

Lessons 1-6

- 1 Proof of the Bible Part One
- 2 Proof of the Bible Part Two
- 3 Time of Ezra and Nehemiah - Fifth Period of Canonization
- 4 How the New Testament Came Together
- 5 The Inspired Order of the Books of the Bible
- 6 Introductory Survey Approach of Studying the Bible
- 7 Genesis 1 - 3
- 8 Genesis 4 - 9 Part One
- 9 Genesis 4 - 9 Part Two
- 10 Genesis 10 - 11
- 11 Genesis 12 - 36
- 12 Genesis 37 - 50
- 13 Exodus 1 - 18
- 14 Exodus 19 - 40
- 15 Leviticus Part One
- 16 Leviticus Part Two
- 17 Numbers
- 18 Deuteronomy
- 19 Joshua
- 20 Judges
- 21 I Samuel 1 - 15 & I Chronicles 1 - 9
- 22 I Samuel 16 - 31 & I Chronicles 10
- 23 II Samuel 1 - 20 & I Chronicles 11 - 20
- 24 II Samuel 21 - 24 & I Kings 1 - 11 & I Chron. 21 - 29 & II Chron. 1 - 9
- 25 I Kings 12 - 22, II Kings 1 - 2, II Chronicles 10 - 20
- 26 II Kings 3 - 25 and II Chronicles 21 - 36
- 27 Ezra and Nehemiah
- 28 Between the Testaments
- 29 Introduction Survey of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
- 30 Matt. 1 - 4:11; Mark 1:1-13; Luke 1 - 4:13; John 1 - 2:12
- 31 Matt. 4:12 - 9:17; Mark 1:14 - 2:22; Luke 4:14 - 5:39; John 2:13 - 4:54
- 32 Matt.8,11,12,13; Mark 2:23 - 4:20; Luke 6:1 - 8:15; John 5
- 33 Matt. 8,9,10,13,14; Mark 4:21 - 6:29; Luke 8:16 - 9:9
- 34 Matt 14:13 - 17:23; Mark 6:30 - 9:32; Luke 9:10-45; John 6:1 - 7:1
- 35 Matt.17:24 - 18:35; Mark 9:33 - 10:1; Luke 9:46 - 12:59; John 7:2 - 10:21
- 36 Matt. 19; Mark 10; Luke 13 - 19:29; John 10:22 - 12:11
- 37 Matt. 20:18 - 25:13; Mark 11:1 - 13:37; Luke 19:29 - 21:38; John 12:12-50
- 38 Matthew 25:14 - 26:75; Mark 13:37 - 14:72; Luke 22:1-62; John 13:1 - 18:27
- 39 Matt. 27:1 - 28:20; Mark 15:1 - 16:20; Luke 22:66;24:53; John 18:28 - 21:25
- 40 Acts 1 - 9
- 41 Acts 10 - 17
- 42 Acts 18 - 28
- 43 General Epistles
- 44 James
- 45 I & II Peter
- 46 I, II, III John & Jude
- 47 Major Prophets - Introduction
- 48 Isaiah 1 - 14
- 49 Isaiah 15 - 35
- 50 Isaiah 36 - 49
- 51 Isaiah 50 - 66
- 52 Jeremiah 1 - 15
- 53 Jeremiah 16 - 34
- 54 Jeremiah 35 - 52
- 55 Ezekiel 1 - 16
- 56 Ezekiel 17 - 32
- 57 Ezekiel 33 - 48
- 58 Background - Apostle Paul
- 59 I & II Thessalonians
- 60 Galatians
- 61 I Corinthians
- 62 II Corinthians
- 63 Romans
- 64 Colossians & Philemon
- 65 Ephesians & Philippians
- 66 Hebrews
- 67 I Timothy & Titus
- 68 II Timothy
- 69 Battle Against First Century Heresies
- 70 Minor Prophets - Introduction
- 71 Hosea & Joel
- 72 Amos, Obediah, and Jonah
- 73 Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and
- 74 Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi
- 75 The Writings - Introduction
- 76 Psalms 1 - 41
- 77 Psalms 42 - 72
- 78 Psalms 73 - 89
- 79 Psalms 90 - 106
- 80 Psalms 107 - 150
- 81 Proverbs 1 - 9
- 82 Proverbs 10 - 22:16
- 83 Proverbs 22:17 - 31:31
- 84 Job
- 85 Song of Solomon
- 86 Ruth
- 87 Lamentations
- 88 Ecclesiastes
- 89 Esther
- 90 Daniel Part One
- 91 Daniel Part Two
- 92 Ezra, Nehemiah and I & II Chron.
- 93 Revelation - Introduction
- 94 Revelation 1 - 3
- 95 Revelation 4 - 6
- 96 Revelation 7 - 10
- 97 Revelation 11 - 13
- 98 Revelation 14 - 18
- 99 Revelation 19 - 22
- 100 Questions & Answers

Lafayette Bible Study

By Mr. John Ogwyn

July 21, 1987

Lesson # 1

Proof of the Bible Series (Part 1)

(Chart at end)

I've given some consideration as to what to get into by way of Bible study. There are many different things we could go through and, undoubtedly (in the time ahead of us), many things that we will go through. I felt that maybe a good place to start would be to **go back to the Bible itself—to take some time as to the proof of the Bible, the origin of the Bible, etc.**

Many times we, in the western world, take this Book for granted. The Bible is a book that we have grown up with, whether we grew up in the Church or not. We grew up with a certain familiarity with the Bible. Everybody had a Bible, heard of a Bible or knew about a Bible. We kind of take for granted the fact this is God's Book.

If we were to look around the world, there are many people in many areas of the world—many different societies and cultures—that certainly don't recognize the Bible as being anything in particular. And there are differences that come in, even as far as what constitutes the Bible. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, regards the books that compose the Bible as being different from the books that we normally use in our Bibles. Why is the Bible that we use in God's Church the same as what is used in the Protestant world, as opposed to the Bible that is used in the Catholic world?

Most of you are undoubtedly familiar with the books in the Catholic Bible that are different. There are several books that are included—the so-called Apocrypha books, as well as certain endings on some other books. There are various things that are included that you don't find in the Bible we customarily use. Why is that? Why the difference and how can you know that the books that you are using as the Bible consist of the books that God wanted preserved? How did it come about? Who decided that this is the Bible? Who had the right to decide that and what gave them the right to decide?

The Roman Catholic Church, of course, claims that they are the ones who have the right to decide what the Bible is. That's why, after the Protestant Reformation had its beginnings with Martin Luther, the Roman Catholic Church, at the Council at Trent, declared certain books to be part of Scripture—the books that constitute the Catholic canon.

The word "canon" is a word that simply means "measure." It comes from a Greek term that had to do with a measuring rod. When you speak of canon in terms of the Bible, you are not talking about something you shoot—a big gun. "Canon" comes from the Greek term which meant "a measuring rod." In other words, the canon was the books that measured up. That's kind of the sense of the word. That's the meaning. It's sort of a technical term that's used and that's the origin of it. It refers to those books that measure up or don't measure up. Going back to ancient times, it was the term that was used. We will be talking about the canon, or the canonization, and the books that composed the canon, or the books that are not considered a part of the canon.

The Roman Catholic Church had the council of Trent in the 16th century, following the Protestant Reformation. The Protestants said the Bible is supreme. This was their claim. That is not the way it actually worked out in practice, but their claim was that the Bible is supreme. The Catholic Church said, 'You don't even know what the Bible is and the church is supreme. The church is superior to the Bible because the church determines what the Bible is. And to prove that, we will add some books! We will declare, as a part of the canon, books that have been kind of on the borderline. We will declare those as a part of the Bible. We will fix the canon and we will determine—we will decide—what is in the Bible and what is not. We are the ones that decided it and established the Bible to begin with.' This was their claim. Is this true? The Catholic Church claims to be the one who provided the Bible. Is that really an accurate statement? What about the Old Testament? What about the New Testament? When was it written? Who wrote it? How do you know which books are a part of the Bible?

Jesus Christ said that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). If we are going to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Father, how do you know that this Book, the Bible, consist of every word of God? How do you know we have the whole thing? Maybe we just have part of it. Can we be sure?

From time to time, we read of certain obscure books. Maybe you've heard of certain books termed "lost books of the Bible." Various books, sometimes, would turn up—the Apocrypha,

books that are normally used as a part of the Catholic canon—and there are other books floating around from ancient times that even the Catholic Church does not consider a part of the canon. But you hear of them: the book of Enoch, Jasher and various ones. Sometimes they are even referred to in the Bible. In the Bible itself, you read a mention of the so-called book of Jasher and of certain other books like that (Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18). What about these books? Are they supposed to be a part of the Bible? Can you know if we have the whole Bible? Who decided that it was the Bible and how was it preserved? The copy we have in front of us—where did it come from? How do we know that this Book we have right here in front of us is God's Book for us? How do we know that this is all of it? How do we know that there are not other books floating around somewhere that somebody will dig up, that maybe we ought to add in? How do we know that the books we have are all the books that God intended?

There are several things that we might look at. Romans 3 is one good place to start.

Romans 3:1, Paul asked, "What advantage then has the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision?"

Verse 2, he answers it, "Much in every way! [Here is the chief advantage the Jews had.] Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God." "Oracles" means "the Word of God." The chief advantage that the Jews had is that, 'to them were given the Word of God.'

Verse 3, "For what if some did not believe it? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?" The advantage that the Jews had was that to them were given the Word of God! What if they didn't believe it? What if some of them did not practice it? Many of them today do not practice it. Does their unbelief make the faithfulness of God of none effect?

If God was going to give His Word to someone, does it make sense that God would then break His Word? Does God inspire something to be written, but is helpless to preserve it? Are you going to go out and dig it up somewhere and then not know if you've found the right thing or the wrong thing? If God is going to inspire something as His Word, then there needs to be some means of preserving it and of guaranteeing that what we have—what God's people have had through the centuries—is what God wanted them to have.

Now, if you are going to do that, then there has to be someone to preserve it. That was the job the Jews had. Their chief advantage is that they

had committed to them the keeping of God's Word. If they didn't believe it, that didn't affect it. They still had to keep God's Word. God was going to be faithful. It was God's responsibility to preserve it. He used them as human instruments. God can use human beings in spite of themselves and has done so many times. God utilized the Jews to preserve His Word.

There is an interesting statement that Jesus made in the book of Matthew in what is called the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:17-18, "'Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill [fill to the full]. For assuredly, I say to you, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass away from the law till all is fulfilled.'"

Now what does "one jot or one tittle" mean? The term "jot" refers to the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, pronounced in Hebrew as "yad." It looks like a little apostrophe, and it is the Hebrew letter that is the equivalent of our "y" or "i" sound. It is the smallest, least significant-looking letter. It looks like a little apostrophe. The "tittle" referred to kind of a decoration that was put on certain letters of the alphabet, particularly the ending letters of a word. What Christ is saying in effect is, 'not the dotting of one "i", not the crossing of one "t" is going to disappear. Everything is going to be preserved to the letter.'

That's a pretty strong statement. He said it would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the dotting of an "i" or the crossing of a "t" to pass away from the Old Testament! It's interesting because even though the Jews have not obeyed—certainly not obeyed in the spirit of the law—many of the instructions that God gave, they historically have had a regard and a certain reverence for the Bible—the Holy Scriptures.

The Jews don't use the term "Old Testament." The obvious reason is that if you have an Old Testament, then you must, therefore, have a New Testament. The Jews do not recognize the authority of the New Testament because as a nation, they rejected Christ as being the Messiah spoken of in the Scriptures. They have, therefore, rejected the authority of the New Testament. The New Testament was preserved in a different manner. We will address that at a later time. The Jews have preserved the Old Testament, or as they have termed it, "the Holy Scriptures" or "the Sacred Writings."

It is interesting the way in which the Old Testament has been preserved. There was a group of scribes known as the "Sopherim" that

were responsible for the transcribing of the Old Testament. This was a lifetime job. This was a major job. The Sopherim were a very meticulous, technical and detail-minded people. They devised various ways to make sure that nothing got lost.

In the Hebrew language, each letter has numeric significance. Most of us are familiar with Roman numerals. “I” is “1,” “V” is “5,” “X” is “10,” “L” is “50,” “C” is “100,” etc. We are familiar with this type of thing and realize that, in modern times, we now use what is termed “Arabic numerals” (the one through ten designations), our alphabet being distinct. But in ancient times, most nations and their languages utilized the letters of their alphabet as also being numbers. This was commonly used in the Roman Empire in the Latin language. A number of the letters had numeric value, and we use it even today as Roman numerals.

In Hebrew, the “alpha,” which was the first letter, was “1,” the “beta” was “2” and the “gamma” was “3.” That was just the way it was, and they had various combinations of letters that stood for certain numbers. Each letter had a numeric value, which means that any word that you could write out, would also have a numeric value. If each letter has a numeric value, then you can spell it out and pronounce it as a word or you can add it up as a number. That is referred to in Revelation 13:18 when we’re told about the beast—the number of his name will be “666.” This is something that was very understandable to people at that time because they were familiar with languages where the letters had numeric value. Every name had a numeric value because if every letter of the alphabet has a numeric value, and you write out your name, whatever your name is you can go through and add it up. We could do that. You can do it in Roman numerals if your name happens to have a lot of “i’s” and “v’s” and “x’s” in it. Maybe for most of us we wouldn’t come up with very much. There are all kinds of names you can add up if you get the right combinations. Anyway, this was something they were familiar with.

The point I’m making is that was one of the primary ways that the Jewish scribes checked to make sure that nothing got lost in the shuffle. They went through the Scriptures and literally counted every word and every letter. They had added up various combinations and they knew, for instance, which letter ought to be the 200th letter, counting from the first letter in Genesis as you count forward. They knew what would be the 200th letter or what would be the 500th word,

counting forward and backwards from the end of Genesis. They had many number tricks like this, including what would be the numeric value of the first chapter. It was their way of crosschecking their work. When a scribe copied, someone would go back and arbitrarily look at various places. They might take the book of Obadiah, and they would know what should be the 99th letter. They would count from the first letter to the 99th to see if it corresponded. At other times they might count backwards. They would add up certain sections. They would add the numeric value and see if it totaled up. They had all these numerical methods of cross checking to where, if one letter was added or taken out, it would throw the numbering off and it would be very apparent.

If all you were doing was just going through, reading and comparing, it would be very easy to miss a letter. How many times have you proofread something you’ve typed and found out later there were spelling errors you had missed? I have lots of times. It’s easy to miss something when you are proofreading something this way. But they would have one man do the copying, and someone else would go through and not just proofread it in the sense of reading through what he was copying. They would have these intricate little puzzles that they had devised as a means of crosschecking. If they ever found one that diverged, they would go through letter by letter to see what the divergence was. And the rule was: when Scripture was copied onto vellum parchment (animal skin), there could *never* be an erasure. If they found an error, they made a note in the margin as to the proper reading, but nothing could be erased. If vellum was used it could not be erased because you wouldn’t know how to distinguish what had been erased by the scribes or erased by someone else. For those occasional errors, they would make a notation in the margin so that anyone reading it would be able to spot what it was and read it properly. But there were not any scratching out, scribbles, erasing and this kind of thing. They were very meticulous, even to the point of a virtual superstitious awe of the Scriptures. Not one jot or tittle was to pass. The Jews were very careful in this regard.

Let’s go on a little further. What books constituted the Old Testament as we know it? It’s very apparent what Jesus Christ considered the Scriptures consisted of.

After the resurrection, Jesus Christ, in His showing Himself to the disciples in [Luke 24:44-45](#), “Then He said to them, ‘These

are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” How did Jesus Christ define the Scriptures? He defined the Scriptures as consisting of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms (or the Writings). That is the traditional Jewish division of the Scriptures: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings—a three-fold division. Jesus Christ recognized that as being authoritative and refers to it here, specifically, as the LAW, the PROPHETS and the PSALMS (or WRITINGS). He defined it in verse 45 as being “the Scriptures.”

The books of the Apocrypha simply do not fit into that. The Jews never have regarded them as a part of the Law, or a part of the Prophets, or a part of the Writings (Psalms) division. They don’t fit into that three-part division. The books of the Apocrypha were primarily written in the Greek language during the time between the close of the Old Testament period and the beginning of the New Testament period. They were books that had their origin in the Jewish community. Jews did not regard them then, nor do the Jews regard them now as being scriptural. They are simply thought of by the Jews as being books—historical books—books of certain value, just as we have many books in our society today. Books that may contain a certain degree of fact and a certain degree of fable—books that are simply books. Somebody wrote them, and they give that person’s opinion. The Jews have never considered the Apocrypha a part of the Scriptures.

Josephus was a Jewish historian who lived in the first century—in the time of Christ and on up through the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. He was not only a priest, but he was also an individual of the highest echelons of Jewish society. He was a Jewish general in the Jewish revolt against the Romans and he was an historian. He provides in his books—in his works that have been preserved for us—a certain listing of the Scriptures and makes an interesting statement. He declares that the Holy Scriptures consists of 22 books, divided into three sections: the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms (or Writings). Now if you were to go through your Old Testament and were to start counting books, you would very quickly come up with more than 22. What did he mean by that? The Jews today count 24 books as being in the Scriptures of the

Old Testament in these same three divisions. There is a reason why.

In the traditional reckoning of the books, some of the books that we count as multiple books, they count as simply one. Let’s notice an example. In 1 Samuel, in most of your Bibles, it will probably have, “The First Book of Samuel, otherwise called the First Book of the Kings.” Maybe you’ve never noticed that. Flip over in your Bible a few pages to 2 Samuel. It reads, “The Second Book of Samuel, otherwise called the Second Book of the Kings.” Just flip over a few more pages, and you will come to 1 Kings and it reads, “The First Book of the Kings, commonly called the Third Book of the Kings.” Guess what it says at the beginning of 2 Kings? You guessed it! “The Second Book of the Kings commonly called the Fourth Book of the Kings.” Now, what does all this mean? Well, simply put, the Jews regarded the books that we term 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings as simply one book—“The Book of the Kings.” It was written on four different scrolls because of length, but it was considered one book. It had four volumes because the size of the scroll would have been so enormous that they could not have gotten it up and down off the shelf. It is the story of the kingship from its inception to its end. They counted it as only one book, but it was divided into four scrolls.

The books of Joshua and Judges were counted as one book. They were written on two scrolls because, again, of their size and length. They tell the story from after the death of Moses to the beginning of the kingship. The Jews counted it as one book even though it was written on two scrolls. That’s why it’s divided into two books in most of our translations.

The Minor Prophets are: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah and all the way through Malachi. These were very short little books, all written on one scroll and was simply called, “The Twelve.” Those 12 books, or Prophets, were considered one book and were counted as such.

Today, Ezra and Nehemiah are reckoned as two books in most English translations. Some Bibles that follow the Septuagint and the Catholic translation will refer to them as I and II Ezras or I and II Ezra. (Ezras is simply the Greek form of the Hebrew Ezra). Ezra and Nehemiah were considered one book—Ezra-Nehemiah. The Book of Chronicles was also divided into two scrolls because of its size and was considered one book—The Book of the Chronicles.

The Jews, by counting them this way, came up with 22 books. They had five books of **the Law**: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These were the five books that Moses gave. The second division that Christ referred to was **the Prophets**. The Jews divided the Prophets into two sections: the **Former Prophets** and the **Latter Prophets**. The Former Prophets were Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. Those are books we would not normally consider prophets. We think that they are historical.

Let me ask you a question. What is the difference between history and prophecy? They are simply the same things seen from different directions—you look back on history; you look forward on prophecy. They are the same things. They considered the historical books and the prophetic books as one section—the Prophets. The Prophets have, as their purpose, to tell you what happens when you obey God and what happens when you don't. All prophecy is based on the blessings and the curses given by Moses in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. God promises blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. That's all prophecy is. It's a story of what happens when you keep the Law, and what happens when you don't keep the Law.

We look at the Former Prophets—Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings—as the record already written of what Israel of old did. Then we look at what are called the Latter Prophets, consisting of the major and the minor. The **Major Prophets** consist of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They are called major because they are longer, lengthier books, not because they are more important. Then there are the **Minor Prophets**, or “The Twelve.” All these together are considered the Prophetic division consisting of Joshua/Judges, Samuel/Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and The Twelve—six books.

Added up, so far, we have the Law—the first five. Then the next six are the Prophets. Next is **the Psalms** (or **Writings**) Division that consists of a little more variety. The book of Psalms was the first of those books. The Division was often called Psalms because that was the biggest and most lengthy book, and it was also the first of that section. Sometimes it was called the Writings because that Division also consisted of poetic books and writings—Psalms, Proverbs and Job were the first three, and this was the order they went in. Psalms, the chief or leading one, set the stage for that section of Scripture. It was written in poetry. Psalms was the logical book to come first, to set the stage for the rest of

the section. David was the primary author of Psalms. Solomon, his son, was the primary writer or author of Proverbs. Proverbs logically followed Psalms. Job came later, even though it had been written much earlier than the others. Psalms was the logical book to come first and set the stage for the rest of that section. Job is placed there about as early as it can be put in—right after Psalms and Proverbs.

Then we have the five books that are called the five Festival Scrolls. The Jews traditionally read them at certain festival occasions. First was the Song of Solomon, which was read at the Passover season. Next was the book of Ruth, which was read at Pentecost season. The book of Lamentations was read during the summer in a national holiday that was kind of a Fourth of July in reverse—the feast of Ab.

Ab was the fifth month of the calendar year and corresponds, approximately, to our July. It was that particular day that Solomon's Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Interestingly enough, it was exactly the same day centuries later that the temple was destroyed by Titus in 70 A.D. The temple was destroyed, both times, on the same day. The Jews set that day aside as a voluntary fast day—a day of national lament—and on that day they read the book of Lamentations, which is a lament. This would be a logical book to read on that occasion.

Then the book of Ecclesiastes was the fourth of that festival section, read during the Feast of Tabernacles. The book of Esther was read on the national day of Purim, which is mentioned in the book of Esther—that's five. Psalms, Proverbs, Job, then, the five Festival Scrolls. Then three more—Daniel, Ezra/Nehemiah and Chronicles. You add that up; you have the five Festival Scrolls and the three at the beginning and the three at the end. This totals 11. There are five books of the Law, six books of the Prophets, and 11 books of the Writings—the sum of which is 22.

Let me show you something about the number 22 and why the Jews considered that an important number. Psalm 119 is a good place to go to illustrate the point. Notice under Psalm 119. In most of your Bibles you will have a funny little squiggle and a name “Aleph” written out by it. If you come down eight verses, you'll find another funny looking little squiggle and the word “Beth” written out by it. Come on down eight more verses and “Gimel” is by it; then “Daleth,” “He,” “Vau,” “Zain,” “Cheth,” “Teth,” “Jod” and “Caph.” Right on down every eight verses, you'll find another little squiggle and a

funny looking word written by it, until you finally come down to the last one, "Tau." Now if you will count all the funny little squiggles, you'll find there are exactly 22—the same number in the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 119 is what is called an "acrostic." If you were reading this in Hebrew, you would find that every eight verses begin with a different letter. We are familiar with acrostics. Little kids learning to read say "a" is for "apple"; "b" is for "boy"; "c" is for "cat"; "d" is for "dog"; etc. They go through the story and each page will have a letter with different things that begin with that letter. That's an acrostic. It uses up every letter in alphabetical order. A poem can be written with an acrostic where every line begins with a different letter. This was an important part of Hebrew poetry and it had significance.

Psalm 119 is a perfect acrostic. In other words, it was an acrostic that used every letter. You had said all you could say on a subject. You had used up the whole alphabet from "A" to "Z" and you had completed it. There was nothing else to be said. This was the sense of it. In Psalm 119, which is in praise of God's perfect law, the entire alphabet was used up. Every eight verses a different letter was used until all the letters were used. The entire alphabet was used up in praise to God's perfect law.

The Holy Scriptures, as the Jew's preserved them, were considered an acrostic. Twenty-two books—22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. God's revelation in the Hebrew language was complete. It was obvious that He had used up all the letters. Now, I mentioned that the Jews today count 24 books. There is a reason for that. Does anybody know how many books there are in the New Testament? There are 27. Count them. Does anybody know what 27 and 22 added together make? Forty-nine! Seven times seven! The significance of that was not lost on the Jews. In fact, it became such an embarrassment to them (in the first century when the New Testament was completed) to see that the Old Testament added to the New Testament had God's stamp of approval numerically. It caused quite a bit of consternation.

About 45 years after the canon of the New Testament was complete, they called a conference and added two letters to the alphabet and divided two of the books. They divided Joshua and Judges into two different books at that time. I believe they also divided Ezra and Nehemiah at that time, but it may have been Chronicles. They actually divided the books and renumbered them at that time (a little over 100

years after the time of Christ) because it was such a problem to them. They were so embarrassed of the idea of the 27 books of the New Testament added to the 22 books of the Old Testament totaling a perfect 49 (seven times seven), they decided they would just have to change their alphabet. They added two letters. They also divided a couple of books in the Old Testament. They didn't change "a jot or a tittle"; they just changed the way they counted them.

Josephus, a Jewish historian and priest, wrote prior to the completion of the New Testament (in the 70s and 80s A.D.) when this had not yet become an issue. He tells on them. He tells exactly how many books there were and how they did it (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, book I, section 8). God used them to preserve His word. Nothing was changed.

Now, when you look at it again, you see that there isn't any room for the Apocrypha. When you have 22 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament, you have God's number of completion and perfection—seven times seven. You add anything to it, and you mess it up. You take something out, and you mess it up. There isn't any room to add or take away. It's perfect! It's complete just the way it is. The Old Testament—God's revelation in the Hebrew language, of which not one jot or tittle was to pass—has been preserved, and it was very clearly marked that it was what God intended for the Jews to preserve. He gave them one book for every letter of the alphabet. He used up the alphabet and that was the end of the story. Now it was time to go on to something else.

Another interesting thing is that the New Testament is prophesied in the Old. Notice a statement that Moses said in Deuteronomy 18.

Deuteronomy 18:15, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me you from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear..." Now what did Moses mean, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me"?

Hold your place there and turn back to Deuteronomy 34.

Deuteronomy 34:10, "But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face..." Moses said God would raise up a Prophet like him.

Let me make a comment about that. Who wrote Deuteronomy 34:10? Clearly, Moses himself didn't write it, though he wrote virtually the entire book of Deuteronomy.

Evidently, Chapter 34 was probably written by Joshua.

Deuteronomy 34:5-6, we are told, “So Moses the servant of the Lord died.... And He buried him....” Moses didn’t write the account of his own funeral. Joshua was inspired to write this as the postscript—the addendum—to the story of Moses’ life, which was also included in others of the first five books. Joshua, as Moses’ successor, wrote that.

But verse 10 could not have been written by Joshua. To have made the statement, “there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses,” that is a statement made looking back over a long period of time. You don’t write that ten minutes after someone died. ‘Look around; hasn’t anyone else just like him showed up. He died 20 minutes ago, and we haven’t seen anybody like him since.’ No, that statement was made as an editorial comment at the conclusion of the Old Testament canon, which was done at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah—the time of the final editing of the Old Testament. We will go into some of that. We don’t have time this evening, but we can actually go through and prove (both from the Scriptures and from history) that both Ezra and Nehemiah were responsible for giving us the Old Testament in the form in which the Jews preserved it.

There were many places in the Old Testament where a certain place-name or something was edited or an editorial comment was stated where it would bring it up to date, so to speak. For instance, in Genesis it would refer to a certain event or a certain location, and then there is an editorial comment that “this place” or “this may be seen at ‘such and such’ until this day.” That was a statement added at the time Ezra and Nehemiah were putting the Old Testament into final form. These comments were added in—parenthetical statements—to bring it up to date, so to speak.

Deuteronomy needed this statement to bring it up to date because the prophecy was made, ‘There would arise in Israel a Prophet like Moses’ (Deuteronomy 18:15). At the conclusion of the canon of the Old Testament, that Prophet had not yet arisen! So, the statement was added in at the end of the book after the end of Moses’ life because that was the logical place to add it. The Prophet spoken of by Moses—a Prophet like him—had not yet come.

Now, what kind of prophet was Moses? How did Moses differ from any other prophet? How did God deal with Moses?

In Deuteronomy 34:10 it says *God knew Moses face to face. And God gave law through Moses.* Through no other prophet in the Old Testament

did God give law. The other prophets commented on the law and they rebuked the people for disobeying the law, but none of them claimed to speak for God or to announce the law. No one else in the Old Testament could be called a lawgiver. Moses gave the law, and everything else was a commentary on that.

Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant—right? Aren’t we told that in Hebrews (Hebrews 9:15-19)? He was the one that was the go-between, between God and the people. Has there arisen a Prophet like Moses?

In the book of Acts, we are told that there has!

Acts 3:20-24, “and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.” And it will come to pass that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold of these days.”

Verse 26, “To you first, God, having raised up His servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you....” Peter quotes what Moses wrote and said that Jesus was that Prophet raised up like Moses.

It is referred to back in Acts 7.

Acts 7:37-38, “This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.” This is he who was in the congregation [church] in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us.”

The point is that Jesus Christ was the Prophet like Moses. Jesus Christ came as a Lawgiver. Read the Sermon on the Mount that is recorded in the greatest detail by Matthew. What did Jesus say?

Matthew 5:27-28, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Verses 33-34, “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.” But I say to you, do not swear at all, . . .”

Verses 21-22, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder,”.... But I

say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause....” —You go on through.

Jesus Christ was giving law! He said, ‘Now it has been said, you shall do this, but I’m telling you....’ He was not making a modification. This is the way it was; here is the modification. In effect, He was expanding and magnifying the law. Jesus Christ came as a Lawgiver.

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6 and 7 is comparable to the statutes and judgments in Exodus 21, 22 and 23. The Ten Commandments were the basis of both the Old and the New Covenant. They were called the tablets of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 9:11). They were placed in the ark of the covenant. The Ten Commandments was the basis of the Old Covenant. It is also the basis of the New Covenant. God will write His laws in our hearts and in our minds (Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:33). The statutes and judgments were the applications of the law.

How do you apply them in practical day-to-day circumstances? Exodus 21, 22 and 23 were the statutes and judgments for a physical, carnal nation. How were they to apply the principles of the law in their circumstances? Jesus Christ came along as a lawgiver and dealt with a converted nation. He said in Matthew 5, 6 and 7, ‘this is the way you apply the spirit of the law.’ Under the New Testament, Jesus Christ came as a lawgiver, as a Prophet like Moses. The Jews recognized this scripture in Deuteronomy 18—there would come a Prophet like Moses; a Prophet who would give law; a Prophet who would introduce Scripture because Moses established Scripture. Moses established a Canon, a measure of books. He established Law. When the Old Testament concluded, this Prophet had not yet come.

At the conclusion of the Old Testament, everything God had to say in Hebrew had been said. The entire alphabet had been used up. God’s revelation in the Hebrew language was complete, and it was committed to the Jews who were responsible for preserving it. Not one dot of an “i” or cross of a “t” was going to be lost. God ensured that. But His revelation of His message was not yet finished. That was made evident because that Prophet had not yet arisen. So, when One claiming to be that Prophet came and the New Testament books of Scripture were complete, it was too much for the Jewish leadership. They recognized that this was too much to be a coincidence, so they actually changed the way they numbered the books.

It’s an interesting story, and we have only touched on the beginning of it. We will go back through and find out the way in which we came to have the Old Testament. We will find certain definite periods in which the Scriptures were written and certain individuals who were responsible for preserving it. Then we will find, in the story of the New Testament, that the Catholic Church had nothing to do with preserving it. In fact, they did their best to either alter it or destroy it! Their early church councils were not arguing about trying to establish a canon. They were arguing about a canon that already existed and they were trying to make alterations in it. That also provides some interesting material that we will discuss later.

Moses was responsible for that first period of canonization—for that first set of Scriptures—the books of the Law (the first five books of the Old Testament).

We will notice the principle laid down in Deuteronomy 31.

Deuteronomy 31:9, “So Moses wrote this Law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Eternal and to all the elders of Israel.” Moses wrote this Law. It is called the Law of Moses (Joshua 8:31-32). Moses wrote this Law and gave it to the priests.

Deuteronomy 31:10-11, “And Moses commanded them saying: ‘At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this Law before all Israel in their hearing.’” What did Moses do? He wrote this Law and he gave it to the priests.

Notice what instruction he gave them.

Verses 25-26, “that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: ‘Take this Book of the Law and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God that it may be there for a witness against you.’”

Moses established the first canon of Scripture—the book of the Law—the first section of authoritative writings.

At the end of Moses’ life, he took the five books (the books of the Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) and laid them up. He gave them to the priesthood and they were to be kept by the side of the ark—laid up in kind of a pouch or pocket on the side of the ark. They were to be kept there as Holy Scriptures. What makes something holy? God

makes it holy! God is holy. God's presence is holy. The word "scripture" simply means "writings." Here were writings that were laid up before God. They were in the Holy of Holies, right next to the ark. This was the official, authoritative Temple copy from which everything else had to be compared.

As time went by other copies were made. When a copy became damaged or illegible, it was destroyed. The reason being that as copies would become tattered and worn, sections would become illegible, and it would be possible for errors to creep in because sections would become difficult to read or would just wear away over time. Little sections of a page may tear or wear away over time and letters would become difficult to read.

It was the priesthood's responsibility to make a new, official, authoritative copy when an old copy began to show signs of wear. The new copy was then laid up beside the ark and the original that had become tattered was destroyed so that no error might creep in and there would not be any divergent copies floating around. They did not want something that was worn out, pages missing or this sort of thing. They were very conscious of making an exact, 100 percent and total continuation of the Scriptures that had been given. This was the beginning of the canon. Moses laid up these five books of the Law.

When we will pick it up next time, we will find out who continued that—the second time an addition was made to the canon of Scripture. We will find out who did it, why they did it, and on whose authority. We can go right on through and find the story of how we came to have the Old Testament and how we came to have the New.

[Editorial Comment: The 1984 Thomas Nelson *New Kings James Bible* (NKJV) is used unless otherwise indicated.]

THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS AND DIVISIONS

				<u>Parts</u>	
I. The <u>Law</u> Division	}		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy 	} 1	
II. The <u>Prophets</u> Division	}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Former Prophets The Latter Prophets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joshua-Judges Samuel-Kings 	} 2	
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Major Prophets The Minor Prophets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Poetic (or Metre) Books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Twelve 	} 4			
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Megillot or Festival Books The Restoration Books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psalms Proverbs Job 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Song of Songs Ruth Lamentations Ecclesiastes Esther 	} 6				
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daniel Ezra-Nehemiah Chronicles 			} 7
III. (Psalms) <u>Writings</u> Division	}				

Bible Study # 2
August 11, 1987
Mr. John Ogwyn

Proof of the Bible Series (Part 2)
(Chart at end)

In continuing with what we talked about last Bible study, **how do we know we have the whole Bible?** The books commonly called the Apocrypha, how do we know that those books are not a part of the Bible? And **how do we know that the books we use are the ones God inspired?** How can we be sure of that?

The Old Testament has seven logical parts: 1) the Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), 2) the Former Prophets (Joshua-Judges, Samuel-Kings), 3) the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel), 4) the Minor Prophets (The Twelve), 5) the Poetic (or Metre) Books (Psalms, Proverbs, Job), 6) the Megillot or Festival Books (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther) and 7) the Restoration Books (Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles). The Old Testament is complete as the Scriptures of God of the Old Testament. But there is something yet to come. It doesn't end with the same finality as the New Testament does in Revelation 21 and 22. How did the Old Testament begin?

Deuteronomy 31:24-26, "So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: 'Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you.'" **This was the beginning of the Canon, the Books that were to measure up as Scripture (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).**

God, prior to this time, had dealt with individuals. He talked with them and He walked with them. But now He began to work with a nation, a group of people He called out.

Exodus 12:3, "'Speak to all the congregation [church] of Israel,'" "Church" means "those who are called out." How much time did Abraham spend studying the Bible? None! Abraham never read the Bible because there wasn't a Bible. Abraham knew God's will because God instructed and taught him. God revealed things to them (Example: Genesis 28:10-22—Jacob's dream). But now God began to deal with a whole group of people, and there needed to be some clear statements given.

There were, evidently, some documents that had been preserved, but it was not the Bible as we know it.

Genesis 5:1, "This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God."

Genesis 10:1, "Now this is the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth. And sons were sons born to them after the flood."

God's basic revelation of His will was set down. God revealed the basic law through Moses. It was the basis of the Old Covenant. This Book of the Law was presented to the priests and the Levites—against which everything else was to be compared. It was the beginning of Holy Scripture. It filled the needs of the people. God's basic Law was revealed.

The second period of canonization: The second period was because there was a need for change. David wanted to build a temple. Things had grown and increased. Some of the things Moses had set up could no longer function. One of the things was the service set up by the Levites. As the years went by, and the numbers increased, you couldn't get all the priests around the altar at the same time. You no longer had just Aaron and his sons. This next period was at the time of David and Samuel.

1 Chronicles 9:22, "All those chosen as gatekeepers were two hundred and twelve. They were recorded by their genealogy, in their villages. David and Samuel the seer had appointed them to their trusted office." There was a reorganization that began at the time of David.

1 Chronicles 24:1, "Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar."

Verses 7-9, "Now the first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin."

Verse 18, "the twenty-third to Delaiah, the twenty-fourth to Maaziah." You get down to 24 divisions—24 different families of priests. David divided them into 24 divisions.

Luke 1:5, "There was in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth." Zacharias was a priest of the division of Abijah.

1 Chronicles 24:10, "the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah." You could actually go through to find when the two-week period—or

division—of John the Baptist’s father was David, under inspiration, divided them up.

1 Chronicles 25:1, “Moreover David and the captains of the army separated to the service some of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. And the number of the workmen according to their service was:”

Verse 7, “So the number of them, with their brethren who were instructed in the songs of the Lord, all who were skillful, was two hundred and eighty-eight.” They were divided up.

2 Chronicles 29:25, “Then he stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king’s seer, and Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets.” David established music. But what were they going to sing? That is where the book of Psalms comes in.

Psalms 72:19-20, notice, “And blessed be His glorious name forever and let the whole earth be filled with His glory, Amen and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” Notice how it ends. What does that mean?

Verse 19, what does it mean, “Amen and Amen”? If you take the number 72 and divide it by 24 (you had 24 divisions of singing and there were 72 songs selected), they had three songs for each division. Psalms 1—72 are psalms of David. (You will find that there are other psalms that David wrote—101, 108, 109 and 110. We will go into that later.) When you reorganized the service in the temple, there were additional things that needed to be brought in.

With the reorganization of Temple worship and as the nation was growing into a great nation, there was also a need for instruction in wisdom.

Proverbs 1:1-3, “The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel: to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment and equity.” You had this set apart.

Ecclesiastes 12:9, “And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs.” Solomon taught the people. He set in order proverbs—meaning the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 1:1, “The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, ...” Solomon set in order Proverbs. Added at this time were Psalms 1—72 and

Proverbs 1—24, 30—31. This was a second period of canonization.

The third period of canonization: Things went on and the nation of Israel split up into two nations. It was a time of crisis, a time when the existence of the entire nation was at stake. During the time of Hezekiah, the king of Assyria surrounded Jerusalem (2 Kings 18 and 19). Hezekiah prayed and fasted (19:1). God sent an angel and wiped out the Assyrians (vv. 35-37). It was a time of crisis. What we will see is that the first two periods of canonization were periods of reorganization—things for a settled nation. The next three periods were times of crisis. Things had drifted and the truth was in danger of being lost. The first revival was at the time of Hezekiah. It was a time of crisis that threatened to literally destroy the entire nation.

2 Chronicles 28:1-2, “Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord, as his father David had done. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molten images for the Baals.” We pick up the story of the way the nation got “off track.”

Verses 21-24, “For Ahaz took part of the treasures from the house of the Lord, from the house of the king, and from the leaders, and he gave it to the king of Assyria; but he did not help him. Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful to the Lord. This is that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, saying, ‘Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them, that they may help me.’ But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel. So Ahaz gathered the articles of the house of God, cut in pieces the articles of the house of God, shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and made for himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem.” The nation got off track and Temple worship ceased.

2 Chronicles 29:1-7, “Hezekiah became king when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. Then he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them in the east square and said to them: ‘Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry out the

rubbish from the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the Lord our God; and they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs on Him. They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel.”

He said they needed to get back on track and clean out dirt that had accumulated in the Temple for years. It took days.

Verse 25, “Then he stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king’s seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets.” Hezekiah began to reorganize things and set things back on track the way David had organized them. He told them to sanctify themselves.

Verse 30, “Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped.”

Psalms 72:20, “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.”

Notice Psalm 73—“A Psalm of Asaph.” Turn to Psalms 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82 and 83—all “Psalms of Asaph.”

2 Chronicles 29:30, “Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped.” They worshiped with the words of David and Asaph.

Isaiah 38:1, now notice, “In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Set your house in order for you shall die and not live.”’”

Verses 5-8, “Go and say to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; and I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city. And this is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing which He has spoken: Behold, I will bring the shadow on the sundial, which has gone down with the sun on the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward.’” So the sun

returned ten degrees on the sun dial by which it was gone down.”

The sun literally went backward. It stood still at the time of Joshua (Joshua 10:13). If you think that was something, wait until you find out how it went backward in the time of Hezekiah.

Verse 20, “The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord.”—The aftermath of that.

Notice Psalms 120—134—“Songs of Ascents” [KJV, “degrees”]. There are 15 songs of degrees—one for each of the 15 years. Hezekiah wrote ten of them; five were written by David. Hezekiah’s songs were to be added to the songs of Scripture. Hezekiah added them to the canon of Scripture.

Proverbs 25:1, notice also, “These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied.” Solomon’s Proverbs ended with Proverbs 24. Here was an addition that the men of Hezekiah wrote out.

This was also a period when the nation was facing captivity. Isaiah was written at this time. The books of Joshua, Judges and Kings were also written at this time.

2 Chronicles 32:32, “Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, indeed they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the books of the kings of Judah and Israel.” What is the book of the kings of Judah and Israel? —The books of Samuel and Kings. 1 Kings is otherwise known as the Third Book of the Kings—the actual title in the King James Bible.

2 Chronicles 32:33, “So Hezekiah rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the upper tombs of the sons of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then Manasseh his son reigned in his place.”

2 Chronicles 26:22, “Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first and last, the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz wrote.” Isaiah wrote the book of Kings. If you compare 2 Kings and Isaiah, 2 Kings 18-20 is identical to Isaiah 36-39. They are identical. There were also books added to the Psalms by the Levites during this time. Then things got off track again.

We come to the second great revival and reorganization—the **period of the fourth canonization**. It was the time prior to Judah going into captivity. Northern Israel was already in captivity (2 Kings 18:11); Judah was almost taken into captivity (2 Kings 18-19). Then there was a revival by Hezekiah (2 Kings 18-20). But

then there was another period of crisis—a time when the nation was faced with captivity.

2 Chronicles 33:1-3, “Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. But he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he raised up altars for the Baals, and made wooden images; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.” They really got off track. Let’s notice a comparison as to what Josiah did in getting things back on track.

2 Kings 23:1-3, “Then the king [Josiah] sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem to him. And the king went up into the house of the Lord with all the men of Judah and with all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great; and he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord. Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took their stand for the covenant.”

2 Kings 22:1-2, “Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.” He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.

2 Kings 23:4, “And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.” This is what King Josiah did to get things back on track. When they went to repair the temple, they found the Book of the Law.

2 Kings 22:8, “Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, ‘I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord.’ And Hilkiah gave the Book to Shaphan, and he read it.”

2 Kings 23:2-3, “...and he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which

had been found in the house of the Lord. Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this Book. And all the people took their stand for the covenant.” Then he began to order these things.

Verses 7-8, “Then he tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons that were in the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places of the gates which were in the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were to the left of the gate of the city.”

Verses 10-12, “And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molch. Then he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance of the house of the Lord... and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. The altars that were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron.” He pulverized them and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron.

Verses 13-14, “Then the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, which were on the south of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he broke in pieces the sacred pillars and cut down wooden images, and filled their places with the bones of men.” He broke down the images and the groves.

Verses 21-22, “Then the king commanded all the people, saying, ‘Keep the Passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.’ Surely such a Passover had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah.” Josiah turned to God with all his heart. It was a time of revival.

2 Chronicles 34:4, “They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars which were above them he cut down; and

the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in pieces, and made dust of them and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.”

Verse 8, “Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the temple [house], he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah and Maaseiah the governor of the city and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God.”

Verse 14, “Now when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the Lord given by Moses.” He found the Book of the Law of the Lord. He found the Bible that existed at that time.

Verse 19, “Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes.”

Verse 21, “Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the Book that is found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this Book.”

Verses 32-33, “And he made all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take their stand for it. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel diligently serve the Lord their God. All his days they did not depart from following the Lord God of the fathers.”

2 Chronicles 35:1, “Now Josiah kept a Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the first month.” It was a time of revitalization.

Verses 17-18, “And the children of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

There hadn’t been anything on that grand scale since Samuel the prophet. It was a revitalization of worship just prior to the captivity. God said He would postpone judgment on the nation because of Josiah. For the sake of Josiah, God was going to spare things as long as he lived, but when he died, that was going to be the end (2

Kings 22:15-20). You talk about everything resting on one man! You can imagine when Josiah was cut off at an untimely death.

2 Chronicles 35:23-25, “And the archers shot at King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, ‘Take me away; for I am severely wounded.’ His servant therefore took him out of that chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had, and they brought him to Jerusalem. So he died, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah. And to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom [KJV, “ordinance”] in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments” [KJV, “lamentations”]. —An ordinance for Israel written in the lamentations. Where do you find it? Turn over to the book of Lamentations—“The Lamentations of Jeremiah.” What do we see in verse 25? Lamentations was recorded as a permanent record and made an ordinance and a law.

Verses 26-27, “Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his goodness, according to what was written in the Law of the Lord, and his deeds from first to last, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.” Jeremiah was responsible for recording the final things in Samuel and Kings.

Lamentations was written at the time of Josiah’s death. His death was all that stood between captivity and destruction for Judah. Lamentations is a prophecy of the Great Tribulation. The death of Josiah was the reason Lamentations was written when it was. It went along with the book of Jeremiah.

2 Chronicles 35:25, “Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah. And to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom [KJV, “ordinance”] in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments [KJV, “lamentations”].”

After Josiah’s death, the temple was destroyed and the nation was taken into captivity. Jeremiah was the prophet who bridged the gap—before the captivity, during, through and after. The books of Jeremiah, Lamentations, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Habakkuk and Zephaniah were added to the canon Scripture by Jeremiah. Jeremiah finished the books of 1 & 2 Samuels and 1 & 2 Kings.

How was Scripture to be preserved? Go back to the book of Daniel.

Daniel 1:4, “young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom,

possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans." Daniel lived during the captivity. He was a prince. He was of the king's descendants and very intelligent. He had access to the archives of Babylon. The Bible was preserved in the archives of Babylon (v. 2). Nebuchadnezzar didn't just burn the temple; he transported these things out of the temple, and they were sent back in the royal archives and treasure of Babylon. And who is in a better position to take care of it than Daniel?

Daniel 9:11, "Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him." Daniel had access to the Bible and was able to study it. All the vessels and sacred things of the temple were taken to Babylon. He was primed, taught and made knowledgeable.

Daniel 1:3-4, "Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans." He was brought to Babylon to be trained and educated.

In Daniel 9:3-22, we read of Daniel praying. Jeremiah added the prophets. How do we know?

Daniel 9:2, read, "in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord, given to Jeremiah the prophet that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." Daniel had been puzzled over this prophecy.

Jeremiah 25:12, "Then it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity," says the Lord; "and I will make it perpetual desolations." Jeremiah's and Daniel's lives overlapped. At the time Daniel was a teenager, Jeremiah was an old man. God took this young man and put him in a position to preserve the Scriptures. That would have been the time the Bible would have been lost—during the time of the captivity. Daniel was brought here. He

studied the Bible. He studied the book of Jeremiah and was trying to understand. Then it finally came to him. He understood it about the time it was supposed to be fulfilled (Daniel 9:1-2). The first Babylonian captivity was 604 B.C. The year of Cyrus' decree to return to Jerusalem was 534 B.C.; the 70-year prophecy was completed.

The point is that Daniel had access to the Scriptures and took care of them during the Babylonian captivity.

Lamentation, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah were all written prior to the captivity and were added to the canon of Scripture by Jeremiah.

Then we come to the period that finished the Old Testament—the **fifth period of Old Testament canonization**—the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Solomon died in 921 B.C. About 200 years after Solomon's death, Northern Israel went into captivity. About 20 years later was the time of Hezekiah and a revival. About 100 years later, we come down to Jeremiah and Josiah and another revival. Then 604 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar comes in and takes them captive. He comes back a few years later and takes more into captivity. About 587 B.C., he destroys everything and the whole nation goes into captivity. Daniel was in captivity as a young man on up until he was an old man. (Jeremiah provides about a 70-year period during this time.) Seventy years later, 534 B.C., Cyrus issued a decree for them to return and repair the temple.

We pick up the story in the book of Ezra.

Ezra 1:1-3, "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? May his God be with him! Now let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.'"

Verses 5-7, "Then the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all those whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. And all those

who were around them encouraged them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered. King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods.” These were the things he brought back.

Ezra 4:1-5, “Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the Lord God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers’ houses, and said to them, ‘Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.’ But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers’ houses of Israel said to them, ‘You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.’ Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.”

They literally hired lawyers and went to court. Zerubbabel and Joshua finished the part of the work God had called them to do.

Ezra 7:1, “Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah.” Verse 10, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” He is coming to Jerusalem prepared to teach Israel statutes and judgments.

Verse 12, “Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven: perfect peace, and so forth.”

Verse 14, “And whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the law of your God which is in your hand.” – “According to the law of your God which is in your hand.” He was bringing the copy that had been preserved in Babylon. He brought back the Law—the Bible.

Nehemiah 8:1-3, “Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate, and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation, of men and women and all who

could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.” The Bible was being read and understood.

Verses 5-8, “And Ezra opened the Book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. Then all the people answered, ‘Amen, Amen!’ while lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, ...and the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. So they read distinctly from the Book, in the Law of God; and gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.” We have this example in the time of Ezra.

[Editorial comment: There were things that had to be added to deal with new things and circumstances.]

1 Samuel 10:25, “Then Samuel explained to the people the behavior of royalty, and wrote it in a book and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.” Samuel added what is in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. It refers to it here.

Deuteronomy 34:10, “But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” Joshua couldn’t have written this. This was an editorial comment made at the conclusion of the Old Testament canon by Ezra and Nehemiah about 400 B.C. Ezra went back and on authority made an editorial comment. There were times when things simply had to be added. The time of Ezra and Nehemiah was that time—a time of editing. It was also a time of crisis, a great deal of trouble. We are going into that at the next Bible study—the things that were going on and what these things were.

During this fifth period of canonization, Psalms 90—119, 135—150, Ruth, Esther, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and 1 & 2 Chronicles were added to the canon of Scripture. One of the statements that Josephus makes is that nothing had been added since the time of Artaxerxes. Since that time there had not been a succession of prophets. The Jews recognized that the spirit of prophets ceased. From that time on, there was never a succession of prophets, and

no one ever took it upon himself or dared to ever make a change. It all goes back to Ezra and Nehemiah. Josephus said that during the reign of Artaxerxes (465-424 B.C.), the canon of Scripture was completed and delivered to the hand of the Great Synagogue (or Assembly). We will go back and understand why Chronicles had to be written at this time. Malachi was the last book written and added in about 420-400 B.C.

We have a story of how these five periods of the Bible were put together—this setting apart of the authoritative canon of Scripture. We see the five periods of time when the Old Testament came together. Then we will see the two times when the New Testament came together—God putting it together working with His prophets. We will see how it all came together and how God has given us this Book we call the Bible.

THE FIVE PERIODS OF OLD TESTAMENT CANONIZATION

I. Moses

Genesis	Moses
Exodus	Moses
Leviticus	Moses
Numbers	Moses
Deuteronomy	Moses
Job	Job

II. Solomon and Nathan

Psalms 1-72	David
Proverbs 1-24, 30-31	Solomon

III. Hezekiah and Isaiah

Proverbs	Hezekiah
Psalms 73-89, 120-134	Hezekiah*
Joshua-Judges	Samuel
I & II Samuel	Isaiah
I & II Kings	Isaiah
Isaiah	Isaiah

IV. Josiah and Jeremiah

Lamentations	Jeremiah
Jeremiah	Jeremiah
Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obadiah	Obadiah
Jonah	Jonah
Micah	Micah
Nahum	Nahum
Habakkuk	Habakkuk
Zephaniah	Zephaniah

V. Nehemiah and Ezra

Psalms 90-119, 135-150	*
Ruth	Samuel
Esther	Mordechai
Song of Solomon	Solomon
Ecclesiastes	Solomon
Ezekiel	Ezekiel
Ezra	Ezra
Nehemiah	Nehemiah
Daniel	Daniel
Haggai	Haggai
Zechariah	Zechariah
Malachi	Malachi
I & II Chronicles	Ezra

*Numerous authors

The canon of the Old Testament was sealed up about 400 B.C. by Ezra and Nehemiah and the Great Assembly which they headed.

Bible Study # 3
August 25, 1987
Mr. John Ogwyn

Proof of the Bible Series (Part 3)—The Time of
Ezra & Nehemiah: The Fifth Period of
Canonization of the Old Testament

I want to continue with the material we had been getting into the last time, when we were **going through the last period of the canonization of the Old Testament—the time of Ezra and Nehemiah**. I want to go back and go into some things in Ezra and Nehemiah. I think it **will help us to understand more clearly the things with which we are dealing**. There was a lot involved in that time period.

If you remember the story, Judah had gone into captivity beginning 604 B.C.—the first period of invasion and captivity. Coming down, about ten years later, was a second Babylonian invasion, and then seven to ten years later, a final Babylonian invasion. The city was burned, the temple was destroyed and the people were taken into captivity. We noticed Daniel was taken captive as a young boy. He had access to and preserved the Bible during that interim time.

Then we read in Daniel 5:30-31, the story we are very familiar with—the Medes and the Persians invading and taking Babylon. This was in 539 B.C. (one of the major dates of history)—falling on the Feast of Trumpets that year and the night Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall (vv. 1-5). The empire of the Medes and Persians was established. Daniel continued in the immediate future in a high position (about five years) under Darius (Daniel 6:1-3).

After the Medes and Persians came in, we pick up the story in Ezra.

Ezra 1:1-3, “Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? May his God be with him! Now let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah and build the house of the Lord God of Israel. (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.”

Verse 7, “King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the Lord, which

Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods.”

We find that they left to go back to Jerusalem. This was done by Zerubbabel, or Sheshbazzar, as he is termed in Ezra 1:8-11.

Ezra 3:1, “And when the seventh month had come and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.”

Verse 4, they set this up and kept the Feast of Tabernacles. That began the process of reorganization.

Verse 8, “Now in the second month of the second year of their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem, began work and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and above, to oversee the work of the house of the Lord.”

Verse 11, the foundation was laid.

The prophets at that time were Haggai and Zechariah. They were contemporary with Jeshua and Zerubbabel (c. 534-500 B.C.). The major thrust of the work of God at that time was the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 3:8—6:15). Read 2 Kings 17. What happened in 2 Kings 17 is crucial to understanding the later story of what happened in the canonization of the Old Testament and later the New Testament. Approximately 721 B.C. (120 years before Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion of Judah), the Assyrians invaded Northern Israel and transported the ten tribes into captivity. Israel had sinned and walked in the statutes of the heathen.

2 Kings 17:8, “and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.”

Verse 10, “They set them up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill, and under every green tree.”

Verse 16, “So they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, made for themselves a molded image, two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal.” They did all the things God told them not to do.

Verse 18, “Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone.” They were taken out. They were not left behind. They were transported.

Verses 22-23, “For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.” —“To this day.” —The time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Israel was still where they had been 200 years earlier. They had not returned with the Jews. Notice what happened.

Verse 24, “Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities.”

Verse 25, instead of the children of Israel, he brought Babylonians and some of the surrounding suburbs and settled them in Northern Israel. Meanwhile, wild animals had increased.

Verse 26, “So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, ‘The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria know not the rituals of the God of the land; therefore He has sent lions among them, and indeed, they are killing them because they do not know the rituals of the God of the land.’” They sent a message to the king of Assyria: ‘We have a problem. We want you to send someone to teach us the manner [rituals] of the God of the land.’

Now who was the king of Assyria going to send to teach them about the God of the land? —The priests of Northern Israel! What were they?

1 Kings 12:28-31, “Therefore the king took counsel and made two calves of gold, and said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!’ And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, as far as Dan. He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people [KJV, “made priests of the lowest of the people”], who were not of the sons of Levi.”

Jeroboam had gotten rid of the priests and made priests of the lowest of the people.

Verse 32, “Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made.” The people never departed from the

sins of Jeroboam, and it was because of this they went into captivity.

Now, what were the priests going to teach them? What he did was to attach the name of God to their old pagan religion. They retained the name of God; they talked about God, but they didn’t really serve God in sincerity and truth.

Verse 29, “and he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.” Each nation made gods of its own.

Verses 32-33, “Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the Feast that was in Judah...So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised of his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.”

1 Kings 13:34, “And this thing was sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy it from the face of the earth.”

2 Kings 17:29, “However every nation continued to make gods of its own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities where they dwelt.”

Verses 32-34, “So they feared the Lord, and from every class they appointed for themselves priests of the high places [KJV, “made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places”], who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. They feared the Lord yet served their own gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away. To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the Lord, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the Lord had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel.”

Verse 41, “So these nations feared the Lord, yet served their carved images; also their children and their children’s children have continued as their fathers did, even to this day.”

What we have given here in 2 Kings is the origin of the Samaritans—the Samaritans that we are going to read of in Ezra, Nehemiah and the New Testament—in the book of Acts. This is the origin of the Samaritans. They were not Israelites; they were Babylonians. They resettled them in the land and then brought back the priests. They paid lip-service to the God of Israel, but in reality they continued the same old pagan religion they had all along. Does that sound familiar? What we need to understand is

that this was the Babylonian approach to religion, the Babylonian Mystery Religion, but they now attached to it the name of God. They identified themselves as Israel, but in reality, they were Babylonians. This is the group that we are going to meet in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and the group later in the New Testament. In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, Sanballat was the chief leader of the Samaritan followers of the Babylonian Mystery Religion.

You look around today and see the successors. They still have their graven images and fear the Eternal to this day—the same people doing the same thing. It was important that the Samaritans be known. They were quick to claim that they were Jews when it was to their advantage. Alexander the Great gave a release to the Jews during the Sabbatical year to not have to pay taxes, and the Samaritans (Babylonians) said they were Jews, too. When the Jews were being tortured and butchered, the Samaritans were quick to say they didn't have anything to do with them.

In Ezra 3, we find that the work of God, at the time of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, was reorganization and rebuilding.

Ezra 4:1-2, “Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the Eternal God of Israel, they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, ‘Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.’”

Ezra called them the adversaries of Judah. One of Satan's tactics is to infiltrate from within. Judah had gone into captivity because of disobedience to God.

Then the work of God was established: rebuilding the temple and temple worship, re-establishing the nation into which Jesus Christ the Messiah would come at a later time and setting the stage. Right after work got started, the Samaritans came and they said, ‘We're good Christians just like you. We all worship the same God. We want to get in on this. We'll help you.’ They used God's name, but didn't really follow the Scriptures.

Verse 3, “But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, ‘You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.’” ‘You have nothing

to do with us.’ God had stirred up Cyrus to bring them back to do the Work.

Verses 4-5, “Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.” They went to court. Look up the word “counselors.”

Verses 6-8, “And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. And in the days of Artaxerxes also, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabel, and the rest of their companions wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the letter was written in the Aramaic script, and translated into the Aramaic language. Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes in this fashion.”

Verses 11-12, “This is the copy of the letter that they sent him—To King Artaxerxes from your servants the men beyond the River, and so forth: Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem, and are building the rebellious and evil city, and are finishing its walls, and repairing the foundations.” ‘This is a bad city and they are setting up walls.’ They took facts; they took the truth and made it sound bad.

Verse 13, “Let it now be known to the king that, if this city is built and the walls completed, they will not pay tax, tribute, or custom, and the king's treasury will be diminished.” ‘They will cut your revenues. They won't pay taxes.’

Verses 14-15, “Now because we receive support from the palace, it was not proper for us to see the king's dishonor; therefore we have sent and informed the king, that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. And you will find in the book of the records and know that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that they have incited sedition within the city in former times, for which cause this city was destroyed.” We are coming to you as loyal citizens to tell you about these things.

Verse 16, “We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt, and its walls are completed, the result will be that you will have no dominion over the region beyond the River.”

Verse 21, “Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me.”

Verses 23-24, “Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they

went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease. Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.” They first tried to infiltrate and get inside. When that didn’t work, they hired lawyers and then put padlocks and closed it up. Those are old tactics and have been around for a long time.

Ezra 5:1-2, “Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.”

They just began to act—injunction or no injunction. Go back and read Haggai and Zechariah.

Verses 3-5, “At the same time came Tattenai the governor of the region beyond the River and Shethar-Boznai and their companions, came to them and spoke thus to them: ‘Who has commanded you to build this temple and finish this wall?’ Then, accordingly, we told them the names of the men who were constructing this building. But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, so that they could not make them cease till a report could go to Darius. Then a written answer was returned concerning this matter.” –All the way to the Supreme Court.

Verses 11-17, “And thus they returned us an answered, saying: ‘We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and completed. But because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this temple and carried the people away to Babylon. However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to build this house of God. Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple that was in Jerusalem and carried into the temple of Babylon—those King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon, and they were given to one named Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor. And he said to him, ‘Take these articles; go, carry them to the temple site that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its former site.’” Then the same Sheshbazzar came and laid the foundation of the house of

God, which is in Jerusalem; and from that time even until now it has been under construction, and it is not yet finished.’ Now therefore, if it seems good to the king, let a search be made in the king’s treasure house, which is there in Babylon, whether it is so that a decree was issued by King Cyrus to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send us his pleasure concerning this matter.”

Then the truth finally comes out.

Ezra 6:1, “Then King Darius issued a decree, and search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon.” He makes a decree.

Verse 11, “Also I issue a decree that whoever alters this edict, let a timber be pulled from his house and erected, and let him be hanged on it; and let his house be made a refuse heap because of this.”

Verses 14-16, “So the elders of the Jews built and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia. Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. Then the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the captivity, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.”

This is in the latter part of the sixth century, around 515 B.C. There is a gap when you pick it up in chapter 7. You will notice that there is a gap of about 50 years—a generation. Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai and Zechariah had died. Now their children are on the scene.

Ezra 7:6-11, “this Ezra came up from Babylon; and he was a skillful scribe in the Law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given. The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him. Some of the children of Israel, the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Nethinim came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel. Now this is the copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the

priest, the scribe, expert in the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of His statutes to Israel.”

Verses 13-14, “I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel and the priests and Levites in my realm, who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem, may go with you. And whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the Law of your God which is in your hand.”

Ezra came back bringing the copy of the Scriptures. He came on the scene about 50 years after the curtain had dropped from what we saw at the time of Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

Ezra 8:1-20 shows the various ones that came back from Babylon.

Ezra 8:21-23, “Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and for our little ones and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, ‘The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him.’ So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.”

The alternative was to fast. ‘We can’t ask the king to protect us because it would look like we didn’t trust God to protect us.’

Verses 31-32, “Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. And the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambush along the road. So we came to Jerusalem, and stayed there three days.”

Ezra 9:1, “When these things were done, the leaders came to me saying, ‘The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites.’”

Now, what has transpired in these 50 years? The Jews have not kept themselves separate in a physical sense or a spiritual sense. They had mixed and mingled and intermarried with the people of the land. The rulers (leaders) failed to set the example. They didn’t keep themselves pure and separate as they should have. When there are problems, it always gets back to a

failure on the part of the leadership to set the right example they should have. Problems usually start at the top and work their way down. Everyone has to take responsibility for his own actions, but it’s ultimately because the leaders didn’t keep themselves pure and separate in the way they should have.

Ezra heard this and he was so absolutely overwhelmed. He couldn’t believe it! He came down there and he saw this mess that had developed. Fifty years earlier the people had returned and they came to do a work. They built the temple. They had gone through the persecutions and all the problems. Finally, the work was done and the persecutions, seemingly, had stopped. But Satan didn’t retire. He started back on infiltration again.

I Peter 5:8, understand, we have an adversary—a roaring lion that’s going about seeking whom he may devour. If he can’t overwhelm by frontal attack (discouragement and cause us to fall by the wayside), then he tries to subvert from within. If he gets caught there, he makes a frontal attack and tries to overwhelm from without and tries to discourage. If that doesn’t work, then he comes back. –Different tactics but really the same old tactics.

Ezra 9:4-15, “Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel assembled to me, because of the transgression of those who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice. At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God, and said, ‘O my God: I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens. Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as it is this day. And now for a little while grace has been shown from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your

commandments, which You have commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, “The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land, with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with their impurity. Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.” And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, since You our God have punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and have given us such deliverance as this, should we again break Your commandments, and join in marriage with the people of these abominations? Would You not be angry with us until You had consumed us, so that there would be no remnant or survivor? O Lord God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this.”

Ezra 10:1-7, “Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large congregation of men, women, and children assembled to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, ‘We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the counsel of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also will be with you. Be of good courage, and do it.’ Then Ezra arose, and made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear an oath that they would do according to this word. So they swore an oath. Then Ezra arose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib [high priest (Nehemiah 3:1); grandson of Joshua]; and when he came there, he ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity. And they issued a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the descendants of the captivity, that they must gather at Jerusalem.”

Word went out. Ezra could see that the very existence of the congregation of God was in danger. He sent out a decree and commanded that the entire nation be assembled.

Verse 8, “and that whoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the leaders and elders, all his property would be confiscated, and he himself would be separated from the congregation of those from the captivity.” If anyone refused, they were to be disfellowshipped, cast out of the congregation and their property was to be forfeited. Ezra ruled with a strong hand. They knew a strong hand from somewhere had arrived. God had raised up Ezra and sent him back from Babylon because the very existence of God’s Church was in jeopardy.

Verse 9, “So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the open square of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain.”

Verses 10-18, “Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, ‘You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel. Now therefore, make confession to the Lord God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the pagan wives.’ Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, ‘Yes! As you have said, so we must do. But there are many people; it is the season for heavy rain, and we are not able to stand outside. Nor is this the work of one or two days, for there are many of us who have transgressed in this matter. Please, let the leaders of our entire congregation stand; and let all those in our cities who have taken pagan wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of their cities, until the fierce wrath of our God is turned away from us in this matter.’ Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite gave them support. Then the descendants of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain heads of the fathers’ households, were set apart by the fathers’ households, each of them by name; and they sat down on the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. By the first day of the first month they finished questioning all the men who had taken pagan wives. And among the sons of the priests who had taken pagan wives the following were found of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozakdak, and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah.”

Verse 44, “All these had taken pagan wives, and some of them had wives by whom they had children.”

A period of about 13 years goes by, and we pick up the story in Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a servant of the king in the palace of Susa in the 20th year of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 1:1). He had a position in the Persian court.

Nehemiah 1:3-4, “And they said to me, ‘The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.’ So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.”

What he heard was going on in Jerusalem bothered him. Ezra had come down and, through force of personality, “carried the day” for a while. We find that the very family of the high priest had intermarried. The high priest’s grandson, who was in line to be high priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans (Nehemiah 13:27-28). Trouble was brewing. Ezra said they would all have to put away these strange wives. Some of the leaders refused to do so (Ezra 10:15). If they refused, the reform among the people would be short-lived. Now, 13 years later, Nehemiah became aware of the state of things.

Nehemiah 1:3, “And they said to me, ‘The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.’” They had never finished repairing the city. Nehemiah was greatly bothered.

In verses 5-11, he prayed and asked God to give him an opportunity to have a part in straightening it out.

Nehemiah 2:1-5, “And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. Therefore the king said to me, ‘Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart.’ Then I became dreadfully afraid, and said to the king, ‘May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?’ Then the king said to me, ‘What do you request?’ So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, ‘If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to

Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.’”

Nehemiah wanted to rebuild the city. The temple had been rebuilt under Zerubbabel, but the work had kind of faded down. What always happens when people begin to mix and mingle with the world around them and become absorbed in the world and its ways? They lose their zeal to finish the work. This is what happened here.

Verses 6-9, “So the king said to me (the queen was also sitting beside him), ‘How long will your journey be? And when will you return?’ So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. Furthermore I said to the king, ‘If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy.’ And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me. Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River and gave them the king’s letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.”

The king sent him back.

Verse 10, “When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel.” It upset them. They were leaders of the Samaritans.

Verses 11-20, “So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down and its gates, which were burned with fire. Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King’s Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. So I went up in the night by the valley and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work. Then I said to them, ‘You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come

and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.’ And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king’s words that he had spoken to me. So they said, ‘Let us rise up and build.’ Then they set their hands to do this good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed us to scorn and despised us, and said, ‘What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?’ So I answered them, and said to them, ‘The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem.’”

Nehemiah 3:1, “Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the Hundred, and consecrated it, then as far as the Tower of Hananeel.” They began to rebuild the wall.

Nehemiah 4:1-2, “But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, ‘what are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?’”

They made fun of the Work of God.

Verses 6-10, “So we built the wall and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion. Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night. Then Judah said, ‘The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.’”

Verses 18-21, “Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me. Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, ‘The work is great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. Therefore, whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for

us.’ So we labored in the work, and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared.”

They went through a very strenuous time. There were many problems to be straightened out.

Nehemiah 5:1, “And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren.” The book of Malachi was written at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Malachi 3:9, “You are cursed with a curse, . . .” The curse they were cursed with was in Nehemiah 5. They were in such hard times; they had to borrow money to eat and pay taxes (Nehemiah 5:2-5). Put Nehemiah 5 with Malachi 3.

Malachi 3:10, God said, “‘Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.’”

Nehemiah 5:6, Nehemiah was very angry because of the state of things.

Verse 7, the people weren’t helping each other, but taking advantage of each other and charging interest.

Verse 12, he called them together and required an oath of them.

Verses 14-15, from the time Nehemiah was appointed governor in Judah—in 12 years—he didn’t take his salary or exhort taxes from the people.

Nehemiah 6:1-5, “Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying ‘Come let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono.’ But they thought to do me harm. So I sent messengers to them, saying, ‘I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?’ But they sent this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner. Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand.”

Verses 8-9, “Then I sent to him saying, ‘No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart.’ For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, ‘Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done.’ Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.”

Verses 13-14, “For this reason he was hired, that I should be afraid and act that way and sin, so that they might have occasion for an evil report, that they might reproach me. My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who would have made me afraid.” He continued in the work.

Verse 15, “So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Elul, in fifty-two days.” The wall was finished.

Verse 19, “...And Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.” The Samaritans were doing everything they could to subvert what was going on.

Nehemiah 7:4-5, “Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt. Then my God put it into my heart to gather the nobles, the rulers, and the people, that they might be registered by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of those who had come up in the first return [534 B.C.; Ezra 2], ...”

Nehemiah 8:1-4, “Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation, of men and women and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month [Feast of Trumpets, Leviticus 23:24]. Then he read it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for the purpose; and beside him, at his right hand, stood...”

Verses 5-14, “And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. Then all the people answered, ‘Amen, Amen!’ And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground...and the Levites helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their places. So they read distinctly from the book, the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, ‘This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep.’ For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Law.

Then he said, ‘Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.’ So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, ‘Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved.’ And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them. Now on the second day the heads of the fathers’ houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law. And they found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the Feast of the seventh month [Feast of Tabernacles, Leviticus 23:34, 39-42].”

Verses 17-18, “...And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the Feast seven days, and on the eighth day [Last Great Day, Leviticus 23:36, 39, 44] there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.”

The Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day—the people were assembled.

Nehemiah 9, in his prayer, Nehemiah gives an historical review.

Nehemiah 9:38, ““And because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our leaders and our Levites and our priests seal it.””

Nehemiah 10:1-27, a covenant was made and the ones who signed the covenant are listed.

Nehemiah 10:28-31, “Now the rest of the people (the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the Nethinim, and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, everyone who had knowledge and understanding), they joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes—that we would not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons; that if the people of the land bring wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath or on a Holy Day; and that we would forego the seventh year’s produce and the exaction [collection] of every debt.”

Verse 37, “to bring the firstfruits of our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, the

new wine and oil, to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God; and to bring the tithes of our land to the Levites for the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities.”

Notice that when the people returned to God with all their hearts, they returned in these areas:

- 1) They separated themselves from fellowship with the world (v. 28).
- 2) They became very conscious of properly observing the Sabbath (v. 31).
- 3) They paid their tithes (vv. 35-38).

This is the way in which they turned around.

Verses 38-39, “And the priest, the descendant of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the rooms of the storehouse. For the children of Israel and the children of the Levi shall bring the offering of the grain, of the new wine and the oil, to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary are, where the priests who minister and the gatekeepers and the singers are; and we will not neglect the house of our God.”

Nehemiah 11:1-2, “Now the leaders of the people dwelt at Jerusalem; the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city, and nine-tenths were to dwell in other cities. And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.”

Problems were not entirely solved.

Nehemiah 13:1-4, “On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people, and it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever come into the congregation of God, because they had not met the children of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing. So it was, when they had heard the Law, that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel. Now before this, Eliashib the priest, having authority over the storerooms of the house of our God, was allied with Tobiah.”

Verse 5, Eliashib the high priest was allied with Tobiah. Tobiah actually had a chamber right there in the Temple where he would come in and stay. He stayed in the place where they brought in meat offerings and tithes.

Verses 6-12, “But during all this I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Then after certain days I obtained leave from the king, and I came to Jerusalem [Nehemiah had been gone for 12 years] and

discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms; and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense. I also realized that the portions for the Levites had not been given them; for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone back to his field. So I contended with the rulers, and said, ‘Why is the house of God forsaken?’ And I gathered them together and set them in their place. Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil to the storehouse.”

Verse 25, “So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, ‘You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves.’”

There kept being a problem because the family of the high priest was allied with the leadership of the opposition. And he never enforced it because his own grandson was married to a pagan woman.

Verses 26-31, “‘Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?’ And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite; therefore I drove him from me. Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan. I also assigned duties to the priests and the Levites each to his service, and to bringing the wood offering and the firstfruits at appointed times. Remember me, O my God, for good.”

Nehemiah finally cleaned house by chasing the grandson of the high priest out of the country. He disfellowshipped him! It never solved the problem until he started at the top and expelled the grandson of the high priest.

As we pick up the story from history, the father-in-law of this grandson took him in and the Samaritans built a temple on Mount Gerizim. This grandson of the high priest became the high

priest of the Samaritans, where he had intermarried.

When we come to the story in the Gospel accounts, we understand why there is such hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans in the time of Christ. The Jews wouldn't have anything to do with the Samaritans. Nehemiah made believers out of them!

Understanding what happened in the time of Nehemiah (as a background), when we come to the story in the Gospel account, we understand why there is such hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans.

John 4:4-9, "But He needed to go through Samaria. So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, 'Give Me a drink.' For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.'"

Verse 20, "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain [Mt. Gerizim, in Samaria], and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." This became the controversy. The family of the high priest that was expelled from Jerusalem claimed that the only thing that is the Bible is what Moses gave—the Torah (the first five books)—and they altered that. This was the situation in which it was necessary for Ezra and Nehemiah to make plain, once and for all, what constituted the Word of God.

The book of Chronicles was written by Ezra. Chronicles tells the story from a different viewpoint. It deals almost entirely centering on Jerusalem. The first chapter of Chronicles sets the stage and spends the whole book on King David and making Jerusalem the capital. 2 Chronicles 1-7 focuses on Solomon and the building of the temple at Jerusalem. The rest of Chronicles primarily focuses in on Kings Hezekiah and Josiah and the great revivals that took place.

The story of what happened in Northern Israel is only referred to in a very general sense. The story now has to be written to make it plain in a time of confusion. Charges and accusations were being made. Everyone was claiming to represent God. The family of high priest that was expelled from Jerusalem claimed to represent God. Ezra

and Nehemiah said they represented God. It was in this context that the official canon of the Scriptures was finally finished. Ezra, during this time, was a ready scribe of the Law who came back to teach the Bible. It was necessary that an authoritative seal be set because the Samaritans were seeking to subvert things from within. It was necessary that things be established.

The Jews, while in Babylon, had adopted a new method of writing—the square script of the Babylonians. The original Hebrew script was different. It looked more like the Arabic you see today. Hebrew is a much squarer script with bolder letters. Arabic is much more flowing, cursive. That is more akin to what the Jews had written with. The letters were the same, but the shapes were different.

The Jews had become familiar with the written Babylonian script while in captivity. Ezra now changed the Hebrew script from the older script that had been used to the Babylonian script they had adopted in Babylon. The reason being was that the Bible was recopied in this Babylonian script. This made a very clear distinction between what the Jews recognized as Scripture and what the Samaritans did because the Samaritans were unwilling to copy the Jews. They hadn't been there in captivity. They had adopted the Hebrew script hundreds of years earlier, and they weren't about to change back to copy the Jews. Now it was very apparent, at first glance, if a book was Samaritan or Jewish. The official canon of the Old Testament was set at this time.

The book of Chronicles focuses in on the periods of revivals, how everything was centered in Jerusalem, and that's where God's work was centered. It was necessary that this be done. Josephus testifies that from the time of Artaxerxes (Ezra and Nehemiah), no more books were added to the canon. Ezra edited certain things to bring it up to date, such as the expression, "to this day." This was the closing—the seal—of the official canon of the Old Testament. God, through Ezra and Nehemiah, had set the nation back on the right track, and the official final canon of Old Testament Scripture was completed.

Deuteronomy 34:10, "But since then there had not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." —Which we'll come to next in the New Testament. We'll see what caused the New Testament to have to be put together in the way that it was and that it very greatly paralleled the events of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was an attempt, again by the

Samaritans—by the false church—to subvert, to infiltrate, to circulate all kinds of false and spurious books and to claim that they were equal with Scripture. It became necessary for the people of God to know the difference and for an authoritative difference to be made.

Bible Study # 4
September 8, 1987
Mr. John Ogwyn

Proof of the Bible Series (Part 4)—How the New Testament Came Together

In this Bible study we **will see how the New Testament came together**. We have been talking about how we got our Bible, the Bible as we know it and how the Scriptures came to be. We have been focusing in on the Old Testament and how it came to be. Last time we went through Ezra and Nehemiah, the conclusion of the Old Testament and what gave us our canon of Scripture. There was a conclusion to the books as inspired by God and preserved by the Jews. The books that they recognized as sacred had not been added to since the time of Artaxerxes in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Deuteronomy 18:15, "...a Prophet like me..." and One who would give law. This was something none of the other prophets did. They had no authority to add to or take away from the Law of Moses. There was this prophecy, "that One like Moses," and that was Jesus Christ.

Acts 7:37, "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him shall you hear.'"" —Showing that all these prophecies referred to Jesus Christ.

The same statements were referred to back in Acts 3.

Acts 3:20-22, "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him shall you hear in all things whatever He says to you.'""

—"Like me...Him shall you hear."

Verse 26, "To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." The emphasis is that all these prophets referred to Jesus Christ—like Moses in a way that no one else ever was. What does it mean to be a prophet like Moses? Moses gave Law. Moses was responsible for the canon of Scripture laid up in the ark. God used Moses to write Scripture and to give Law. Let's notice a prophecy in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 8:14, "He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both

the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Who is this referring to?

Turn briefly back to Romans.

Romans 9:23, "and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory."

Verses 32-33, "Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him shall not be put to shame.'" That stumbling stone refers, of course, to Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:4-8, "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.' Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious but to those who are disobedient, 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,' and 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.' They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed."

This is quoted from Isaiah 8:14, "He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

—Referring to Jesus Christ.

Verses 15-20, "And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken.' Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples. And I will wait on the Lord, who hides His face from the house of Jacob; and I will hope in Him. Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion. And when they shall say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,' should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the Law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them."

"To the law and to the testimony"—that expression or statement is utilized various times.

Revelation 12:17, for instance, "...the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

In other places in Revelation it refers to the Law and to the testimony (Revelation 12:11; Revelation 19:10; Revelation 1:2, 9; Revelation 6:9).

Isaiah 8:16, "Bind up the testimony, seal the Law among My disciples." *The testimony would be bound up, and the Law would be sealed among the disciples of Jesus Christ.* "Bind up" means "to canonize, to seal, to set it apart." The testimony and the Law would be set apart. The testimony and the Law would be set apart as authentic and genuine among whom? —The disciples of Jesus Christ! It was not going to be canonized by the Catholic Church. It was to be sealed by the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 42:21, "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the Law and make it honorable." Jesus Christ would magnify the Law.

Matthew 5:17, notice, "'Do not think that I came to destroy the Law, or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill.'" —To fill up to the full! He was coming to magnify the Law. He was not coming to destroy it or do away with it.

Verse 18, "'For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.'" —Not one jot or tittle. Then He begins to magnify the Law.

Verses 21-22, "'You have heard that it was said...But I say to you...'"

Verses 27-28, "'You have heard...But I say to you...'"

Verses 31-32, "'Furthermore it has been said...But I say to you...'"

Verses 33-34, "'Again you have heard...But I say to you...'"

Verses 38-39, "'You have heard...But I tell you...'"

Notice as we go on through and you find again a sixth place.

Verses 43-44, "'You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.'" —Bless them that curse you.

Verse 48, "'Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.'" —Be completely spiritually mature. He goes on focusing on different things. He is magnifying the Law. He says, 'This is what you have always

been told, but I say to you.' He was making it more binding. It is not enough to keep the letter of the Law. He taught the spirit of the Law. He magnified the Law. He did come and He did magnify the Law.

In Isaiah 8:16, the Law was bound up by His disciples. In the beginning they did not feel a need to preserve what Jesus said and did because they expected His return soon.

Acts 1:6, the last question they asked Him, "'...Lord, will You at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?'"

Verse 7, "And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.'" They expected Christ to return in their lifetime (including the Apostle Paul), but as time went on and as they got further along, it was apparent—the awareness began to dawn on them—that there were things yet to be done. As a result, certain records began to be set down.

2 Peter 1:12-15, "Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease."

The story of who was responsible for giving us the New Testament, as we have it, is not that different than what Ezra and Nehemiah faced. It was because of the Samaritans and their trying to subvert and water down the truth of God. It was their opposition and their antagonism that caused Ezra and Nehemiah to set apart these books.

Was there anything like this in the New Testament? Yes, there was—in Acts 8:9-11, Simon the Sorcerer (the magician) known in history as Simon Magus. The Samaritans looked to him as God's representative on earth.

Acts 8:12-13, "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done."

We are going to see what he believed a little later. He was amazed at the things Philip did.

Verses 17-18, "Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he

offered them money.” He offered them money; he tried to make a deal. He said, ‘I want this office.’ He was trying to buy an apostleship.

Verse 19, “saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’” He said, ‘I want the office that you hold; I want to be able to do that.’

Verse 20, “But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money.’” He told him to take his money and where to go with it.

Verse 21, “‘You have neither part nor portion [KJV, “lot”] in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.’”

“‘You have neither part nor lot.’” What does that expression mean? Notice what the apostles said after Judas had committed suicide.

Acts 1:24-26, “And they prayed and said, ‘You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.’ And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

Acts 8:21, “‘You have neither part nor portion [KJV, “lot”] in this matter....’” It was a reference to the apostleship.

Verse 20, “... ‘Your money will perish with you,’”

Verse 21, “‘You have neither part nor portion [KJV, “lot”] in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.’” ‘You have not been chosen nor designated by God.’

Verse 23, “‘For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.’” –The bond of lawlessness. He looked into [at the heart of] Simon and saw that he wasn’t in any way repentant. He was bitter against the Government of God. He was caught up in an attitude of contempt toward the Law of God.

Verse 24, “Then Simon answered and said, ‘Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.’” He said, ‘I hope all those terrible things don’t happen.’ He didn’t repent.

Simon loomed rather large on the horizon in church history. He was the religious leader of the Samaritans. What was their religion? They practiced the Babylonian Mystery Religion. They paid lip-service to the God of Israel but attached that to their old pagan religion. They kept doing the same things but called it by the name of God.

John 4:19-22, “The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain [Mount Gerizim, in Samaria], and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.’”

Jesus made it very plain that you don’t look among the Samaritans for the truth of God. They used God’s name, but they didn’t even know anything about the name of God. Don’t look to the Samaritans for what they preserved. Don’t look there; look to the Jews. They are the ones who have the responsibility of preserving the text. It is among these Samaritans that we find Simon the Magician. He thought he was the great one. He tried to buy an apostleship.

Later we read where Paul talked about those who were false apostles.

2 Corinthians 11:13, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.”

John also talked about them in 1 John.

1 John 2:19, “They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.” That is who he was talking about.

The interesting thing to note, concerning the Samaritans and the Jews, there is another comparison. When the Apostle Paul went out into the Greek-speaking world, he primarily went where the Jews were. It really started out by being preached to those who were familiar with the Law. Three hundred years earlier was the dispersion (Greek, “*Diaspora*”)—the scattering of the Jews during the time of Alexander the Great. That served as the nucleus around which the Church of God was built.

There was another group of people who were dispersed in the ancient world—the dispersion of the Samaritans. Rome and Alexandria, Egypt were the two major areas where the Samaritans settled.

It is interesting to note that when we come across a church in the second century, as the curtain lifts from the time the New Testament closes, we find a church that calls itself Christian, but it’s not doing the things we find practiced by Jesus and the early apostles. It was a church that used the name of God and Jesus Christ, but was, in reality, following the same old Babylonian

Mystery Religion. It was none other than the church that Simon the Sorcerer was responsible for founding. It was the outgrowth of what Simon did among the Samaritan colonies.

There are many warnings in the New Testament. It was a time of confusion. Let's go back to 2 Peter. He was writing in the latter part of the 60s A.D.

2 Peter 2:1-3, "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber."

Peter was talking about false prophets—those who would mislead. There are these warnings.

The Apostle Jude gave a number of these warnings.

Jude 3, "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." –Again, writing in the late 60s A.D. Even 35 years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Jude was telling the Church to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered.

Verse 4, "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." There was a false message being taught, turning the grace of our God into lewdness and denying the only Lord God.

Verses 11-12, notice, "Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves; they are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots." There are spots in your feasts, twice dead. He speaks here of these individuals who were a source of contention, a source of problems. The Church was told to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered.

Christ said He would bind up the Law among His disciples (Isaiah 8:16).

2 Peter 1:12-14, "Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me." "Tent"—he was referring to his mortal body.

Verse 15, "Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease." He said, 'I am not going to be negligent. I know that I am not going to be alive much longer, but I am going to endeavor that after I die, you will have all of these things in remembrance.' How could Peter do this? –By having these things written down and set apart as canon of Scripture.

I want you to notice something we always read right over.

Verse 16, "For we did not follow cunning devised fables..."

Verse 15, "Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder..." He switched from first person singular to first person plural. He switches from "I" to "we."

In verses 12-15, Peter used "I"; in verses 16-18, he used "we." Who is the "we" to whom he is referring?

2 Peter 1:17-18, "For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain."

To whom is "we" referring? It is very plain this "we" refers specifically to Peter and John alone, and I can prove that.

Let's go to Matthew 17:1-9. "We" refers to those who were in the mountain and heard, "This is My beloved Son."

Matthew 17:1-2, "Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, brought them up on a high mountain by themselves, and was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light." Does that sound like Jesus back in Revelation 1 in His glorified state?

Verse 5, "While He was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'"

Verses 3-4, "And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three

tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

Verse 9, they saw a vision.

Matthew 16:28, “Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” They saw Jesus coming in His kingdom.

Peter, James and John went up into a mountain six days later, and they saw Christ in glorified form coming in His Kingdom and saw Moses and Elijah (Church and State) resurrected in a vision. They heard that. It was a vision, and Jesus told them not to say anything about it.

Matthew 17:9, “...Jesus commanded them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead.’” Who was there? –Three men: Peter, James and John. Go back to Acts.

Acts 12:1-2, “Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.” A few years into the New Testament period (about 13 years after the crucifixion) James was killed.

In 2 Peter 1, there were only two other men still alive.

2 Peter 1:16, Peter said, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” This “we” can only refer to Peter and John, the only two people still living who had heard the voice. Notice something about Peter and John.

Verse 19 (KJV), “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; ...” We have the authoritative word of prophecy.

Verse 20, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation.” Peter and John were responsible for the canonization of the New Testament. They were the ones to whom were given the authoritative word of prophecy. Peter was responsible for the first canonization of Scripture, and about 30 years later, John was responsible for the last canonization of Scripture. We are the ones who have the “sure word of prophecy.”

Verse 16, “For we [Peter and John] did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”

2 Peter 2:1, “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies even denying the Lord who

bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”

‘There were false prophets, but we (Peter and John) are the ones you listen to. We are the ones that God has given that authority to—to say what is inspired of God and what is not. We are the ones that God has given that authority to.’ Just read church history and all the spurious accounts.

Verse 3, “By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; ...” Covetousness was the actual motive of those who tried to subvert.

Verses 4-5, “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly.”

Verses 9-10, “then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.”

They despise government and church authority. That has been a stumbling block in our day. They didn’t want to be told what to do. They wanted to do what they wanted to do. Peter was very quick to call “a spade a spade.” He had a way of being very blunt and to the point.

Jude 8, “Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.” –Just as in our time, and as we saw, with the Samaritans. Satan hasn’t changed his tactics.

Verse 10, “But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.”

Verse 12, “These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves; they are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.”—Clouds without water.

2 Peter 2:12-13, “But these like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes,

carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you.”

People were coming in trying to fellowship with God’s Church and yet using that opportunity for fellowship to try and subvert with their own deceptions.

Verses 14-15, “having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practice, and are accursed children: They have forsaken the right way and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.”

Verses 17-19, “These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, to whom the gloom of darkness is reserved forever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through licentiousness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption, for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought in bondage.”

They promise them liberty. Peter makes it very plain.

2 Peter 3:1-2, notice, “Beloved, I now write this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior.”

This is referring to Scripture—the prophets and the apostles. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone and He is what the Bible is all about. He personified the Bible and lived it totally and completely.

There are several interesting things that come out in this. We noted before that as the Jews count the Old Testament, there are 22 books. There are 27 books in the New Testament. When you add the 27 and 22, you come up with 49—seven times seven—God’s number of completion and perfection.

If you take the four Gospels, which tell the story of Jesus Christ’s life, and Acts, which continues that story of what Jesus did through the Church (in those five books), the story of Jesus is the focal point. There are 22 books before and 22 books after those five books. Christ is the center of the Bible—the focal point. He is the chief cornerstone.

John wrote five books of the New Testament—the last books written—the Gospel of John, 1, 2, 3 John and Revelation. He outlived all of the

other apostles by 30 years. If you take out John’s Books, how many remain for Peter to have canonized? —Twenty-two! Exactly the same number as already existed in the Old Testament canon. Then, 30 years later, five final books were added by John.

In 2 Peter 1:15, he says that he is going to be sure, after his decease, to always have a reminder of these things. How? —By setting down an authoritative canon of Scripture. But he made it plain that he was not the only one with that authority. Thirty years later, after the scene had changed, John had five more, which brought the total to 27. With the 22 of the Old Testament, it made God’s perfect number, and it also represented the seventh period of canonization. 1) The time of Moses, 2) Solomon, 3) Isaiah and Hezekiah, 4) Josiah and Jeremiah, 5) Ezra and Nehemiah, 6) the time of Peter and then 7) the Apostle John put the final books in as the Greeks preserved it. God, over a period of centuries, working seven distinct periods of time, put together a book that consists of seven times seven. There is a logical flow and it finishes out with eternity in Revelation.

2 Peter 3:2, “that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior.” He makes it plain the people were to accord the same to these Scriptures as they had with the Old Testament.

Verses 3-9, “knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’ For this they willingly forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which now exist are kept in store, reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

Peter began to expound that God has a time plan. Peter is writing in the late 60s A.D. and he could see that Jesus Christ was not coming back in their lifetime. He began to go through and explain that God has a time plan. God is not

slack concerning His promises; it's not that God has forgotten about what He said. In that time plan, a day is as a 1,000 years.

Verses 13-15, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found of Him in peace, without spot and blemish; and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you." There is a definite article there.

Verse 16, "as also in all his epistles speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." Notice the fact that Paul's writings were now available. But there were things that weren't clear. "The rest of the Scriptures"—Peter says Paul's writings were Scriptures. Peter makes it plain.

Turn back to II Timothy 4 and see a little bit as to how some of these things came about.

II Timothy 4:6-9, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that Day, and not to me only but to all who have loved His appearing. Be diligent to come to me quickly."

Verse 11, "Only Luke is with me. Get Mark, and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry." He was useful to him for a service. 'I need him to do something.'

Verse 13, "Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments." Parchment was a writing material of value. It was what the scrolls were made of. It was not something on which you wrote your everyday letters, but official documents that needed to be preserved a long time—normally on what the Scriptures were written. Paul told Timothy, 'Come and see me because the time of my departure is at hand. I am going to be executed. I need you to come and bring Mark. I need him to do something and especially bring the parchments.' Timothy was coming there from Ephesus, the area Paul had been and the area where there was a depository of a copy of the letters that Paul had written.

1 Peter 5:13 (KJV), "The church that is at Babylon, selected together with you, salutes you;

and so does Mark, my son." Mark was to function as Peter's assistant in the same way that Timothy was to Paul. 'I need you to bring some things and bring Mark. He is profitable to me for a service.'

The copy of the letters that Paul had written had been preserved in Ephesus—copies of all the things that he had written. He edited those things in the final period of his life and put them in the final form. Timothy was bringing these to Peter and Mark was coming along.

Remember the prophecy—"seal up the Law among My disciples" (Isaiah 8:16). Peter and John were the ones who were given the authoritative, sure word of prophecy. They were responsible for sealing up those things. He sent them by Mark to Peter and was responsible for putting the first 22 books in the New Testament. They were kept and preserved 30 or so years, and the Apostle John put the New Testament in its final form. It was preserved by the Greeks; it was preserved right where Paul spent his final years.

The emphasis on Ephesus as the early Church was significant in more than one way. That is where John lived his final years. That is the area where the book of Revelation was written. That is where the authoritative copies of the New Testament were kept. That is where we find them preserved as we come on down to our time today—the official Greek text, preserved in the Greek-speaking world. The other copies that were not as completely and clearly preserved were found elsewhere.

We find the story a couple of centuries later when the church at Rome and Alexandria were arguing over a canon that already existed. They were debating over whether to exclude certain books from it—Revelation, 2 Peter, Jude—books that showed who they were and what they were doing. Revelation 17 talks very plainly of a great city that sits on seven hills, that reigns over the kings of the earth. Rome was noted as being the city of seven hills. Some of the references were so plain that they did their best to get rid of it.

We find here that God ensured the preservation of His Word. He inspired it to be written and raised up individuals to preserve and seal it up as authoritative. And God has preserved it!

The next time we will focus in on the order in which the Jews preserved the Old Testament and the Greeks the New Testament. The order was a little different and there are reasons for that. There are things that are obscured, that you don't properly see. Even though they couldn't get rid of the books, they tried to confuse them. God is a

God of order. The Book on which we base our life is God's Book and He has put His stamp on it. Our God has placed on this Book His seal and His stamp. You can't take anything out or put anything in because it doesn't make sense. Paul wrote 14 books. Time after time, you see these "sevens" that run through. God has done these things in a systematic way. Next Bible study we will see these things more clearly.

Bible Study # 5
September 22, 1987
Mr. John Ogwyn

Proof of the Bible Series (Part 5)—The Inspired Order of the Books of the Bible
(Chart at end)

Our focus has been on **how we can come to know and have the confidence that we have the complete Bible, and that it is really the Word of God.** We have gone through and seen how we have come to have the Old and New Testaments. We have seen God's completion of the Bible.

We mentioned that there were seven periods of how the Bible came together. When you add the 22 books to the 27 books, you come up with 49. There isn't any room for an Apocrypha. The Bible has an internal unity. **There are seven divisions of the entire Bible.** There are **three divisions of the Old Testament Scriptures:** 1) the Law, 2) the Prophets and 3) the Writings. There are **four divisions of the New Testament Scriptures:** 1) the Gospels and Acts, 2) the General Epistles, 3) the Epistles of Paul and 4) Revelation. It is not the order you have in your King James Bible and there is a reason for that.

What we term the "Old Testament," the Jewish Publication Society Edition simply terms it the "Holy Scriptures." In their translation, they record in the inspired order. There was a translation made (that took place over a period of years) called the "Septuagint Translation"—in reference to the 70 scholars. It was not translated for the authoritative Scriptures. They were on the edges of the Jewish community. It was the common translation in the Greek language and was the only one for a number of years. (Jews in Palestine looked down on it.) The Law, the Prophets and the Writings did not make sense to them.

They based the order of the Septuagint on what was commonly used by the Catholic Church. When the translation was made, they used the order that was already there by the Catholic Church. It loses something. The Greek manuscripts are preserved in a particular order. Only one translation preserves the proper Greek order—the Ivan Panan translation. When the King James was translated, they utilized the order which was already being used, and that was the order of books that the Catholic Church utilized. They went to the right sources of the translation, but they lost sight that God is a God of order who builds order in a system and has a

reason for doing it that way. Let's look and see **how the inspired order differs with the order in which we are familiar.**

The Old Testament has three sections (Luke 24:44):

1) **The Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. That part has not been tampered with.

2) **The Prophets:** There are two sections of Prophets: the **Former Prophets:** Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. They are books we would consider as historical. These books tell the story of the entrance of Israel until they go into captivity; they are told in a logical order. Then the **Latter Prophets:**—divided into the **Major Prophets:** Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and the **Minor Prophets** (simply based on the size of the books): Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

History and prophecy are simply the same thing. You look back on history and forward on prophecy. It is the story of what happens when you obey the Law and what happens when you don't—the blessings and the curses. God's law is the fundamental revelation. Everything builds on that. That is the starting point.

The **Former Prophets**, written earlier, tell the story of what Israel did—what happened when they obeyed and what happened when they disobeyed. The **Latter Prophets** drew lessons out into the future and showed the ultimate end of things.

3) **The Writings** (or **Psalms**) division consists of things that amplify and many things of poetry. They sandwiched it in with the Prophets because they didn't understand it. We are going to come back and see there is a direct logical reason why these Writings are in the order that they are. As we come into the New Testament, we again see the logic. When you read the Writings in the order we have them today, you don't really understand what Ruth is all about. The point is often lost. We come to 1, 2 Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, and it seems like Chronicles is rehashing what you just read. Ezra and Nehemiah are sandwiched in there along with Esther. You come to Job, and it seems to be sticking out, unrelated anywhere. You have Song of Solomon, then Lamentations (after Jeremiah). We add in the book of Daniel, and then, finally, books dealing with the Minor Prophets. That is not the way God had it. The **Former Poetic (Meter Books):** Psalms, Proverbs and Job are all written in a poetic fashion. Psalms was written

primarily as songs to sing. They were written to be memorized.

Psalm 148:1, “Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise Him in the heights!” –A poetic expression repeated. There is a certain repetition of thought.

Proverbs 2:2, you find the same thing, “So that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding.”

Proverbs 1:20, “Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open square.” They were written to be meditated on. There was a rhythm to them. It’s far easier to commit poetry to memory than to prose. You are able to call it back to mind. You think on them; you meditate on them. There are a lot of things you have to think about to get them out. Job was written in poetry.

The Megillot (Festival Books): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther were Festival Scrolls read through the year to illustrate points. Realize, when you understand when these books were to be read, you get some understanding. They don’t get lost in the shuffle.

Then we have the books written after the captivity. **Latter Restoration Books:** Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles—written as a conclusion to the Old Testament. Daniel answers to the book of Revelation in the New Testament—written as a parallel to that. Ezra and Nehemiah pick up the story after the return from captivity and how the Old Testament came to be. They tell you the story of what happened when they came back and make it plain about the Samaritans and Israel. After several hundred years, we know where to look. Simon the Magician claimed that they were the source of truth, and it resulted in a religion that claimed to be of Christ. Chronicles tells the story from the standpoint of Jerusalem. It tells you nothing about Northern Israel or King Saul. 1 Chronicles tells you about King David, that the temple was built there and that this was where God was working. It is obvious when you go through and read the Old Testament that there needs to be something to come after.

In the inspired order, 2 Chronicles 36:23 is the end of the Old Testament—the end of the Scriptures. It is a totally different feeling than what you get at the end of Revelation, where it would end. The next thing you would be reading in the inspired order is the book of Matthew. Matthew 1 goes right on through, coming down 14 generations—all the generations from Abraham to David to Christ. Matthew backs up

the story and kind of summarizes it from the standpoint that 2 Chronicles had just gotten through telling it. We find, as we go into Matthew, it ties in with 2 Chronicles.

The New Testament has four sections:

1) **The Gospels and Acts:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts correspond to the books of the Law.

Luke 1:1-3, “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus.” Go on to Acts.

Acts 1:1-2, “The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen.” Acts is the story of the Living Jesus Christ after He had ascended to heaven and sent the Comforter. He continued to work through His servants. John is inserted between Luke and Acts.

2) The next section is the **General Epistles:** James, 1, 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John and Jude.

3) Then follow the **Epistles of Paul.** They follow through Paul’s letters to seven Churches: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and 1, 2 Thessalonians. Then comes Hebrews (General Epistle) followed by Timothy, Titus and Philemon (Pastoral Epistles).

4) **Revelation.**

Let’s go back and understand a little more why this order has some relevance.

There are seven divisions of the Bible:

I. The Law: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Logically, Genesis is the place to begin. Why is Genesis a part of the Law? God didn’t open up with the Ten Commandments. That is not where the Bible starts. It starts in the most logical place—“In the beginning.” It starts out by introducing to us who and what God is. We are introduced to God. God created and fashioned the earth. He is the Creator of the earth and of man upon it. He is the Author of that. He introduces Himself as the Creator and the Life-giver. Then He introduces Himself as the Lawgiver. We find God promises land to Abraham. We understand that the God, who promised land to Abraham, created it and He owns it. It is His to give. We are introduced to

Him in that context. We are introduced to Abraham.

Notice the focus. God starts out with the universe and then the family of man. In a matter of 12 chapters, He goes all the way from the universe to one man, Abraham and then the family of Abraham, zeroing in on the family God was to work with in the future.

We then go to the story in Exodus. God didn't do it the way it would seem logical to people. They never really anticipated that God would allow their descendants to sink down as slaves. God wanted them to get the point that He was the One who gave the blessings. Man seems to think, 'Look what I have done; look what I can do.' As God brings them out of slavery, He then begins to speak. He reveals that Law and goes through the statutes and judgments and the experiences Israel went through wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. There is logic and order.

II. The Prophets: As we go through the Former Prophets, it is continued in story form. It is an amplification of the promises that God made (the blessings and the curses) and what happened when they obeyed and what happened when they disobeyed.

III. The Writings: Then we come back with the Writings—written in poetic and philosophical fashion, focusing in on many ways you can derive lessons. The Megillot (Festival Books): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. The Jews traditionally read the Song of Solomon during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The Song of Solomon is a love story in poetic form, the story of a young lady and her intended. It is the story of an attempt by the king to take her into his harem, and the story of two people who saved themselves for each other. It is a beautiful love story that we will be going through during a Bible study. I don't know of any sin more difficult to really see the need of putting away than sin dealing with the area of sex. This book read during this time was to focus in on the positive blessings and benefits that two young people were to have if they put away sin and saved themselves for one another. It is a beautiful and a graphic story. God is not prudish. The Song of Solomon is very graphic. It contains many things of instructions, in terms of sexual matters. It is important for young people to understand.

The book of Ruth was read on the Day of Pentecost. Again, it is a love story; it is more of a symbolic story. It ultimately focuses in on the marriage of Christ and the Church. It looked

back to the marriage of Christ and Old Testament Israel. The marriage of the Lamb has not yet taken place. Ruth embraced the ways of God and then her marriage to Boaz. It was a story that parallels the story of Pentecost.

Lamentations was read during their national holiday—the Feast of Ab (not one commanded in Scripture)—an anniversary of the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C. Titus did it on the same day in 70 A.D., so the Jews had a greater reason to fast. It was kind of a Fourth of July in reverse. It's a prophecy of the Great Tribulation of which the destruction of Jerusalem was a type.

Ecclesiastes was read during the Feast of Tabernacles. That may strike some as unusual. But when you understand the message of Ecclesiastes, it was the story of a man who lived the Feast of Tabernacles 365 days during the year. His name was Solomon. He had everything; he lived it up. It was a time of prosperity, a time of abundance.

Micah referred to the World Tomorrow.

Micah 4:4, "But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree...." This term was used during the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 4:25). This was to be characteristic of the World Tomorrow. Solomon, however, had to learn some lessons, and those lessons are set out in the book of Ecclesiastes. If physical things are all that you have, then there is an empty spot. The book of Ecclesiastes was read during that occasion. You see, there is a story contained in these Festival Scrolls.

Latter restoration books: Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. The book of Daniel is prophecy from a completely different standpoint. It was written by one outside the land of Palestine, written primarily dealing with Gentile areas. It was written after the captivity. Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles complete the story from that standpoint.

Then when you come to the New Testament, it is interesting that the Church is described as being built on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles (Ephesians 2:20). The Old Testament was written by prophets; the New Testament, by apostles and Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone.

IV. The four Gospels and Acts: Why are there four gospel accounts? They tell the story from four different standpoints. They follow a similar outline, but they tell the story in a different way.

Matthew was written to a Jewish audience. It focuses in on things from a Jewish standpoint. Those who were reading it were coming from a

background of strict, orthodox Judaism. It covers Christ's confrontation with the Pharisees and the Olivet Prophecy. It gives things not given in any other account. It was written to people very familiar with the Law. The confrontations were written in detail.

Mark (written by Mark)—the one who accompanied Peter. The thrust was to the area Peter ministered to. It is a book that focused in on the things that Christ did. It is a fast-moving story. It uses the word "straightway" (KJV), "immediately" (NKJV). It focuses in more on what Christ did rather than what He said. It doesn't give the details that Matthew gives.

Luke was written primarily to the Gentile area. Luke was a companion to Paul. There are two genealogies of Christ—Matthew and Luke. Matthew establishes that Jesus is the Messiah—the heir of David and Abraham. Those were the ones that were important as far as the Jews were concerned. God made the promises to Abraham and reiterated it to David. Matthew emphasizes that Jesus was the King. Luke traces it back to Adam, showing a common bond to all humanity. This was the Gospel that was circulated where Paul preached. It was written from a little different standpoint.

Here were three Gospel accounts that circulated in three different areas: Matthew's in the area of Judea and Jerusalem, Luke's and Paul's in the Gentile area and Mark's in the area where Peter and Mark worked.

John simply omits some of the things that Matthew, Mark and Luke talk about. John wrote at a much later time. He doesn't give the Sermon on the Mount. You will find that it gives what Christ said and did on seven occasions: three Passovers, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, Feast of Tabernacles and The Last Great Day. John focuses in on these Festival occasions. John simply added in material that was important for the Church to know. It was a time when the validity of the Holy Days and the Sabbath was being questioned.

Acts picks up the story from Luke, carries it through and ends abruptly with Paul's imprisonment. It tells how Christ established His Church and worked through it. That set the stage. That is a logical place to begin the New Testament.

Remember last Bible study, the warning from Peter about Paul's writings—"things hard to understand"—some things people tend to misapply and misuse. You read Jesus' example of the days He observed and kept. Then the book of Acts and the good news of the Kingdom they

preached. We have two sections that were to set the stage for Paul's writings: the Gospels and Acts and the General Epistles.

V. The General Epistles: James, 1, 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John and Jude.

James explains faith; Peter, hope; and John, love. Faith without works is dead (James 2:20). He emphasizes faith. The faith it takes to be healed in James 5. The kind of faith Abraham had (2:23). The kind of faith it takes. When you get through reading the book of James, you realize that it is necessary to do something.

Peter focuses on hope.

John goes through and explains about love.

1 John 5:3, "This is the love of God that we keep His commandments."

2 John 6, "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments." He goes on explaining about the things we are to love. We are not to love the world (1 John 2:15). It focuses in on what real love really is.

Then Jude warns you that you must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered.

After having the Gospels and Acts and the General Epistles as a background, you are prepared to read what Paul wrote. The Catholics didn't like the book of James; it was too Jewish. They liked the book of Romans. They put all the general epistles to the back, hoping you wouldn't make it all the way there.

VI. The Epistles of Paul: The order of Paul's Epistles is interesting. Paul's epistles to seven Churches include: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians and a General Epistle: Hebrews. He wrote four Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

Some modern critics want to say that Paul didn't write Hebrews. When you include Hebrews, you have 14 that he wrote. There are seven General Epistles: James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude. There are 14 letters from Paul. That is logical. God does things in a logical way. There is order. Many of the scholars can't understand why the epistles are in the order they are, but there is logic.

The order of Paul's epistles is based on the outline of God's plan based on the Holy Days. The book of Romans explains the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread.

Romans 5:8, "...Christ died for us." Isn't that the message of the Passover? It continues right on into Romans 6—the Days of Unleavened Bread and the necessity of coming out of sin.

Romans 5:8, "...while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." But we can't live in sin; we have to come out of it.

Then you go on to the book of Corinthians—the instruction about Passover (1 Corinthians 11) and the little leaven that leavens the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:6). The Holy Days picture God's plan of salvation.

Then you go on to Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. Those four focus in on the meaning of Pentecost and the giving and working of God's Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23—the fruits of the Spirit. Ephesians is an entire sermon on Pentecost. Ephesians in the New Testament and Ruth in the Old Testament explain being called out of the world and the marriage covenant.

Let's notice one little thing here.

Ephesians 2:11-12, "Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

That's what Ruth was—a Moabite. She turned her back from the world. What did she tell Naomi?

Ruth 1:16, "...your people will be my people and your God my God." It has to do with us being called out of the world. 'Husbands, love your wives; wives obey your husband.' He goes through this in Ephesians 5, and people think he is talking about the husbands and wives.

Verse 32, then he comes down and says it is a mystery about Christ and the Church.

Philippians focuses in on God's Spirit and how to overcome. Colossians continues on with the very same things—things that zeroes in, in a special way, with the meaning of Pentecost. What does 1 Thessalonians talk about? What comes next? Trumpets!

Chapter 4:16, Christ will descend from heaven.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, "...the times and seasons, ...the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night."

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, "Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come." Paul goes through and explains things—setting the stage of the Feast of Trumpets.

Then Hebrews focuses in on the things that deal with Atonement and Tabernacles. We always go back to Hebrews on Atonement because it explains the symbolism of Leviticus 16.

In Hebrews 8 and 9, Paul explains, "...He [Christ] entered the Most Holy Place" (9:12). Hebrews 11:13-16 focuses in on the time when they will receive the promises—the Feast of Tabernacles—a time yet to come. There is a thread that runs through, focusing in on the return of Christ and on into the World Tomorrow.

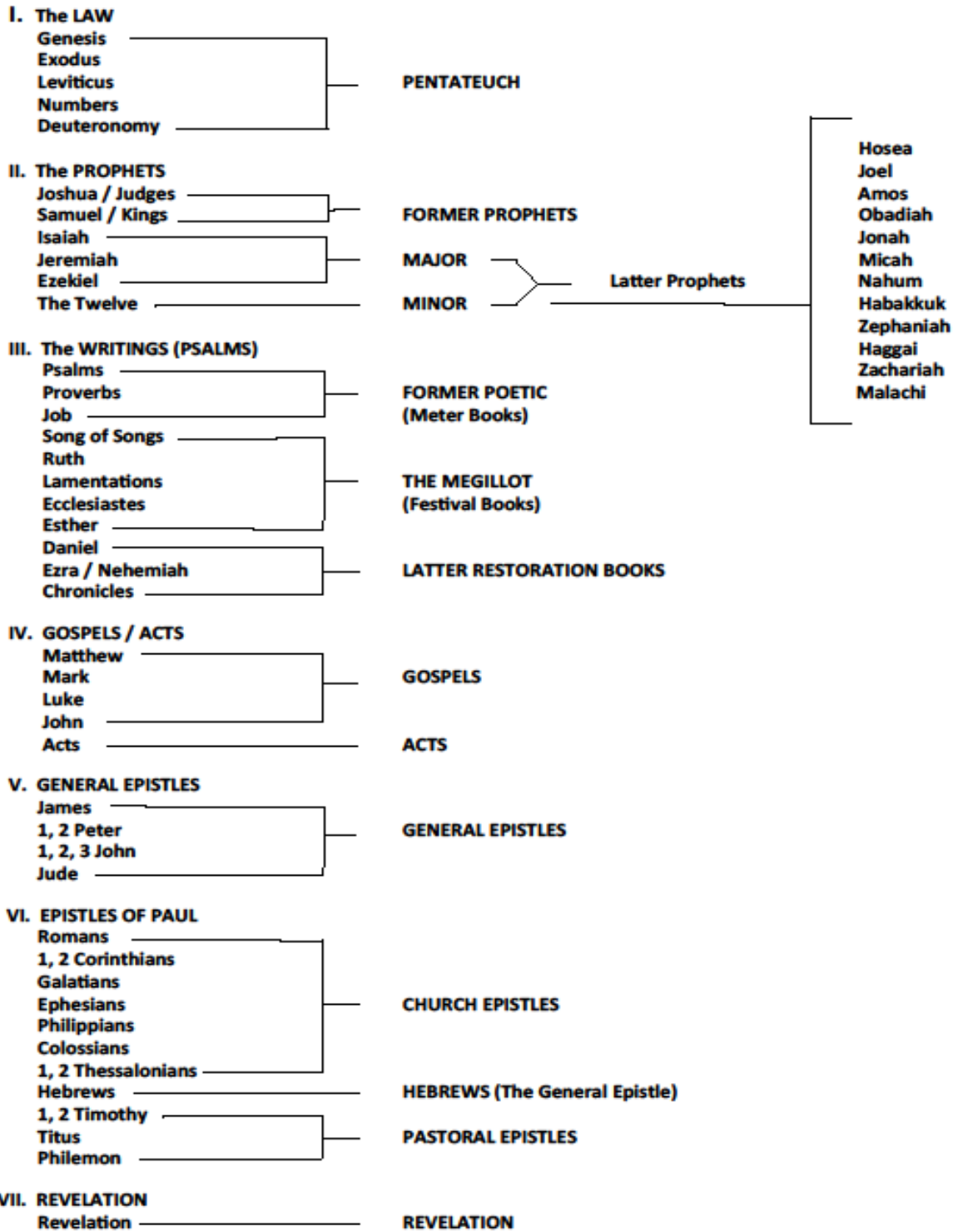
You have a logical flow through Paul's epistles, then his letters of instructions to the ministry: Timothy, an Evangelist, Titus (of less responsibility) and Philemon, an elder in the Church. There is logic as you go through it.

VII. Revelation: The logical place to end is Revelation—on out into eternity. Genesis opened up in the beginning; Revelation ends on the brink of eternity—forever stretching out beyond. They both boggle your mind. You can't understand "forever" in the past and in the future. Genesis starts with the Tree of Life in the midst of Paradise; Revelation ends with the Tree of Life and God building His family. We find the 12 sons of Jacob have now become 12 tribes designated by 12 gates. All mankind ultimately becomes the spiritual seed of Abraham. Jacob had 12 sons because God had an organizational structure that is ultimately going to relate to all those 12 tribes. Everyone who comes in has to go through one of those 12 tribes.

The Bible: things written over a period of a millennium and a half—1,500 years. Yet, there is logic. There are seven divisions in the Bible: three in the Old Testament and four in the New Testament. This Book that God gave to mankind starts at the beginning and ends on the brink of eternity.

Next Bible study we will focus in on different aspects of the Bible. Many aspects will be of value to us in coming to understand more deeply this Book—every word by which we are to live (Matthew 4:4). That is what we are going to focus in on—this Book that is to be the basis of how we live our lives.

TRUE ORDER & DIVISIONS OF THE BIBLE



Bible Study # 6
October 27, 1987
Mr. John Ogwyn

Introductory Material to the Survey Approach of Studying the Bible

We have been going through a series of the proof of the Bible. Where did we get the Bible? How did it come to be? Where did it derive its authority? The canonization of the Bible, how it came to be set apart?

Tonight we **are going to begin another series.** Have you ever wished that you could take part in an Ambassador College Bible class? Some of you have had that privilege. The approach we are going to take in the months immediately ahead is that we are going to go through the entire Bible in several different series: a Historical Survey of the Old Testament, a series on the Gospels, Acts, the Major Prophets, the Minor Prophets, the Writings (the poetic books), the General Epistles, the Epistles of Paul and Revelation. We will go through the Bible in a set of different ways.

There are different ways to study the Bible. One way is to study the Bible in terms of subject matter. Many of our booklets and the Bible Study Course utilize that. It takes all the scriptures that pertain to a subject and is presented that way. We are going to take another approach in this series. We are going to take it from a standpoint of surveying the book and the subjects that book covers. **We are going to take a survey approach.**

I am going to go through some material this evening that is introductory. We are going to start with the Books of the Law, then Joshua, Judges, then a harmony of the events contained in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, ending with the material covered in Ezra and Nehemiah. Then we will cover the transition period and then the Gospels. Later we will come back with material such as the Major Prophets, etc.

Every Bible study you will be told what we are going to cover. You will have two weeks to study these chapters. You will have a standing assignment, and you can read that material. I will hand out questions, and I will go through the answers with you with each of those. You will have questions that will take you through every single book of the Bible. You will have two weeks to cover the material and get the answers. You may come up with questions yourself.

The material of this section of the Bible—the first five books of the Old Testament—are called “the Law” or “the Torah.” “Torah” is a Hebrew

word that means “Law.” They are sometimes called “the Books of Moses” or “the Law of Moses.” The Law didn’t originate with Moses, but he was the one God used to deliver the Law. God used Noah as the physical instrument to build the ark, and God used Moses as the physical instrument to deliver the Law—the first authoritative revelation set apart. Just prior to Moses’ death, he delivered the authoritative copy of the Law to the Levites.

Deuteronomy 31:24-26, “So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: ‘Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you.’”

That comprised the very first canonization of Scripture. It also served as a basis for the rest of the Bible because everything else goes back to and derives from those first five books. That is God’s most basic revelation. You can’t understand anything that comes after unless you first understand the beginning.

The other two divisions of the Old Testament, the Prophets and the Writings, are simply expansions of and commentary on the Law. The Prophets tell you what happens when you obey the Law and when you don’t obey—an amplification of the blessings and the curses. Hosea, Joel and other prophets are simply an expansion of the curses in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 and the blessings that God’s people are ultimately going to have. Why are those good things going to happen? Why is the whole world going to enjoy a Feast of fat things (Isaiah 25:6, KJV)? —Because the whole world will be obeying the law. The Prophets tell you the effect; the Law tells you the cause. The Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings) show the extent to which the nation obeyed the Law. The Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) projected it on out into the future. Then we have the poetic amplification of the Law—the Psalms or Writings.

Christ came to fulfill the Law—to fill it to the full.

Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” He amplified and expanded the Law in the spiritual. The Gospels, the Acts and the Epistles continue to build upon the Law.

Moses wrote the first five books—the Pentateuch.

Exodus 17:14, “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua,’”

Exodus 24:4, “And Moses wrote all the Words of the Lord.” Moses wrote these things because God told him to.

Numbers 33:1-2, “These are the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the Lord.” Again, we are told that Moses wrote this account and by God’s instruction.

Deuteronomy 31:9, “So Moses wrote this Law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel.”

The books of the Law themselves testify to Moses’ writings. Other Old Testament writers claim that Moses wrote it. Joshua testifies that Moses wrote it.

Joshua 1:7, “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you;”

The testimony of later writings: King David testifies that Moses wrote it.

1 Kings 2:3, “‘And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, ...’”

In the latter part of Kings, it testifies that Moses wrote it.

2 Kings 21:8, “‘and I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers—only if they are careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them.’”

Malachi 4:4, “‘Remember the law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.’” In the Old Testament, all testify to Moses. The Pentateuch, or Torah, testifies that Moses wrote it and so do other Old Testament writings.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ Himself claimed that Moses wrote of Him.

Matthew 19:8, “And He said to them, ‘Moses because of the hardness of your hearts permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.’” He is quoting from Deuteronomy 24:1.

John 5:45-46, “‘Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you

believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote of Me.’” Jesus said that if you didn’t believe what Moses wrote, then they were not going to believe Him either because what Moses wrote was the basis of the background that led to Him.

John 7:19, “‘Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keeps the law?’”

Luke 16:29, “‘Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’”

Verse 31, “‘But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets [referring to the Old Testament Scriptures], neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’”

Luke 24:44, “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’” Jesus testified of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms (or Writings).

There is also the external evidence of the books themselves. Some of the very things that the critics used (back in the early part of this century), trying to prove that Moses couldn’t have written the Law, trying to prove that someone wrote it centuries later, has served to enforce that Moses wrote the book of the Law. It has turned out that the more archaeology has uncovered, the more it has shown that certain things were customs and things were practiced at an earlier time and since forgotten about. Things serve to authenticate the books of the Law and serve to show they were written at the time—not someone writing centuries later. There are details that were not uncovered until recent years about cities that have ceased to exist. No one who wrote later than Moses could have known because they would not have existed. There are details of migrations—details that could not have been invented by an imposter. These things have served to enforce that Moses is the one who wrote the book of the Law.

The book of Genesis is the book of beginnings. It gives the origin of the human family. It gives the origin of the family with whom God made His Covenant and with whom He chose to work.

Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” God introduces Himself. He did not start the Bible with the Ten Commandments. He started the Bible in the only logical place—in the beginning. He first introduces Himself. What right does He have to tell us what is right and wrong? He is the One who made everything. The God we read of is the Creator. He is the One who brought those things

into existence. He created the universe, this planet and human life on this planet. And He created that human life in His own image—setting apart that human life from animal life. Biologically, chemically and physically there is not that much difference between human life and animal life. He made human beings after His likeness. It gives the origin of the different nationalities that comprise the human race and then focuses in on one human family (Abraham) with whom He made a special agreement—a Covenant. Then He brings his descendants all the way into the land of Egypt. Genesis is the introduction to the whole Bible.

The laws of God were known and understood. We are introduced to the Sabbath right in the beginning.

Genesis 2:2-3, “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

Joseph knew that it was wrong to commit adultery.

Genesis 39:9, “...‘How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’”

Romans 4:15, “...for where there is no Law, there is no transgression.”

It was a sin for Cain to murder Abel.

Genesis 4:7, “‘If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.’” You go on through and see that, time after time, the Laws of God were known and understood.

Then we follow with the book of Exodus. It begins with Israel, as the Covenant people, having entered Egypt with great prominence because of Joseph, but moved from this position of prominence to being slaves. Then we have God’s intervention in calling them out of Egypt, giving to them the first codification of God’s Law and establishing His Church—the Congregation of Israel. We have the story of God intervening to bring the people out of the enslavement of this world’s system. That journey was made possible through God’s intervention. God’s Law—the Law—is codified in the book of Exodus (Exodus 20).

Leviticus has as its emphasis to be holy. It was written to the priesthood. They were to teach the people the difference between the holy and the unholy. We are to become perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. We are told to become holy, as our God is holy. If we are to become like God,

we must be characterized as being holy. God will not dwell in uncleanness. God entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham and then with Israel; they must be a holy people because God is a holy God. The emphasis in the book of Leviticus is to be holy in order that God’s presence might remain among them and that they might remain holy. We will see, as we go through the book of Leviticus, that there are basically seven sections on what it means to be holy.

The ceremonial things were lessons—a schoolmaster—to educate us about Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:24, KJV) and to recognize that, in order to come into the presence of God, they had to have sin paid for. Our sins must be paid for in order for us to come into the presence of God. The sacrificial offerings were a type. It showed their need for a Savior, their need for One whose life could pay the penalty. There are many principles in Leviticus all dealing with how to be holy. God will not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. If God would not dwell in the midst of physical uncleanness, how much less would He dwell in spiritual uncleanness? We cannot conduct our lives in such a manner and expect that God would dwell in us and be our God.

Numbers is the account of the wanderings in the wilderness. Let’s notice what the Apostle Paul said.

1 Corinthians 10:1-2, “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud [under water; water vapors], all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” They came through the water. In other words, they were surrounded by water. They had it all around them, both sides and on top. They were, in a figurative sense, baptized. They were immersed in water.

Verses 6-7, “Now these things became our examples to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.’”

Verses 10-12, “nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all things happened to them as examples, and they are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages are come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” These things happened to them for examples. These things are primarily contained in the book of Numbers.

We are right now, in our position of coming out of Egypt, going into the Promised Land. We are going through, figuratively, our 40 years in the wilderness. We are the heirs of the world to come. This is not our age, our world. We are in a transition period. Living in this world, we are coming through a wilderness. We have turned our back on Egypt and are going toward the Promised Land. We are not there yet.

Numbers is a very important book. It tells us the things that entangled and trapped the people to whom He had made great promises. Seeing these things, we are able to bypass these pitfalls.

Hebrews 3:7-12, “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, “they always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.” So I swore in My wrath, “they shall not enter My rest.”’ Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.”

Verses 17-19, “Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” We see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. The book of Numbers is the story of that.

To the extent that we can learn the lesson, these lessons set down for our benefit, we don’t have to repeat the same mistakes. The book of Numbers is a very profitable book that enables us to be a holy people to our God and enables us to become like Him. It shows the pitfalls that we encounter along the way.

“Deuteronomy”—the name means “the second law.” It lays great emphasis on the responsibility of the individual to follow through with His covenant obligation. It serves as a completion of the Law by showing us the ultimate results of obedience and disobedience. Deuteronomy 27 and 28 are an outline of blessings and curses.

Deuteronomy 28:6, “Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.”

Verses 8-13, “The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. The Lord will establish you as a holy people

to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you. And the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow, and the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them.”

‘You shall be the head and not the tail. You will set the example, and others will come to you to learn.’

Verses 14-15, “So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them. But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.”

Verses 21-22, “The Lord will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. The Lord will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish.”—All kinds of diseases.

Verse 37, “And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the Lord will drive you.”

Verse 41, “You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity.”

Verse 43, “The aliens among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower.” Israel would suffer curses and come to a point that, in the midst of their inheritance, they would be at the bottom and others at the top.

Verse 47, “Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things.”

We have the basis for all of prophecy in the conclusion of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy

serves as a re-statement, a reminder, as it serves to put the Law into perspective. It is a book of reminders, just prior to inheritance, by stating that things are a matter of cause and effect.

We have, throughout these first five books, a tremendous amount of material. These things are examples. They serve to introduce to us the true God, to understand God's law, to have it codified for us, to have principles and to have a special relationship with God. They warn of the pitfalls that we are encountering in the Christian life and the basic things we need to understand as we prepare to enter in.

There is so much contained in these first five books. It sets the stage for everything else that comes after—especially Genesis, which is the book of origins. You can't understand science unless you understand the book of Genesis; it is the foundation for knowledge. You can't understand history.

God made of one blood all the nations on the face of the earth (Acts 17:26). All are simply a branch of the human family from one man and his wife; all human beings are derived from that. We are one family. God was ultimately looking forward to a Family that He was going to put together for all eternity.

God is a God of organization and harmony. God's Family, on out into eternity, is not going to be a mass of people getting into each other's way. God's Family will have a work to accomplish, expanding God's government and family on out into the universe. But it has to be done in a systematic way. That is why God programmed diversity into the family. Any organization has departments responsible for different aspects.

We are given the basic material of origins. The Bible is a foundation of knowledge. It contains a foundation on which all knowledge is to be built. Man has the ability to search out and discover, but if we do that apart from God's revelation, then we get off the track. God reveals the basic information.

We are going to spend a little more time in the book of Genesis. God summarizes such vast information in Genesis—1,656 years of human history in simply a matter of a few chapters. The first five or six chapters tell you 1,656 years of human history. Then in some places, God paints in with a broader brush.

For the next Bible study, I want you to read and study the first three chapters of Genesis. I will hand out questions, and I will go through the answers with you on our study of Genesis 1—3. If you will utilize it, it will be something that

will help you deepen your own knowledge of the Word of God and have some deeper insight into this Book by which we are to live as the people of God.