

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

A short synopsis of their contents

THE OLD TESTAMENT:

GENESIS -- Creation; the fall of man; Cain and Abel; the Flood; the Tower of Babel; and the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Closes with Jacob and his family in Egypt.

EXODUS -- The birth, early history and call of Moses and Aaron; the plagues in Egypt, including the Passover; the crossing of the Red Sea; manna provided; water from the rock; the giving of the Law at Sinai; the first tables of the Law broken and the second given; the construction of the Tabernacle.

LEVITICUS -- Detailed instructions about the Law and its implications and applications. The "ceremonial law" with its offerings and feast days detailed.

NUMBERS -- A census taken near the beginning of the 40 years in the wilderness and another taken at the close of this time. A history of the 40 years, including the rebellion at Kadesh Barnea; the rebellion under Korah; the budding of Aaron's rod; the offering of the red heifer; death of Miriam; Moses and Aaron smite the rock instead of speaking to it (and are told they will not be able to enter the land); the death of Aaron; the prophecies of Balaam; some instructions to prepare them for entry into the land; the decision of Reuben, Gad and the half the tribe of Manasseh to settle east of the Jordan.

DEUTERONOMY -- Moses reviewing the Law just before the people enter Canaan -- for the sake of the new generation which had grown up since the Law was given at Sinai -- preparing them for their entrance into the land. The song of Moses and his death.

JOSHUA -- The entry into the land, its conquest, and its division among the 12 tribes. It includes the stories of the crossing of Jordan; the walls of Jericho falling down; the "long day of Joshua" when the sun stood still in the heavens for about a day; and the death of Joshua.

JUDGES -- The first 350 years (approximately) in the land. From the death of Joshua to the death of Samson -- including the stories of Deborah and Barak; Gideon; and Samson (chapters 1 - 16). Some stories are related illustrating the kind of evil conduct that caused God to chasten them over and over (chapters 17 - 21).

RUTH -- A beautiful love story, taking place during the period of the Judges, illustrating the lives of the godly remnant during this time -- and preparing a background for the introduction of David, their greatest king.

1 SAMUEL -- From the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul. The life, ministry and death of Samuel, Israel's last Judge; life, reign and death of Saul, Israel's first king; introduction and early years of David; his anointing to be king in the place of Saul; his fight with Goliath; his rejection and persecution by Saul; and his flight into the land of the Philistines to escape from him.

2 SAMUEL -- The 40 years of David's reign.

1 KINGS -- The death of David and the 40 years reign of Solomon -- including the building of the Temple (chapters 1 - 11); the division of the kingdom; the history of Judah and Israel through the reign of Ahab over Israel and of Jehoshaphat over Judah -- including most of the ministry of Elijah (chapters 12 - 22).

2 KINGS -- The history of Israel from Ahaziah until the Assyrian captivity -- including the translation of Elijah and the ministry of Elisha (chapters 1 - 17). The history of Judah from Jehoram to the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of Judah by the Babylonians -- including the stories of such wicked kings as Ahaz and Manasseh and such outstandingly good kings as Joash, Uzziah (Azariah), Hezekiah, and Josiah (chapters 1 - 25).

CHRONICLES -- In Chronicles the record goes back over the history of Judah (the kingdom of Israel is only mentioned when their history touches on Judah) from God's viewpoint. In Kings we learn what happened, while in Chronicles we often learn why it happened.

1 CHRONICLES -- Extensive genealogies (chapters 1 - 9); the death of Saul (chapter 10); and the reign of David (11 - 30).

2 CHRONICLES -- The reign of Solomon, including the building of the Temple, and the reigns of the rest of Judah's kings. Closes with the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of Judah.

EZRA -- God's people are allowed to go back to their land. A remnant of them return and rebuild the Temple.

NEHEMIAH -- The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah.

ESTHER -- God's providential care for those of Israel who did not return to the land when God had made it possible. His name is not mentioned openly, and there are no miracles, for He was hiding His face from them due to their unwillingness to return to their land. Yet He did work all things together for their good in exciting ways, delivering them from an attempt at genocide by the wicked Haman.

JOB -- A story dramatizing the problem of suffering among God's people. It took place about the time of Abraham and, *possibly*, may have been written by Moses. It is thought to be the first book of the Bible to be written.

PSALMS -- The "hymn book of Israel" as it is often called. While it is all Hebrew poetry, and covers the many problems of the heart and its relationship to God, it is also filled with prophecy as well. See Psalm 22 as an outstanding example.

PROVERBS -- Practical wisdom in the daily life.

ECCLESIASTES -- The "vanity," the emptiness, of life "under the sun" (as viewed on the basis

of what we can see, experience, or investigate). Contrast Paul's conclusion after considering the One who came from above the sun, died for those under the sun, arose and ascended back to heaven -- soon to return from above the sun for us. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is **NOT** in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

SONG OF SOLOMON -- Correctly understood, it exalts true monogamous love over the lust of Solomon, with his many wives. It seems Solomon tried to win a woman he really loved (after he already had 140 wives -- 8:6, 7), but her heart was true to her childhood sweetheart, a simple shepherd (2:8 -- contrast Solomon in 3:6 - 11), and she returned to him and his pure love.

THE MAJOR PROPHETS:

ISAIAH -- Prophecies from the reign of Uzziah through the reign of Hezekiah. Notice particularly chapter 53. He is known as "the prince of the prophets."

JEREMIAH -- Prophecies from the reign of good king Josiah through the fall of Jerusalem and the subsequent flight, of the small remnant escaping the captivity, into Egypt. He is called "the weeping prophet." He foretold the fall of Jerusalem and was greatly persecuted because of his predictions of doom on Judah.

LAMENTATIONS -- Jeremiah weeping over the fall of Jerusalem, the captivity of its people and the destruction of the Temple. The word "lamentations" means "weepings." But hear his words of testimony in the midst of it all. Standing in the ashes of Jerusalem and among the corpses of her people, he cried out, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness!" (3:22, 23).

EZEKIEL -- He had been taken captive by the Babylonians before the city of Jerusalem fell. He prophesied from Babylon both before and after that fall. He was contemporary with both Jeremiah and Daniel. Ezekiel and Daniel form a necessary background for understanding the book of Revelation.

DANIEL -- He was also a captive of the Babylonians before Jerusalem fell. He had a place of great responsibility in both the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires. To him was given the task of outlining the future history of the time referred to by Christ as "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) -- the time during which Israel would not have a king, and world government would be in the hands of Gentile nations. His prophecies are many and powerful.

THE MINOR PROPHETS:

HOSEA -- The "prophet of persevering love" (This title, and some others following on the Minor Prophets, are taken from "Explore the Book" by J. Sidlow Baxter. See his fine treatment of the Minor Prophets in volume four of this excellent work.)

JOEL -- The prophet of Pentecost. His message can be summarized by his cry, "The

Day of the Lord cometh!"

AMOS -- The herdsman prophet. His message -- "Judgment because of abused privilege."

OBADIAH -- "The prophet of poetic justice." He foretold the destruction of Edom. They gloated and rejoiced in the destruction of Jerusalem, now they are to be destroyed.

JONAH -- God's concern for the city of Nineveh and how He prevailed on Jonah to take His message to the Gentiles who lived there. See "The City of Two Tales" by W. P. Heath -- a study of both Jonah and Nahum. It is published by Grace Publications, Grand Rapids, MI.

MICAH -- Prophecies during the days of Isaiah.

NAHUM -- The doom of Nineveh prophesied. After being spared when the people living there repented in the days of Jonah, the following generations returned to the old ways and their doom is sure. Nineveh was destroyed about 185 years after the ministry of Jonah.

HABAKKUK -- Addressed to God rather than to the people. Notice the triumphant faith of Habakkuk expressed in Hab. 3:17 - 19.

ZEPHANIAH -- He was a great grandson of King Hezekiah ("Hizkia" in Zeph. 1:1 should be "Hezekiah"). He prophesied during the days of Judah's last good king, Josiah, so he was contemporary with Jeremiah. His message was "through judgment (the coming exile) to blessing."

HAGGAI -- "From this day I will bless you" (Hag. 2:19). He encouraged the remnant in Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi wrote after the exile.

ZECHARIAH -- Many outstanding prophecies growing out of the rebuilding of the Temple. Notice his clear prophecy of the salvation of all Israel (Rom. 11:26) when Christ comes in glory (Zech. 12:10).

MALACHI -- Looking toward the coming of Christ in glory. He replies to what the people were saying on many topics. He closes his book, and the Old Testament as well, with a promise of the appearance of Elijah to precede the coming of Christ (both the first coming -- fulfilled in John the Baptist, and the second coming -- evidently to be fulfilled by the return of the Old Testament Elijah himself. Compare Rev. 11:3 - 6-a).

The Old Testament closes with the statement that the earth would be smitten with a curse apart from the coming of the One to be heralded by Elijah, Christ (Mal. 4:6).

THE NEW TESTAMENT:**THE GOSPELS:****# The Four Gospels compared.**

The Gospels do not constitute a "biography" of Jesus Christ, for much necessary to a biography is left out completely. There is no record of his boyhood, aside from a brief story of his visit to the Temple when He was a lad of 12, and no record at all of his adult life until He was about 30 years of age. Instead, the four records give us a well rounded out picture of who He is and what He did. The Old Testament Scriptures seem to foreshadow the fourfold portrayal of Christ in several ways:

- * **Matthew** -- Christ as the **King**: "Behold a King" (Isa. 32:1; Zech. 9:9; John 19:14); the "Branch of David" (Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5).
- * **Mark** -- Christ as the **perfect Servant**: "Behold my Servant" (Isa. 52:13; Zech. 3:8); "My Servant the Branch" (Zech. 3:8).
- * **Luke** -- Christ as the **perfect Man**: "Behold the Man" (Zech. 6:12; John 19:5); the "Man the Branch" (Zech. 6:12).
- * **John** -- Christ as **God**: "Behold your God" (Isa. 40:9); the "Branch of the LORD [Jehovah]" (Isa. 4:2; Psa. 80:15).

Compare also the four faces of the cherubim in Ezek. 1:10; 10:14.

- * The face of a **Lion** -- Christ as **King** (Matthew's Gospel).
- * The face of an **Ox** -- Christ as **Servant**. The lowly servant of **man** in Ezek. 1:10. See Matt. 20:28; John 13:3 - 5; Rev. 4:7. In Ezek. 10:14 it is the face of a **Cherub** -- Christ as the exalted Servant of His **Father**. See Heb. 10:7; Phil. 2:7 (Mark's Gospel).
- * The face of a **Man** -- Christ as **Man** (Luke's Gospel).
- * The face of an **Eagle** -- Christ as **God** (John's Gospel).

MATTHEW -- **42%** of this material is not found in the other Gospels. Here is a list of some of the things found **only** in Matthew:

- * The genealogy of Christ through His foster father, Joseph (1:16).
- * The visit of the wise men; the flight into Egypt; and the slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem.
- * The full record of the "Sermon on the Mount" (parts of it are found in other Gospels) -- chapters 5 -- 7.
- * The full record of the "mysteries of the kingdom" -- chapter 13.
- * The full record of the "Olivet Discourse" -- chapters 24, 25 (Compare the shorter and somewhat different record in Luke 21:5 - 38).
- * The "repentance" (better, "remorse") of Judas, and his suicide -- 27:3 - 10.
- * The resurrection of some of the Old Testament saints at the resurrection of Christ -- 27:52, 53.

MARK -- Only **7%** of this material is not found in the other Gospels. The miraculous signs to follow the preaching of the gospel are found **only** in Mark -- 16:15 - 18.

- # **LUKE** -- **59%** of this material is found only in Luke. **Only** in Luke do we find:
- * The circumstances concerning the birth of John the Baptist -- 1:5 - 25, 57 - 80.
 - * The angelic announcement of the birth of Christ (1:26 - 38); Mary's visit to Elizabeth; and Elizabeth's song of praise (1:39 - 56).
 - * The birth of Christ announced to the shepherds -- 2:8 - 20.
 - * The circumcision of Christ; the visit to the Temple over two months later (see Lev. 12:6 - 8); the prophecy of Simeon; and the testimony of Anna -- 2:21 - 38.
 - * The visit to the Temple when Christ was twelve -- 2:41 - 50.
 - * The genealogy of Christ through Mary (see the footnote in the Scofield Bible on Luke 3:23) -- 3:23 - 38.
 - * The raising of the widow's son from the dead -- 7:11 - 18.
 - * Jesus anointed in the Pharisee's house -- 7:36 - 50.
 - * The sending forth of the seventy witnesses -- 10:1 - 12.
 - * Several parables, including: the Good Samaritan (10:30 - 37); the rich fool (12:16 - 34); the lost coin and the "prodigal son" (15:8 - 32); the unjust steward (16:1 - 13); the Pharisee and Publican in the Temple to pray (18:9 - 14).
 - * The story (**NOT** a parable) of Lazarus and the rich man (16:19 - 31).
 - * The cleansing of the ten lepers (17:11 - 19).
 - * The conversion of Zacchaeus (19:1 - 10).
 - * The two disciples on the road to Emmaus (24:13 - 32).

JOHN -- **93%** of this material is not found in the other Gospels!

The following items are found **only** in John (of the miracles, only the feeding of the 5,000 and the walking on the water are found in the other Gospels):

The stories of Nicodemus and the woman in Samaria are found only here. Many of the discourses -- on the new birth; the Living Water; the Bread of Life; the Good Shepherd; the Light of the World; etc. -- are found only in John. The total content of chapters 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 14 through 21 is peculiar to John. Only in John do we read of the crowd falling backwards when He said, "**I AM**" and only in John does He cry from the cross, "It is finished!"

Notice, in review, the amount of material unique to each of the four Gospels (that is, material contained in none of the other three): Matthew -- 42%; Mark -- 7%; Luke -- 59%; John -- 93%! (From "Daily Walk" Oct. 1979 -- published by the Navigators).

There are significant omissions in John's record. John leaves out Christ's genealogy, and any record of His birth, childhood and home background -- though, with Mary living in his home after the crucifixion, he no doubt knew more about these things than even Luke. The temptation and the choosing of the twelve are omitted. He does not mention the transfiguration or the agony in the garden, though he was there and the other Gospel writers were not. The ascension is left out also. He omits the Sermon on the Mount, the Olivet Discourse, the parables of the kingdom and any mention of the "gospel of the kingdom." As a matter of fact he only uses the word "kingdom" five times in three verses (3:3, 5; 18:36). Of the sayings from the Cross he omits "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?," "Thou shalt be with me in Paradise," "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," and "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

The key words found in John surely include believe, life, love, light, witness, and world. The word "witness" occurs fifty times or more. There is the witness of John the apostle (1:1 -

14; 21:24, 25), John the Baptist (1:7, 8; 3:27 - 36; 10:41, 42), Andrew (1:41, 42), Philip (1:45), Nathaniel (1:49), Nicodemus (3:2), the Samaritan woman (4:39), the man born blind (9:29 - 33), Martha (11:27), and others. Witness to the deity of Christ is borne by Christ Himself, the Father, the works of Christ, and the Scriptures (5:31 - 39; 8:12 - 18). John is truly a book of witness.

Notice the word "repent" or "repentance" is not used in John even once.

Though the word "apostle" is used once (13:16) and, even there, only referring to a "sent one" in general, the verb form of the word "apostle" is used twenty eight times. Seventeen times it speaks of Christ as sent from the Father, three times of Christ sending the believer, and twice concerning John the Baptist being sent from God. By the time his Gospel was written, John was the only apostle (of the original twelve chosen by Christ during His earthly ministry) still living -- and he was shortly to die. It was high time to recognize that all are "sent ones," though not "apostles" in the sense the twelve were.

The "**I AM**"s of John's Gospel ¹ (compare Ex. 3:14): **8:24** -- the importance of His deity announced; **8:58, 59** -- the fact of His deity rejected; **8:28** -- the fact of His deity to be demonstrated to His enemies (In Acts they reject Him **KNOWING** who He is); **13:19** -- the fact of His deity to be confirmed to the believers; **18:6** -- the power flowing from His deity through the name "**I AM**"

"**I AM!**": The **Bread of Life** (6:48); the **Light of the World** (8:12); the **Door** (10:7, 9); the **Good Shepherd** (10:11, 14); The **Resurrection and the Life** (11:25); the **Way, the Truth and the Life** (14:6); the **True Vine** (15:1).

The **SIGNS** in John (the Greek word for "sign" is used in John 2:11, 18, 23; 3:2; 4:48, 54; 6:2, 14, 26, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30):

- * Water to wine (symbolizing a new birth) -- 2:1 - 11.
- * Nobleman's son healed (a new life -- he was at the point of death) -- 4:46 - 54.
- * Healing of the impotent man (a new walk) -- 5:1 - 9.
- * Feeding of the 5,000 (new food) -- 6:1 - 14.
- * Walking on the water (a new power in our lives) -- 6:19 - 21.
- * Blind man healed (new vision) -- 9:6, 7.
- * Raising of Lazarus (new assurance of life after death) -- 11:41 - 44.
- * Miraculous catch of fish (new assurance of success) -- 21:3 - 11.
- * **PLUS** one **SUPER MIRACLE** and the greatest of the signs -- the

resurrection of Christ Himself! It was a sign worked **BY HIM** (John 2:19, 21; 10:18) -- though all three members of the Trinity were involved. It was indeed a **SIGN** (Matt. 12:39; John 8:28; Rom. 1:4).

ACTS -- Pentecost; the stoning of Stephen; the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Paul); his "missionary journeys;" the first "church council" at Jerusalem; and the history of Paul up to his

¹The expression "I am he" in the verses referenced should be simply "I am" -- the "he" is not in the Greek text. The "he" can be inferred in other passages, but the context in these verses indicates it does not belong here.

imprisonment in Rome. The historical record of the fall and setting aside of Israel and the introduction and development of this Age of Grace is perhaps the main message of the book.

ROMANS -- The major treatise on salvation (chapters 1 - 3); justification (4, 5); and sanctification (6 - 8) -- with three chapters on God's dispensational dealings with Israel (9 - 11). It gives us, in addition to teaching concerning the believer's walk, a list of the non-miraculous gifts (12) and instructions on how to deal with the weaker brother in regard to doubtful things (14).

1 CORINTHIANS --- Paul writes to a very carnal church. His letter includes some outstanding topics: the relationship between knowledge and love (8); the relationship between our "rights" ("power" in the KJV should be "right") and our responsibilities (9); the Lord's table (10:16, 17; 11:17 - 34); the miraculous gifts (chapters 12 through 14); the "love chapter" (13); and the "resurrection chapter" (15).

2 CORINTHIANS --- A treatise on ministry. Some outstanding chapters: a contrast between the Law and the ministry of the Spirit in this age of grace (3); our "great commission" (5); Christian giving (8, 9); and Paul's defense of his apostleship (11 - 13).

GALATIANS --- Paul's great treatise against legalism.

EPHESIANS & COLOSSIANS --- The Body of Christ: its heavenly character, program and destiny. Ephesians emphasizes the Body in its relationship to the Head (Christ) while Colossians has the Head Himself in the foreground. The pinnacle of Pauline doctrine is found in these two books.

PHILIPPIANS --- A "thank you letter" from Paul, the "missionary," to the church which has been supporting him in his work. Though it is such a letter it contains rich teaching of a high order. The preeminence of Christ in the believer's life is stressed. The epistle is also Paul's recipe for healing a divided church. Though he is writing from prison the book is filled with joy.

1, 2 THESSALONIANS --- The coming of the Lord. The Rapture described and our relationship to it revealed. The distinction between the Rapture and the coming in glory set forth, with the assurance we will not go through the Tribulation (1 Thess. 5:9).

1 TIMOTHY --- Instructions to Timothy as to church order and the latter times (the trend which is to characterize this age).

2 TIMOTHY --- Instructions to Timothy concerning his own ministry and the last days (the tragic culmination of the trend spoken of in 1 Timothy).

TITUS --- Instructions as to church order and the ministry of Titus. Contains full and balanced treatment of the place works have in the believer's life.

PHILEMON --- Paul's gracious handling of a difficult situation, the return of a runaway slave to

his master -- illustrating how God dealt with us. Compare vs. 17, 18 with 2 Cor. 5:21 & 8:9.

HEBREWS --- A letter to Jewish believers leading them from the shadows and types of the Old Testament to the realities and anti-types of the New. The keyword is "better." Notice the chapters setting Christ forth as our High Priest (5 -- 8) and the "faith chapter" (11).

JAMES --- Written to Jewish believers, emphasizing practical aspects of the Christian life. Compare 2:14 - 26 with Rom. 4:1 - 5 on justification (James speaks of justification before men, Paul of justification before God). See the well known discourse on the tongue (3:1 - 12).

1, 2 PETER --- Two letters from Peter to Jewish believers. Notice the theme "suffering and glory" in these letters. It will have a special significance to Jewish believers during the Great Tribulation who will be suffering greatly and looking forward to the glorious return of Christ to reign in the Millennial Kingdom.

1 JOHN --- Written by the apostle John to believers for several stated reasons. See the phrase "these things I write unto you" -- or its equivalent -- in 1:4; 2:1, 12 - 14, 21, 26; 5:13. Compare his one purpose in writing to unbelievers in his Gospel (John 20:30, 31).

2 JOHN --- A letter commending truth and warning against error.

3 JOHN --- A letter commending truth and Christian hospitality.

JUDE --- A stern warning against false teachers and the cults, particularly in the last days.

REVELATION --- A prophetic book drawing heavily from the prophecies of the Old Testament about the "Day of the Lord," relating them to one another, organizing them chronologically, and shedding the light of new revelation on them. Major topics include the Great Tribulation, the Coming of Christ in Glory, the Millennial Kingdom, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the eternal state. Genesis is the book of beginnings, and those topics introduced there find their ultimate conclusion in the book of Revelation. So the Bible is a completed revelation from God. It opens with eternity past and concludes with eternity future -- and in between all that God has to say to mankind has been said. Man's origin, history, sin, and deserved judgment are set forth -- balanced by the record of God's work of redemption made available to him. God has spoken -- it is left up to man to believe what He has said.

Bible Study # 29 --- William P. Heath

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