet in great contrast to that of the Old Testament. Indeed, prophecies, types, and typical persons are seen to have their marvellous fulfillment in God's now speaking from heaven in the person of His Son, the Creator and Upholder of all things. His eternal Godhead and His true Manhood are clearly and carefully declared, and He Himself supersedes every Old Testament partial revelation of the mind of God.

His great work of redemption is seen in its eternal value before God. He is seen entered into heaven itself, establishing a heavenly and eternal inheritance for every redeemed soul, a contrast to the earthly

hope of Israel. He is the Great High Priest, passed through the heavens, by whom we approach and worship God, and who sustains and sympathizes with His saints in all their present needs.

Thus the believer is seen as on earth but possessing a heavenly hope, and so in a real sense a "passenger" through an adverse world. All religion of earthly character (even Judaism, previously established by God) is seen as a "camp" hostile to the glory of this heavenly revelation, The believer is then called upon to go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp."

Hebrews is a book precious for the clearness of its lines of demarcation as regards the Christian's faith, walk, and, worship.

James

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, yielding, full of mercy and good fruits, unquestioning, unfeigned.

James 3:17

James (the Greek form of the name Jacob) does not address the Church but "the twelve tribes scattered abroad." Early Christianity from the point of view of Jewish believers is therefore its evident theme. There had been as yet no separation from the Jewish synagogues (ch. 2:2), such as the Epistle to the Hebrews later insists upon.

For this reason James has been called "the cradle of Christianity." It deals with elementary principles.

Yet let us not think it unnecessary to us because we suppose ourselves advanced in the truth. If we have not properly learned elementary principles, then we are not rightly learning more advanced truth; and it is important, too, that these primary truths should be reviewed continually in order to have a consistent, practical application of Christianity in its entirety. For as a student learns more in the higher grades, he may too easily forget what he once learned in the lower grades.

Nor are these things learned by mere natural wisdom. They require the wisdom from above as a living reality in the heart; and the believer knows well that only true, consistent communion with the Lord can maintain this.

This book insists upon faith being shown by means of works. Not that this justifies before God, but it does so before men. It is mere hypocrisy to talk about having faith, yet not to show it in one's conduct.

This epistle therefore is deeply needed in order for the child of God to check up on himself with regard to the simplest responsibilities of conduct.

First Peter

Blessed be the God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead.

1 Peter 1:3

1 Peter ("a stone") is also addressed to Jewish believers, dispersed in Asia Minor, but not as still connected with Judaism. Rather, they are those separated and suffering, strangers and pilgrims in more than one sense. In a far higher sense than had ever been true of the nation Israel, they were a people "not reckoned among the nations." Theirs was an eternal election of God, sanctification of the Spirit (not of mere formal ordinances), and an inheritance reserved in heaven, because Christ is raised and at the right

hand of God.

Their suffering was also but the needed chastening of a Father's governing hand. He governs wisely among His own children for their good in view of eternity. On the other hand, their suffering would manifest the woeful end of those who obey not the gospel.

This line of truth is clearly that of the kingdom of God rather than of the body of Christ, the Church; for to Peter were given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, in Peter personally is seen the effective dealings of the Father's government; and it is precious to see him graciously and powerfully used of God after so sad a failure in his denying the Lord.

This book is simple to be understood, vigorous and stirring, begetting a wholesome fear of God, and pressing every exercised conscience to walk in subjection of heart.

Second Peter

As his divine power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us by glory and virtue.

2 Peter 1:3

2 Peter is a provision of God in view of the dread corruption of Christendom in its bold defiance of the authority of the Lord Jesus and the government of the Father. False teachers would not only ignore, but systematically undermine every true principle of God's government.

Would this therefore absolve the godly from their responsibility of obedience? Quite the reverse. Rather, the fullest provision is made to encourage implicit subjection of heart to Him. His authority will yet absolutely triumph, with awful judgment to be meted out, not only to the ungodly world, but to the ungodly professors of Christianity.

God's divine power has marvellously and graciously supplied every necessary thing to sustain that fresh, vibrant life that is in contrast to the stagnant deadness of apostasy. It also furnishes the godliness that is so valuable at a time when ungodliness is predominant. And this provision is connected with the vital knowledge of Himself personally, the Living God revealed in the Person of the Lord Jesus. He calls us by glory and virtue, that is, He sets before our eyes glory as the end in view, and virtue as a precious, present incentive; for it is such virtue as is seen in all the history of the Lord Jesus.

Here the certainty of the coming judgment of God is spoken of in sobering, awe - inspiring terms - and this not only the judgments of the Tribulation, but of the conflagration of heaven and earth. And such themes are intended to have a sanctifying effect in souls.

First John

And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

1 John 5:20

1 John beautifully dwells upon the great truth of eternal life abiding in the believer, the life which is the very nature of God, and which has been manifested perfectly in the blessed Person of His Son. If we desire to rightly learn its characteristics, they shine radiantly in all the history of the Lord Jesus on earth.

Two grand expressions summarize for us the blessedness of this divine nature: "God is light," and "God is love." Thus, three marvellous and deeply necessary mysteries of nature — life, light, and love — become but symbols of infinitely greater spiritual mysteries, which nevertheless are known and enjoyed by faith in the Son of God.

The word "know" and derivatives of it appear frequently in this book, making its truth a living, absolute reality in the hearts of believers. No doubts whatever can be left that the Son of God has come, and in coming has given believers an understanding — not merely of regulations or doctrines — but in knowing the personal glory of Him who is true, and in knowing ourselves to be seen by God as "in Him." Clearly seen also is the perfect unity of the Father and the Son in this infinitely blessed work.

How valuable indeed is this book then in giving settled assurance to the believer of the reality of his vital relationship as a child of God. It also encourages filial devotion and affection to his God and Father.

Second John

Whosoever goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ has not God. He that abides in the doctrine, he has both the Father and the Son.

2 John 9

2 John is the only epistle in Scripture addressed to a woman. 1 John has laid down the blessed principles of truth (or light) and of love revealed in the person of the Son of God. Now this epistle emphasizes the truth as necessary to be maintained faithfully, even by a gentle, tender - hearted woman.

Many deceivers were then circulating everywhere, and Satan's chief target was the home. He would especially appeal to the courteous, responsive nature of the woman. Though John intended soon to visit there, yet God required him to write without delay. This godly woman must be protected from such insidious wickedness. Such deceivers are multiplied today, those not confessing Jesus Christ come in flesh. His eternal Deity and His true, pure Manhood are vital matters. If one "goes forward" in this respect, claiming to have advanced truth and knowledge over what is revealed in the person of Christ, that one "has not God."

Many of this class today — so-called "Jehovah's Witnesses," Mormons, and many others — seek to enter homes with their subtle and deadly doctrines.

Not only was the "elect lady" to refuse them entry, but she was not to give them a common greeting. For this would involve her as linked with their evil deeds. She must not show love to evil; for love must be "in truth".

Let us also solemnly abhor such evil, detaching ourselves totally from it in true devotion to Him who is "the Son of the Father in truth and love."

Third John

Beloved, I desire that in all things thou shouldest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospers.

3 John 2

3 John again has much to say about truth and love, but emphasizes love as being the necessary accompaniment of truth. For another type of evil had arisen: that of a man in the assembly apparently claiming to be acting for the truth and yet casting others out — even refusing the apostle John. If love

for the saints of God is ignored in this way, then no claims of "truth" can stand. Truth and love must stand together, as complements of one another, for in these is the very nature of God.

Gaius, to whom John writes, is himself commended because his soul prospered, and John expresses the wish that in health he should prosper similarly. He may not have been blessed with physical strength to bear much in the way of controversy; but his walking in the truth and his faithful care and love toward those who had gone forth in the work of the Lord is highly commended.

In this case the "strangers" mentioned are so different from the "deceivers" in 2 John. They were brethren before unknown to Gaius who were unselfishly devoting themselves to the work of Christ, taking nothing from the Gentiles — that is of course, from those unsaved. Just as fully as deceivers were to be refused, so fully were true servants of Christ to be received.

Let us cultivate this godly warmth of affection in a proper balance of truth by attending to the ministry of this Epistle. Again the apostle writes though he intended to come shortly.

Jude

Beloved, using all diligence to write to you of our common salvation, I have been obliged to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Jude 3

Jude ("praise"), though deeply desirous of writing, had not intended at all to write as he did. No doubt it would have been a much more pleasant and precious employment to write of the common salvation, but God, who had given him the desire to write, had Himself decided that Jude's message was to be one of intensely serious exhortation that the saints should contend earnestly for the faith.

His book has been spoken of as contemplating "the decay and death of Christianity in the world." For its subject is the apostasy, the deliberate turning of the grace of God into lasciviousness through evil men creeping into the circle of professing Christendom.

Its language is strong and prophetic. He uses the history of past occasions of revolt against the gracious authority of God to illustrate the condition that would develop in Christianity in the last days. Though Israel was blessed in being delivered from Egypt, yet through unbelief many perished in the wilderness. Even angels, greatly blessed of God, were brought down to eternal darkness because of rebellion. Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam, Korah, all provide dreadful warnings of God's just judgment.

If all this seems somberly negative, yet Jude's closing words, beginning "But ye, beloved," are a lovely positive encouragement to a faith that trusts the Living God; and "Praise" remains the becoming attitude of the child of God where God's great name has been dishonored.

Revelation

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star.

Revelation 22:16

Revelation, written by John the apostle, is a prophetic summing up of God's ways with man. A history that began in Genesis in pure freshness and simplicity now ends in great involvements and complications occasioned by man's accumulated guilt and willful disorder.

But our great God in calm, majestic deliberation unravels the tangled mass, and judges in perfect time and order according to His divine wisdom.

Three major divisions in the book will be of great help to the student: 1. "The things which thou hast seen" (ch. 1); 2. "The things which are" (chs. 2-3); 3. "The things which shall be after these" (chs. 4-22). The first is past; the second present, applying to the Church age; and the third is future. In chapters 2 and 3 the Lord Jesus is seen in sublime judicious discernment of the state of the seven assemblies, these being prophetic of the entire history of the Church from its inception to the coming of the Lord. For judgment must begin at the house of God.

The victory of the Lord Jesus over all things, His millennial kingdom, His great white throne judgment, the eternal glory of God in the new heavens and the new earth - these are some of the great issues of the book. Glorious culmination of the magnificent counsels of God!

How fitting, too, that this last word from God should declare blessing for those who read, hear, and keep its sacred truths.