

THE BOOK WE TRUST

by

Brian Sherring

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Ten Words
The Meaning of Salvation

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PREFACE TO THE PARENT.

The responsibility for bringing up the child to know and love the Lord rests with the parents - especially the father. Neither book nor person can ever take their place. If this be realised then perhaps this booklet may be used with profit.

The parent is advised to read the booklet through first before giving it to the child. He will then be in a position to verify for himself the truth or otherwise of the statements made. Also the brevity of the subject matter should prompt questions; questions which will be asked by the child of the parent.

It must be realised that much has been left unsaid. The aim has been to give a very general idea of the contents of the Bible, and it has not been possible to enter into vital doctrines. The instructed parent will realise just how much has been left unsaid from such a statement as:

‘Only God as the Lord Jesus could buy us so that we should not be lost. He had to be a *relation* of ours, and so became a man’.

It is hoped that some of the more important doctrines will be dealt with in further booklets.

The ages aimed at are 10 years and upward, but with help it could be useful for a younger child. The language has been kept as simple as possible, but with the proviso that it is not *so* simple as to be incorrect. Familiar terms such as *Jews* have been preferred to *Hebrews* or *children of Israel*.

This is a tentative publication. It was written by request. If, however, this booklet can be used to the glory of God then it is sent forth to that end. May it be used to the honour of Him ‘Who loved us and gave Himself for us’.

Brian Sherring.

THE BIBLE - THE BOOK WE TRUST.

We trust the Bible because we believe it is God's Word and that what it says is true.

In this booklet we are going to see a little of what the Bible is about. Have your own Bible ready, and then you can turn up the references that I give and read them for yourself. The first reference is 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16, which will answer our first question.

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

If you have read 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16, you will already know that God caused the Bible to be written. He used men to write it for Him, but guided them about what to write. This is what the verse means when it says:

‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God’.

The word Scripture means for us today the whole Bible, and God inspired it all.

To write some parts of the Bible God used ordinary men like Peter the fisherman, and Luke the doctor. God also used men in high positions such as David the king and Moses the great leader of the Jews. So although we think of the Bible as one book, it is really many books put together inside one cover. If you count the books in your Bible you will see there are 66. The Old Testament has 39 and the New Testament 27.

All the books in the Bible should teach us something about the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we shall get to know Him and His ways. We should also get to know just how He expects us to live, and what things we should and should not do. So you can see that the Bible is an important book which we should read often.

HOW IS THE BIBLE DIVIDED?

(a) HEAVENS AND EARTH.

Parts of the Bible are about the earth and parts about the heavens. Most of the Bible is about the earth. To only one man, the apostle Paul, did God speak about His heavenly plan. Paul had then to make it known to others. We must find out more about this later.

(b) JEWS AND GENTILES.

The Jews are people who were chosen by God for a special part of His plans. They were to teach God's ways to the whole world so that all would know Him. A special country was given to them, to live in peace and to have the first place in the earth. But they disobeyed God, and have been punished by being sent away from this country into many different parts of the world. One day God will lead them back into their own country, and this time they will obey Him and become His teachers to the whole world. Then everybody will know God and His ways.

Gentiles are people who are not Jews. In other words the other people in the world apart from the Jews. God also has plans for the Gentiles. Some will live on the earth, but God's big plan for them is in the heavens. Paul tells us about this plan in part of the New Testament.

(c) PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

The Bible tells us about things that happened in the past. It also speaks about the future, and it has a message for the present.

The Lord Jesus Christ came in the past as the babe in the manger. He came to be the King of the Jews, and to die for our sins. In the future He will come again; this time with great power, to put the world right.

When we are dividing the Bible up into past, present and future, we must be careful about what parts are for us today. We want to know just what God has caused to be written for us personally. We can learn something about

the Lord Jesus by reading any part of the Bible, but not all of it is *for* us today, or *about* us. There is a verse which tells us about dividing the Bible in the right way. Turn to 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 15 and read.

Did you notice that the verse said:

‘rightly dividing the word of truth’?

The word of truth is the Bible, and it is important to divide it up properly.

Now turn to the front cover. On it you will see the two references that we have looked at so far: 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Timothy 2:15. These are both very important to remember.

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE.

What are the different books of the Bible about? We have already said that they should point us to the Lord Jesus, so this is one thing we should remember. Whatever they are about, they must teach us of Him. Four words may help us to understand the difference between the books. They are:

(1) HISTORY (2) PROPHECY (3) PRAISE (4) TEACHING.

Try to remember these four words, for every book in the Bible fits one or more of them.

(1) HISTORY.

History is stories about the past. The story of Moses in the bulrushes is history; so is David’s victory over Goliath. In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus’ birth at Bethlehem is history. You should think of many more examples.

(2) PROPHECY.

We could call prophecy the opposite of history, that is, stories about the future. Only God knows what will happen in the future, so the Bible is the only place where we can read true prophecy. The Bible tells us that one day God will lead the Jews back into their own country. This has not yet happened; it is a story of the future, and we call it prophecy. A person who spoke on God’s behalf was called a prophet and many wrote or spoke of the future. In the Old Testament, prophets wrote about the coming of the Lord Jesus to this earth, and about His death. After He had come, people could see that what the prophets had said was true.

(3) PRAISE.

Under this title we think especially of the book of Psalms. Psalms means songs, and the Psalms in our Bibles are songs of *praise* to God. Some are prayers, and some were written to remind the Jews of God’s ways with them in the past. The best known Psalm is number 23. Turn to it and read it all.

(4) TEACHING.

We can learn something from every book of the Bible, but some books are meant to *teach* us. The epistles (letters) of the New Testament written by Paul, Peter, James, John and Jude have much teaching in them. Also, in the Old Testament the book of Proverbs is a *teaching* book. As long as we always remember to *rightly divide* the Bible, then God can teach us much through these books and others in His Word.

Now we must look more closely at the books of the Bible. As we go through them, you may notice that they are not all in the right order in our Bible. This does not really matter for now, as long as we understand a little about each of them.

GENESIS (a) THE BEGINNING.

This first book of the Bible tells us the first thing we must know about God, He is the creator, He made all things. Read the whole of chapter 1 and make a list on a piece of paper of the things that God created. If you do not miss anything, you will see that God made *everything*, as we are told in other parts of the Bible.

The greatest of God's creation that we read of in this chapter was man. The first man's name was Adam and his wife was Eve. They lived in a beautiful garden in a place called Eden. In chapter 3 of Genesis we are told of someone else who came into this garden, the serpent.

The serpent is the great enemy of God, and has always tried to spoil God's plans. Today we call him Satan or the Devil. You can read some of his names in the last book of the Bible, Revelation chapter 20, verse 2:

'the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan'.

He entered the garden of Eden and spoilt things. He persuaded Eve to disobey God, and Adam disobeyed also and when they disobeyed, two things came into the world: *sin and death*.

There were two trees in the garden that were special. You can read their names in Genesis chapter 2, verse 9.

They were:

1. The tree of life.
2. The tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Adam and Eve were allowed to eat of any tree in the garden (including the tree of life) except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If they chose to eat of the tree of life they would live for ever. Read Genesis chapter 3, verse 22 where we are told this.

If they chose to eat of the other tree they would die. Now read chapter 2, verses 16,17, where we are told this. When Adam disobeyed God he chose to eat of this tree, and so became a sinner. He also let sin and death into the world.

Adam is sometimes spoken about in the New Testament. In Romans chapter 5, verse 12, he is called the *one man*, and the verse tells us that sin and death entered the world by him. It also tells us that sin and death have come upon us all.

Adam chose death by his disobedience. We can choose everlasting life by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who died for us and became our Saviour.

GENESIS (b) THE REST OF THE BOOK.

After the story of Adam and Eve, we are told of those who lived after them. There were Cain and Abel and others. Do you remember Noah and the great flood of water over the earth? This flood was brought upon the world by God because Satan had again spoilt things. Everyone was destroyed except Noah, his family and the animals in the ark. It was a terrible thing that God had to do, but the world had become so ungodly. Read 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 5, which tells us about the flood.

In Genesis we also read about the time when people began to speak different languages, and why it was so. Read the story in chapter 11, verses 1 to 9.

Abraham is the next important person in Genesis. He was the father of the Jews, and it was to him that God gave the wonderful promise of the place that the Jews would have in His earthly plan. Abraham was also shown the special country in which they would live.

From this point on in the Old Testament we read mostly about the Jews, other people are only mentioned when they had something to do with the Jews. God was working out His earthly plan, and was getting the Jews ready for their important place in it.

At the end of Genesis the Jews are seen going into Egypt as friends of Pharaoh. After many years another Pharaoh became king, and being afraid of the great number of Jews in Egypt, put them into slavery to keep them in check. The next book in the Bible, Exodus, carries on the story from here.

EXODUS - THE WAY OUT.

This book tells of the way God brought the Jews *out of Egypt*, and gave them His laws. He used Moses, who became their leader.

You will know the story of Moses in the bulrushes, and how Pharaoh's daughter took him into her house. When Moses grew up God spoke to him, telling him to go to Pharaoh and demand that the Jews be set free. When Pharaoh would not let them go, he was punished many times by God. Finally, Pharaoh had to give in, and you can read the story in Exodus chapter 12, verses 21 to 36.

The time of the year when God brought the Jews out of Egypt was remembered each year by them. Today we call it *the Passover*. It was a time when many lambs were killed, to show the Jews that they could not be freed unless a lamb died in the place of their firstborn. A lamb had to die to free us; it was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Read John chapter 1, verse 29.

Exodus also tells of the giving of God's laws to the Jews after they were freed from Egypt. You will have heard of the ten commandments, and you can read them in Exodus chapter 20, verses 1 to 17.

LEVITICUS.

Leviticus is a book about worship. It taught the Jews how they should worship the true God. Part of this worship meant that animals had to die. This may seem cruel to us today, but God was teaching the Jews an important lesson. It is a lesson that we must learn also. Read Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22.

Did you understand the last part of the verse?

'without shedding of blood is no remission'.

Remission is forgiveness, and *shedding of blood* would refer to dying. So the lesson for the Jews, and for us, is that *unless someone dies for us, then we cannot be forgiven* for sin must be paid for by death. Read Romans chapter 6, verse 23.

We are thankful that the Lord Jesus has paid for sin by dying for us, and we can have eternal or everlasting life through Him.

NUMBERS.

This book is called *Numbers* because if you look at chapter 1, verses 1 to 3, you will see that the Lord told Moses to *number* or count the Jews (children of Israel).

After God had brought the Jews out of Egypt, He was going to lead them into the promised country. When they reached the edge of this country they sent spies in to see what it was like. The spies brought back from the country some wonderful grapes and figs and pomegranates, showing the Jews what wonderful fruit grew in the land, just as God had said. The spies also told the Jews of the giants living in the land, and the Jews became frightened and would not go in.

God had promised that He would give them this good country and destroy the people living there, who were being used by Satan to spoil God's plans. However, like Adam and Eve, the Jews disobeyed God and so did not go into the land. So God turned them round away from the promised country, and sent them back to wander in the wilderness from which they had come.

The book of Numbers is about their 40 years in this wilderness.

DEUTERONOMY.

This name means *second law*. In this book the 40 years of wandering are almost over. By this time all the Jews who had refused to obey God and go into the promised country were dead. The remaining Jews were now brought again to the edge of the promised land. Moses gave the laws of God to the Jews for the *second* time.

The last chapter tells how Moses died and Joshua took over the leadership of the Jews. Read the whole of this last chapter yourself.

Joshua is a Hebrew name and Jesus a Greek name, but they have the same meaning. Joshua led the Jews into their promised land, and the Lord Jesus leads us into ours.

JOSHUA.

This book, named after the man whom God chose to lead the Jews into their promised land, tells of the way they went in, and the battles they fought.

When the Jews tried to get into the promised land, they found others already living there. These people were being used by Satan, the great enemy of God, for he, Satan, was again trying to spoil God's plans. God had promised that He would destroy these people and give the land to the Jews. There were many battles to be fought, but God kept His word, and the Jews were able to go in and possess the land. Do you remember how the walls of Jericho fell down flat? God made them fall down before Joshua and His people.

The Jews were divided into 12 tribes, and to each tribe a part of the land was given. And so the Jews settled down after many years, in the country that God had promised them. The country was called Canaan. Read Joshua chapter 23, verses 1 to 5.

JUDGES.

The Jews had now settled down in the land of Canaan. After a while they began to forget all that God had done for them, and began to displease Him. They became disobedient, and God had to punish them. Read chapter 2, verses 11 to 15.

God allowed people from other countries to make the Jews slaves because of their disobedience. It was then that the Jews prayed to God to be set free and He heard them. He sent a man called a *judge* to deliver them. The judge set things right and was a ruler over the Jews for a while.

The Jews soon began again to forget God, and He again punished them by sending them into slavery. When in slavery they turned to the only one who could help them and cried again to God for deliverance. Another *judge* was used by God to free them and put things right again.

Many times during this period the Jews forgot God, and were often in slavery as a punishment. But every time they turned back to Him and cried for deliverance He was merciful and sent them a *judge*, and they were freed. Therefore this book is called *Judges*.

RUTH.

This lovely little book is the story of one family who lived in the time of the Judges. It is a very important book to understand, because it gives us the reason why God had to become a man in order to die for our sins and redeem us.

In this book we are told how all the men of this family died, and the piece of land belonging to them was lost. It was important that this land should not be lost, and the story is about the way it was bought back again. It meant that a *man* had to marry into the family, *but not just any man*. He had to be a *relation*, somebody like a brother or an uncle. He was called a *kinsman redeemer*.

In our story Boaz was the kinsman redeemer, who married Ruth and bought the piece of land that was lost. For us the Lord Jesus Christ is the *Kinsman Redeemer*, Who is God as well as man, and so is related to us. He has redeemed us.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Let us stop looking at the different books of the Bible for a short while, to see if we can remember what we have learnt about the Lord Jesus Christ so far.

You remember that we said at the beginning of this booklet that all the books of the Bible should teach us something about the Lord Jesus. How have they done so?

1. Adam chose to eat of the tree that brought death, and not the tree of life. Only the Lord Jesus can give everlasting life.
2. The Passover was the time when God brought the Jews out of Egypt - out of slavery. Lambs had to die to bring this about. The Lord Jesus became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, by bearing it Himself. He frees us from the slavery of sin in the same way.
3. The many animals that had to die taught the Jews that there could be no forgiveness without death. The Lord Jesus died so that we might have forgiveness of sins.
4. Joshua led the Jews into their promised land. The Lord Jesus leads us into ours. Where this is for us we will learn later.
5. Only a relation, the kinsman redeemer, could marry Ruth and buy or redeem the lost piece of land. Only God as the Lord Jesus could redeem us. He is our Kinsman Redeemer. Only God as the Lord Jesus could buy us so that we should not be lost. He had to be a *relation* of ours, and so became a man.

1 AND 2 SAMUEL.

We have now reached the books called after Samuel. These books carry on the story of the Jews from the time when the judges ruled over them. There are four names that we should remember especially. They are Samuel, Saul, David and Solomon. Samuel was a prophet; Saul, David and Solomon were kings.

1 Samuel begins with the birth of Samuel, whom God used to anoint Saul and David as kings. The Jews wanted a king to rule over them like the other countries round about. In wanting a king they had rejected God, for He was really their king. Samuel was not pleased about it but God told him to anoint Saul as king of the Jews. Samuel was also to warn them that Saul would be a hard king, and take away many things from them. The Jews would not listen to Samuel, and so Saul became king.

It was during the time that Saul was king that the shepherd boy David killed Goliath. This of course made David famous, and he became more popular than Saul. Saul was angry, and after a while tried to kill David.

David finally had to run away from Saul, and Saul was often seeking David's life from then on.

After Saul died, David became king. *2 Samuel* carries on the story of the Jews from when Saul died. There was no real peace for the Jews in those days, and David had often to fight in battles with countries round about. He won many victories over his enemies.

David wanted to build a temple for the Lord but He would not allow it, for David had been a man of war. The Lord said that David's son, Solomon, could build it. Solomon became king after David, and it was more peaceful during his reign. Read 1 Kings chapter 5, verses 2 to 5.

1 AND 2 KINGS.

1 Kings tells of the death of David, and of Solomon's reign as king. The Lord spoke to Solomon, and gave him the opportunity to ask for anything that he wanted. Solomon asked the Lord for wisdom. He could have asked for riches, as many men might do, but because he chose wisdom the Lord was pleased with him, and gave him riches as well. Read *1 Kings* chapter 3, verses 5 to 13.

So Solomon became a rich and wise king, and was able to have anything he wanted. In the book called *Ecclesiastes*, which Solomon wrote, he tells us that he was able to try everything in the world, and that it was all vanity, it was empty and ended in death. Only the Lord Jesus can make the things in this world worthwhile. Apart from Him all is empty.

After Solomon's death the Jews became split into two kingdoms. The twelve tribes were divided under two kings. Ten of the tribes became the *Northern Kingdom*, and the other two, the *Southern Kingdom*. The ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom are sometimes called *Israel* in the Bible, and the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom, *Judah*.

The rest of *1 Kings* and the whole of *2 Kings* are about these two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, and the *kings* who reigned over them. Neither kingdom was very faithful to God, and both were sent into slavery by Him. First the Northern Kingdom was taken by a powerful country called *Assyria*, and later the Southern Kingdom became subject to *Babylon*. The prophets, which we will look at later, warned the Jews many times of this slavery, but they would not listen, and continued in their disobedient ways. At the end of *2 Kings*, both kingdoms had tasted the punishment of God for their disobedience. Read *2 Kings* chapter 25, verses 8 to 11.

1 AND 2 CHRONICLES.

It is not easy to understand the place that these two books have in the Bible, because they tell many of the same stories as *Samuel* and *Kings*.

1 Chronicles begins with a long list of names, showing how the Jews had descended from Adam, the first man. This list makes difficult reading, but is very important. We have already said that the Lord Jesus had to be *related* to us in order to redeem us. Later on in *Luke's Gospel* this list is extended to reach the Lord Jesus, showing how He is related to Adam, and to us.

The rest of *1 Chronicles* and the whole of *2 Chronicles* tell us again of David, Solomon and the kings who reigned after them over the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Read *2 Chronicles* chapter 36, verses 5 to 23.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon came up against Judah and took them as slaves into Babylon. God allowed this because of their disobedience. Nebuchadnezzar also burnt the house of God (the temple), and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the capital city where Solomon had built the temple for God during the peaceful days of his reign.

After a while another country became strong - Persia.

God had chosen the Persian king, Cyrus, to deliver Judah from Babylon.

EZRA - NEHEMIAH.

These next two books carry on the story from *2 Chronicles*. If you read *Ezra* chapter 1, verse 1, you will see that it is almost exactly the same as *2 Chronicles* chapter 36, verse 22. Compare these two verses.

Ezra and Nehemiah tell of the way that God freed Judah from the king of Babylon, and how they went back to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple and walls. Read *Ezra* chapter 1, verses 1 to 8.

ESTHER.

Esther was a young Jewish woman who lived during the time when the Jews were in Babylon. She became queen of Persia, and so was able to help the Jews.

Read Esther chapter 2, verses 15 to 17, where Esther is chosen as queen instead of Vashti, who had made the king angry by her disobedience.

JOB.

Job is probably the oldest book in the Bible. It is not about the Jews, but about one man - *Job*, and the terrible things that happened to him.

First of all Job's cattle and camels were taken from him, and his sheep and servants killed. Then his sons and daughters were killed. Finally Job himself became very ill. The book shows us that Satan, the great enemy of God, was the cause of all this trouble.

Job's friends talked about why these things had happened to Job, but were not able to give the right answer. They could not see that Satan was being allowed to *test* Job's trust in God.

Job cried out to God in his trouble, and God heard him. Job became well again, and God gave him sheep, camels and cattle, far more than he had before. God also gave Job sons and daughters.

Job is known for his patience. Terrible things happened to him, but in spite of it all he still trusted in God. He knew about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. Read chapter 19, verses 23 to 26.

This book can be a lesson to us. We do not know what may happen to us or what we may have to go through, but we can be like Job and trust in God. The Lord Jesus is our Redeemer too, and so we need not be afraid of anything. We have a promise in the New Testament that all things will come out well in the end, as they did with Job. You can read the promise in Romans chapter 8, verse 28, but notice that it is for *them that love God*.

PSALMS.

We have already seen that *psalms* means songs. *The Psalms* were used by the Jews at different times, in the somewhat similar way in which people sing hymns in church today. The Lord Jesus and His disciples sang a psalm on the night when He ate that last supper with them, just before He was crucified.

Nearly half of the psalms have the name of David, and were either written by him or for him.

Psalms 119 is an interesting one. Open your Bible and look at it. You will see that it is very long, and is divided into parts. Each part is headed by a strange name. Look at the first part, the name is ALEPH. Then we have BETH, then GIMEL. These strange names are the Jewish alphabet. ALEPH is the name of the first letter, BETH the second, and so on. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, so the psalm is divided into 22 parts.

Some of the psalms are prophecies. They told of things that would happen to the Lord Jesus on the day He died. Read Psalm 22, verses 1 to 18, and then read Matthew chapter 27, verses 35 to 46. See if you can find the three places in the psalm which are referred to in Matthew.

PROVERBS.

The first verse in this book tells us with whom the Proverbs are associated. They were either written *for* Solomon or *by* him. Those he wrote himself would be the result of what he learnt as king of the Jews; the others were written to help him. Remember that God caused *all* of them to be written, as with all parts of the Bible. Although written so many years ago, they can still help us today in the way that we live. Read Proverbs chapter 13, verse 1. This verse if written today would probably look like this:

'A sensible son listens to what his father says, but one who would laugh at his father, does not listen'.

ECCLESIASTES.

This book is also to do with Solomon the king. He wrote it after he had tried all that the world had to offer. Read chapter 1, verses 12 to 14, where he set his mind to find out about all things done in the world, and how,

without God, it is all vanity. Do you remember that we said only the Lord Jesus can make the things in this world worthwhile?

Apart from Him all is vanity - empty.

SONG OF SOLOMON.

The name of this book seems to suggest that Solomon wrote it, but this is not so. It could be that the book was written *for* Solomon, or it may even be *about* him. In any case, the most we can say in a short booklet like this is that it is a love story.

THE PROPHETS.

The rest of the Old Testament is taken up with the prophets. There are 16 in all, 4 which we call *major prophets*, and 12 *minor prophets*. God caused them *all* to be written, so the names *major* and *minor* do not mean that some are more important than others. They are *all important*, but four of them are *longer* than the rest, and so are called *major prophets*. The four major prophets are:

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

Now write out the 12 minor prophets, by turning to the first one, Hosea, and then carrying on through the Old Testament until you have them all.

We have already said that some prophets spoke of things to come. Some of the things they said have already happened, but others have still to take place in the future. The prophets spoke about the Lord Jesus Christ, who came in the past, and will come again in the future.

To help us remember something about the prophets, we notice that they prophesied during three periods of the history of the Jews.

1. When the Jews (children of Israel) were divided into two kingdoms (Israel and Judah).
2. When Judah were slaves in Babylon.
3. After Judah had been freed from Babylon.

Let us look at these three periods.

- (1) When the Jews (children of Israel) were divided into two kingdoms.

The prophets who spoke during this time were:

Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Jeremiah.

Do not worry if you forget which prophets belong to which period; you can always look it up in this booklet. The important thing is to remember something about the three periods.

The period we are thinking about at the moment is when there were the two kingdoms, Israel in the north, and Judah in the south.

Some of the prophets we have just listed spoke to Israel, some to Judah, and some had warnings for both kingdoms. They warned the Jews (children of Israel) that God would punish them if they did not change their ways.

One prophet during this time was sent to warn the people of Nineveh, the capital of *Assyria*. His name was *Jonah*, and you probably know something about him. Do you remember that *Assyria* took the Northern kingdom, Israel, as slaves? Some of the other prophets warned Israel of this.

Other prophets at this time also foretold of later days when Judah would suffer under Babylon. The Jews were often disobedient to God, not listening to the warnings of the prophets, and so the strong nations of *Assyria*, and

later Babylon, were used to punish them. God has warnings for today, men are disobedient, and so one day they too will have to be punished by God, as the Jews were of old.

(2) When Judah were slaves in Babylon.

When Judah had finally gone into slavery in Babylon, God again sent prophets to them. The following belong to this time:

Daniel, Joel, Ezekiel, probably Obadiah and Jeremiah again.

Jeremiah, as you can see, prophesied for a long time. He foretold the length of time Judah would spend in Babylon. See how long this was in Jeremiah chapter 25, verse 11.

Daniel also made some wonderful prophecies about the future of the Jews. Do you remember what happened to Daniel? He foretold that after *Babylon*, the Jews would be subject to *Persia*, and then *Greece*. Finally, in the time of the Lord Jesus, the Jews would be subject to *Rome*. Daniel spoke of the death of the Lord Jesus (the Messiah), you can read this in Daniel chapter 9, verses 25 and 26. The Messiah was to be *cut off*, He was, He was crucified.

(3) After Judah had been freed from Babylon.

The prophets who spoke after the return of the Jews to their own land were:

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Malachi spoke of the coming of John the Baptist, who would come before the Lord Jesus Christ.

Zechariah spoke of the future (second) coming of the Lord Jesus to this earth, when He will gather the Jews back to their own land, and be king over all the earth. In Zechariah we see the Jews at last as the people that God intended them to be. They will have the first place among all the peoples of the world, and people of all countries will travel to Jerusalem to worship the Lord Jesus. This has not happened yet; we live in the time when we are awaiting the return of the Lord Jesus.

We have now looked at all the books of the Old Testament except one. Did you notice which one we missed? Look at the book after Jeremiah the prophet.

The book is about the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Do you remember we read about this in 2 Chronicles?

The book is called *The Lamentations of Jeremiah*. Jeremiah sits crying as he thinks about the things which had happened to Jerusalem, and his sad words are written in this book.

The sadness of Jeremiah over Jerusalem must have been like the sadness of many of the Jews many years later, when they were being ruled by the Romans. Do you remember that Daniel had foretold this? Into this sadness the Lord Jesus Christ came to be the King of the Jews, and to save His people from their sins. To read about His coming we must turn to the New Testament.

THE FOUR GOSPELS.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John tell us about the coming of God to this earth as the Lord Jesus. They tell how He lived here and what He did, and finally how He died on the cross, rose from the dead and went back again into heaven. Each gospel writer saw the Lord Jesus in a different way, and so wrote about Him. We must now see what they had to say about Him.

MATTHEW.

Matthew wrote about the Lord Jesus as the *King* of the Jews, and he wrote particularly for Jewish readers. He showed how the Lord Jesus was descended from Abraham and David, and so was *related to the Jews*. The Lord Jesus had come to set up a kingdom on the earth, and John the Baptist announced this to the Jews. He said that the kingdom was 'at hand', it had almost come. He told them they should repent, change their ways, for they had become disobedient to God in many ways. Read Matthew chapter 3, verses 1 to 3.

The Jews would not accept the Lord Jesus as their King and crucified Him. Just before they crucified Him, they pretended to believe in Him as their King, but they were only laughing at Him. Read Matthew chapter 27, verses 27 to 37.

Today we know the Lord Jesus will be more than King over the earth. See what He is called in 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 15.

When the Lord Jesus came to this earth the first time, He was rejected by the Jews and crucified. When He returns they will accept Him as their *King*.

MARK.

In Mark the Lord Jesus is seen as a *Servant*. Read Mark chapter 10, verse 45. We could write the verse like this:

'For even the Son of man came not to be served, but to be a servant, and to give His life a ransom for many'.

The name 'Son of man' is one of the names of the Lord Jesus.

Mark wrote his gospel about Christ for the Romans, the rulers of the world at the time. They would understand the idea of a servant or slave and his position, for they had many slaves who served them. The Lord Jesus was a servant because He came to do the wishes of His Father in heaven. He showed to man what those wishes are.

We think of a servant as doing hard work, and this is exactly what the Lord Jesus did on earth. When the sick were brought to Him we read 'He healed them every one'. Sometimes He worked so hard that He fell asleep with tiredness. The Lord Jesus also had the enemy of God, Satan, against Him. Do you remember how Satan tempted the Lord Jesus in the wilderness? Read Mark chapter 1, verses 12 and 13.

Satan often tried to prevent the Lord Jesus from doing the wishes of His Father. All these things, the healing and the opposition of Satan, made life very hard for the Lord Jesus. He knew the hard life of a *servant*.

If we would be a servant for Him we may find it hard also, but He has told us to put all our worries, all the things which make it hard for us, upon Him, and He will carry them for us. Read 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 7. We could say that this verse means:

'Putting all your worries upon Him (the Lord Jesus) because He cares for you'.

LUKE.

Luke wrote his gospel for the Greeks. Now the Greeks admired fine men, and so in Luke the Lord Jesus is seen as the *Perfect Man*.

Luke shows how the Lord Jesus is descended from Adam, the first man, and so is *related to us all*. Do you remember, when we were looking at the book of Ruth, how we said that just as Boaz had to be related to Ruth to redeem, so the Lord Jesus had to be related to us, and become man, in order to redeem us?

Luke was a doctor who went about with the apostle Paul. He also wrote *The Acts of The Apostles*. It was Luke who prepared the way for what Paul wrote later in his letters to the Gentiles. Paul became the apostle to the Gentiles, and has an important message for us today. Luke shows that although the Lord Jesus came to the Jews, yet the Gentiles were not forgotten, and Paul had more to say about this.

So far then we have seen that:

Matthew wrote of Christ as *King*.

Mark wrote of Christ as *Servant* and

Luke wrote of Christ as *Man*.

There is one gospel left: *John*, and in it we should see another side of the Lord Jesus Christ of which we have already spoken.

JOHN.

Read John chapter 1, verses 1 to 14.

In these verses we read of someone called *the Word*. We are told two things about Him:

1. The Word was God (verse 1).
2. The Word was made flesh and dwelt (lived) among us (verse 14).

We know that the One who *lived among us* was the Lord Jesus, so that *the Word* must be one of His names. In John's Gospel the Lord Jesus (the Word) is seen as *God*.

The message which John had was for the world, and his message is for today, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. When we were looking at Genesis, we saw how Adam chose the tree of death instead of the tree of life. We said that only the Lord Jesus could give everlasting life. John, in his gospel, tells us how we might have that life. Read John chapter 20, verse 31.

How can we have everlasting life? By believing that:

'Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God'.

If we believe in Him, we will also believe that He died and rose again for us.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

The gospels tell the story of how the Lord Jesus came to this earth, lived among us, died on the cross and rose again to return to heaven. When we read the first part of the book called *The Acts of the Apostles*, we see the Lord Jesus returning to heaven. Read Acts chapter 1, verses 1 to 11.

Did you notice in the last part of verse 11, that there is a promise that the Lord Jesus would *return*?

God does not break His promises. He has promised that the Jews will be a great people in the earth, and that He will be their King. He came Himself to the Jews but they would not have Him as King - this we read in the gospels. In the Acts He sends His servants *again* to the Jews, and they are given another opportunity of accepting Him. Again they were commanded to change their ways (to repent) and to accept Him, *then He would return to them*. Read Acts chapter 3, verses 19 and 20.

The Acts is the story of how these servants of Christ went to the Jews at first, and then to the Gentiles, to tell them what Christ had done for them, and how He could return at any moment. The Jews again would not have Him as either King or Saviour, and only a few believed the servants of Christ.

Why did the Jews not believe? Well, do not forget Satan, the great enemy of God, he was again trying to spoil God's plans. It began to look as though Satan was winning.

In the last chapter of Acts we are told how God turned away from the Jews. They had rejected Him, and so He rejected them for a while. God turned to the Gentiles and to another part of His plans, for the Jews could not be used at this time to bless the whole world, because of their disobedience. Read Acts chapter 28, verses 23 to 29.

THE JEWS - WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THEM?

From the time when God chose Abraham out from other people, the Jews had been a special people to God. They were to be His servants, to do His wishes. They were given a special country to live in and special laws to live by. God was preparing them to take His word to the rest of the world. This was God's earthly plan.

For many years God had put up with their disobedience in turning from His ways. He had punished them by sending them into slavery, but they still did not seem to learn. Finally, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself came to them as their Saviour and King, and they rejected Him. They crucified Him.

During the Acts they were given another opportunity to believe in Him, and God commanded them to do so, but again they refused. Three things happened:

1. Christ did not return to them.
2. They were no longer a special people to God, and so could not be used to take His salvation to the world.
3. God turned away from them to the Gentiles, and began another part of His plans, the heavenly part.

It was this *turning to the Gentiles* which Paul spoke of in Acts chapter 28, verse 28. This was something which God had kept secret. Now Paul made it known, Satan had not won.

WHAT IS GOD DOING TODAY?

From the time when God turned away from the Jews He has been working out another part of His plans. This has to do with the heavens, and only one man has anything to say about it - the apostle Paul. Even Paul only writes about the heavenly plan in *some* of his letters. This is because he wrote seven of his letters *before* God made known to him His heavenly plan. In a future booklet we must see what this plan is about, but now we must look at the other books in the New Testament.

THE LETTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

After the Acts of the Apostles there are 21 books in the New Testament which are really letters. They are called *epistles* in our Bible. Some of these letters have to do with God's earthly plan through the Jews, and some with God's heavenly plan for the Gentiles. We must, of course, be careful which are which.

Fourteen of the letters were written by Paul, and seven by other writers - Peter, James, John, and Jude. Of the fourteen written by Paul, *seven* have to do with the earthly plan, and *seven* with the heavenly. Look at it like this:

- (1) God's purpose through the Jews - the earth.

7 letters by Paul.

Romans
1 and 2 Corinthians
Galatians
1 and 2 Thessalonians
Hebrews

7 letters by others.

James
1 and 2 Peter
1, 2 and 3 John
Jude

- (2) God's purpose for the Gentiles - the heavens.

7 letters by Paul

Ephesians	1 and 2 Timothy
Philippians	Titus
Colossians	Philemon

There is not the room in this small booklet to look at each letter on its own, because there is so much *teaching* in each. If you learn by heart to which part of God's plan each letter belongs, then you will be ready to understand what is written in them.

Now we have seen that God has a plan for the earth, in which he will use the Jews when they are saved. And He has a plan for the heavens, especially to do with saved Gentiles. At the moment He is working out the heavenly plan, but one day this part of His work will be finished. *Then* He will again be working on the earthly plan. *The Revelation*, the last book in the Bible is about this.

THE REVELATION.

At last the Jews will take their place on the earth that God has for them, and Revelation is about the time which leads up to that. The Jews will suffer many things from other people before finally Christ returns, saves, and blesses them. There will be 1,000 years during which the Jews will have the chief place on the earth. During this time Satan, the great enemy of God, will be bound - he will be unable to spoil any more. After the 1,000 years he will be set free, and as he again tries to spoil God's plans, so he will be finally destroyed.

This present earth will also be destroyed, and God will create a new heaven and a new earth, in which there is no sin or death - the things that Adam let into this world. What a day that will be for those who love the Lord Jesus and believe in Him. Let us read about these new things in Revelation chapter 21, verses 1 to 5.

We have come to the end of this booklet. We have seen a little of what the books of the Bible are about. Our next booklet will be about the Saviour, and the salvation He has provided for us.

FOR YOUR NOTES

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