

# Know the Book

## Bible Knowledge, Part 1

### Summary for Teachers

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#### Theme

Get to know the Bible!—Getting to know how the Bible was written and compiled.

#### Aim

To help the students become familiar with the composition of the Bible, the main books and divisions, so that they can easily find books and verses, and have a grasp of where to look and for what. To increase their faith in the Bible's truth through a brief look at fulfilled prophecies and archaeological discoveries.

#### Roundup

Prayer and Opening Activity (15 minutes)

Praise Time with songs

Discussion about the Bible

Class Section 1: Why Study the Bible? (25 minutes)

You should study the Bible for your own benefit

Reading the Bible, you get closer to the Author

You should study the Bible for your witness

To know the future: The Bible tells us what's going to happen!

The Fall of Tyre

The destruction of the temple

Cyrus: The king named in advance

Quick summary of reasons to study the Bible

Class Section 2: Basic Bible Knowledge (75 minutes)

Who wrote the Bible?

Difference between Old and New Testaments and what they are

Old Testament Groups

Historical books

Poetical Books

Major Prophets

Minor prophets

New Testament Groups

Historical: Gospels and Acts

The Epistles

The Prophetic Book: Revelation

How the Bible came into being

How the Bible was put together

Language and Translation

Compiling the Bible and its division into chapters and verses

## Optional Section: Archaeological Finds Confirm the Bible

King David

The finding of Babylon

Ancient kings

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Prayer and Closing Activity (5 minutes)

### Get Prepared

- In this class you'll want to try to help the students get a good foundation of understanding about the composition of the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, and so on.
- Depending on the amount of their prior knowledge, you can teach more or less of this class. It is much better for the students to leave with some basic information that they will remember than to become bored or confused by a mass of details. Do not feel you need to teach everything in this class. Teach what the students need and are interested in.
- For this class each student will need to have a full Bible in their hands. If the students have their own copies, they can mark their Table of Contents. (If you are providing Bibles, make sure that they have an easy-reading print size.)
- You should also encourage them to look at the different books as you describe them, to give them a feel of their way around the Bible.
- You can also use the Teacher's Aid "Books of the Bible" (also printed in the Study Notes book) to help illustrate the books and divisions of the Bible.
- The section on fulfilled prophecies has several examples. You do not need to read every example. To keep things moving, just pick the one you personally find most interesting and comfortable with teaching.
- There will be more on fulfilled prophecies in the second class. There is also a section of Fulfilled Bible prophecies in the booklet *Understanding God's Word* that the students should already have. Encourage them to read this (Especially pages 80–87).
- A short summary of each book of the Bible is included in the class. You are not meant to read over this summary with your students, as it is also included in the Study Notes book. It is mostly included for your information and in case you are asked questions about specific books. (Of course if you have time, you can read it with your students if you wish.)
- Encourage the students to become familiar with and even memorize the names and order of books of the Bible. Even if they cannot memorize all the books, they should at least grasp the basic divisions and know where to find what they need. In most cases, you probably would not require them to memorize all the names of the books, as older students in particular may find this daunting
- The class concludes with an optional section describing archaeological discoveries that have confirmed the Bible. These are quite faith-building and help to bring the Bible into reality. There probably would not be time to read much of this section, but if you wish, you could read one or more of the points.
- Related material in *Activated* magazines and other pubs
  - Activated* Issue No. 2—All.
  - Understanding God's Word* (*Get Activated!* booklet), Appendix

### Student Reading Material

*Discovering Truth: Bible Basics* (book)

# Prayer and Opening Activity

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15 minutes

## ► Praise Time with songs

① *Pray to begin the meeting and then sing 2–3 praise songs (see “Praise Song Sheet”).*

## ► Discussion about the Bible

① *Choose one of these questions, let the discussion flow for a few minutes, and then move on to another question. You won’t have time for all of the questions so just pick a few. (Questions suitable for those who do not have much Bible background are marked with \*):*

- ☛ *How can reading the Bible help us?\**
- ☛ *What do you like most about the Bible?*
- ☛ *Has anyone here read the entire Bible? What was your favorite part?*
- ☛ *What do you seek for when you read the Bible?—Faith, comfort, general knowledge, or something else?*
- ☛ *Throughout history some political systems have tried to destroy the Bible or stamp out Bible reading. Why do you think they did not succeed?*
- ☛ *What difficulties have you come across when trying to read the Bible: Lack of understanding, distraction, lack of time? Anything else? What solutions have you found?*
- ☛ *What do you think God’s purpose was in giving us the Bible?\**
- ☛ *What have you heard about the Bible that interests you in reading it?\**

# Class Section 1: Why Study the Bible?

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25 minutes

## ► You should study the Bible for your own benefit

It’s important that you know your Bible, first of all for your own benefit!—So you know where to find what you’re looking for and what you want to study and what you want to read, etc.

The Lord is the Author! Remember, the people who “wrote” the Bible were merely tools in His hands. The Lord inspired them to write what they did. If you want to get to know His views, His explanation of history and His outlook for the future, read what He has to say!

### 📖 [Optional Skit] The Pen That Wrote

See skit text at the end of this class.

## [Optional] The Author made me!

A learned Chinese scholar was employed by some missionaries to translate the New Testament into Chinese. At first the work of translating had no effect upon the man. But after some time he became quite agitated and said, "What a wonderful book this is!"

"Why so?" asked the missionary.

"Because," said the man, "it tells me exactly about myself. It knows all that is in me. The One Who made this book must have made me!"

## ► Reading the Bible, you get closer to the Author

① *The following verses are all from Psalm 119. Select and read a few of them.*

*Psalm 119:9—How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your Word.*

*Psalm 119:15—I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways.*

*Psalm 119:27—Make me understand the way of Your precepts; so shall I meditate on Your wondrous works.*

*Psalm 119:42—So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your Word.*

*Psalm 119:97—Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

*Psalm 119:99—I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation.*

*Psalm 119:100—I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.*

*Psalm 119:104—Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.*

*Psalm 119:105—Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

*Psalm 119:144—The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting; give me understanding, and I shall live.*

*Psalm 119:151—You are near, O Lord, and all Your commandments are truth.*

*Psalm 119:160—The entirety of Your Word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.*

*Psalm 119:165—Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.*

## 📖 [Optional Skit] The Love Letter

See skit text at the end of this class.

## ► You should study the Bible for your witness

The Bible is well known and is a well-recognized authority. Most people at least have heard about it and a lot of people respect it, and there are millions of people who even believe in it!

If you can quote the Bible to them, or if you can even find the verses and the proof you want in the Bible and show it to them, a lot of people will believe it. But if you don't even know how to find the verses in the Bible, how can you purport to be wise enough to tell others how to find Heaven, if you don't even know the names of the Books or where the passages are and how to find them!

Even for the people who pretend not to believe it, the Word is powerful just the same!—"Sharper than any two-edged sword," full of the power of the Spirit and very convicting.

*Hebrews 4:12—For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

## 📖 [Optional Skit] "The Way To the Post Office"

See skit text at the end of this class.

## ► To know the future: The Bible tells us what's going to happen!

The Bible contains hundreds of specific prophecies about people, nations, places, times, and events that have already been fulfilled down to the smallest detail. Some of these were fulfilled almost immediately, others took hundreds of years, but each came to pass exactly as God said they would. (There are also many other prophecies in the Bible that are yet to be fulfilled, which will be fulfilled just as surely.)

Fulfilled prophecy is one of the greatest proofs of the Bible! Who else but God could have revealed the future thousands of years before it would unfold? Who else but God could have foretold the future in perfect detail, long before it happened? A lot of these prophecies haven't happened yet, so they're not yet proven, but there are hundreds and hundreds of prophecies in the Bible that have already been fulfilled and are already proven! They say there are over 300 prophecies about Jesus alone and His first coming that have already been fulfilled in detail!

In the book *Understanding God's Word* (Get Activated series), pages 80–87, you'll find over sixty of the most outstanding fulfilled prophecies, arranged into two groups: 1) those fulfilled by Jesus and 2) others from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Take the time to study these. For now, we'll look at one example.

① *Teachers: Here follow several examples of fulfilled prophecy. You can read whichever one you prefer. You do not need to read them all.*

### [Optional] A place for fishermen's nets—The fall of Tyre

Tyre was a city in ancient Lebanon which still exists today. In the years when the prophecy was given, Tyre was part of a country called Phoenicia. This was about 600 years before Jesus was born.

In the year 590 B.C., God spoke to the prophet Ezekiel and told him what was going to happen in the future to the city of Tyre.

*From Ezekiel chapters 26–30—Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, 'Aha! She is broken.' And hast said, 'I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas—I am of perfect beauty!' Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for spreading nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken,' says the Lord God; 'it shall become plunder for the nations. I will make you a terror, and you shall be no more; though you are sought for, you will never be found again. I will make you like the top of a rock; you shall be a place for spreading nets, and you shall never be rebuilt. Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: ... and they shall know that I am the Lord [when] I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus.*

God told Ezekiel that because the city of Tyre was proud and rebellious against God, then God was going to allow the king of another country to come and destroy the city. He said that the city would end up in ruins, just piles of rocks for the fishermen to spread their nets over.

If you were living in Tyre in those days, you would have thought this was a silly prediction. Tyre was the great city of the Phoenicians, built on a hill overlooking the Mediterranean Sea in what is now the modern nation of Lebanon. The Phoenicians were a great seafaring and trading people—“all the ships of the sea” came to Tyre. The Phoenicians were one of the outstanding civilizations of ancient times.

*Ezekiel 27:9—Elders of Gebal and its wise men were in you to caulk your seams; all the ships of the sea and their oarsmen were in you to market your merchandise.*

But just look what happened to Tyre!

Nebuchadnezzar was the heathen king of Babylon. He went out conquering many countries.

God even allowed him to conquer His people in the land of Israel because they had turned their backs on God's ways.

In 586 B.C. four years later, Nebuchadnezzar's armies went through the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Just like God had told Ezekiel, Nebuchadnezzar tore down ancient Tyre and leveled it to the very ground, but left the ruins there.

The whole prophecy still had not been fulfilled because the old city of Tyre had not been scraped “as bare as the top of a rock” and its ruins were not yet “a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea.”

Nebuchadnezzar received no wages for destroying Tyre—no jewels or gold or loot—because the people of Tyre fled to a little island that was a half mile offshore. There the people built a new city and took all of their wealth with them. Nebuchadnezzar was not a seafaring man. He had no ships or navy and he was unable to cross that little half mile of ocean between him and the island to conquer them.

So on the mainland lay the ruins of ancient Tyre, while a new city of Tyre was built on the island. The prophecy was still not completely fulfilled.

But what God says, eventually comes to pass! Sometimes it takes a long time, but God’s prophecies never fail! And that’s what happened. About 250 years later a Macedonian king named Alexander the Great came along sweeping the world with his armies, fighting great battles with minimal losses on his side.

In 332 B.C., Alexander came to Tyre. He heard all about this wealthy city out there on the island. Alexander was a very smart general. He looked out across that half mile of water and said, “How can I get there? I want to get all that money they have out there!”

So he began looking around for something to use, and he saw this big pile of rubble that used to be the ancient city of Tyre—all those bricks and stones and mortar and timbers. So Alexander’s army got it all together and they scraped everything they could find right into the Mediterranean Sea. They scraped the area bare and used the materials to build a causeway right across the shallow floor of the Mediterranean to the island city! And soon Alexander captured and plundered the island city of Tyre.

And do you know what? Along the sides of that road the fishermen spread their nets exactly like God had prophesied! Tyre was thrown into the sea! This exact end of ancient Tyre was predicted over 250 years before it happened! Only God could have predicted that so many years before!

### **[Optional] The destruction of the temple by the Romans in fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy**

① Repeat from Preparatory Class #2b

*Matthew 24:1–2—Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”*

As Jesus prophesied, the temple was thrown down—actually torn apart stone by stone.

The event is recorded in secular history. In 70 A.D., the armies of Roman Emperor Vespasian marched into Judea under General Titus and crushed the rebellion of the Jews, destroyed Jerusalem, and burned the temple. The fire caused the gold leaf on the temple ceiling to melt. The melting gold flowed down the walls, settling into crevices. The Romans then pried apart the stones to remove the gold, until literally “not one stone was left standing upon another”!

### **[Optional] Cyrus: The king the Lord named in advance**

① Also in Study Notes book. Repeat from Preparatory Class #3.

Cyrus was the first king of the Medo-Persian empire in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. God had prophesied through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, even naming him by name, more than 200 years before Cyrus was even born! He named Cyrus as the king who was going to order the release of the Jews. This was before they were even in captivity.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the Lord said through Isaiah:

*Isaiah 44:28—Who says of Cyrus, “He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’”*

*Isaiah 45:1–4—“Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: (2) ‘I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. (3) I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. (4) For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.*

As it turned out, in the years that followed that prophecy, the Babylonians conquered the people of Judah. Then in the year 516 B.C., King Cyrus of the Persian Empire, which was the dominant world power, issued an edict letting them go.

Cyrus was the son of Cambyses, the prince of Persia, and was born about 599 B.C.. In the year 559 B.C. he became king of Persia, the kingdom of Media being added to it by conquest. Cyrus was a great military leader, bent on universal conquest. Babylon fell before his army (538 B.C.) on the night of Babylonian King Belshazzar's feast (Daniel 5:30).

Hitherto the great kings of the earth had only oppressed the Jews. Cyrus was to them as a "shepherd." God employed him in doing service to His ancient people. He may possibly have gained, through contact with the Jews, some knowledge of their religion.

Archaeological evidence: This decree was discovered "at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes" (Ezra 6:2).

In a chronicle drawn up just after the conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus, it gives the history of the reign of Nabonidus (Nabunahid), the last king of Babylon and dual regent with his son Balshazzar, and of the fall of the Babylonian empire.

In B.C. 538 there was a revolt in Southern Babylonia, while the army of Cyrus entered the country from the north. In June, the Babylonian army was completely defeated at Opis, and immediately afterwards Sippara opened its gates to the conqueror. Gobryas (Ugbaru), the governor of Kurdistan, was then sent to Babylon, which surrendered "without fighting," and the daily services in the temples continued without a break. In October, Cyrus himself arrived, and proclaimed a general amnesty, which was communicated by Gobryas to "all the province of Babylon," of which he had been made governor. Meanwhile, Nabonidus, who had concealed himself, was captured, but treated honorably.

Cyrus now assumed the title of "king of Babylon," claimed to be the descendant of the ancient kings, and made rich offerings to the temples. At the same time he allowed the foreign populations who had been deported to Babylonia to return to their old homes, carrying with them the images of their gods. Among these populations were the Jews, who, as they had no images, took with them the sacred vessels of the temple.

- In the next class we'll be looking at fulfilled prophecies about Jesus, which is an amazing study all in itself. In later classes we'll look at prophecies concerning the time we are now living in.

### ► **Quick summary of reasons to study the Bible:**

- For our own benefit and spiritual growth
- To get closer to the Author and to know His mind
- For the sake of our witness to others
- To know the future: The Bible tells us what's going to happen!

## **Class Section 2: Basic Bible Knowledge**

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**75 minutes**

### ► **Who wrote the Bible?**

Would you like to know a little something about the general content of the Bible? It's helpful to know something about how the Bible is composed or constituted, how it's set up. It's very well organized.

The Bible is a collection of 66 books. God used about 40 men to write the Bible. In some cases quite a few books were written by the same man.—But that’s not really the most important thing because God is the Author of the Bible!

*2 Timothy 3:16—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

*2 Peter 1:21b—Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*

- The books of the Bible were written during a 1,500-year period. That 1,500-year period began with Moses about 3,400 years ago and ended with the book of Revelation over 1,900 years ago.

## ► **Difference between Old and New Testaments and what they are**

Have you all got your Bibles? The Table of Contents in the front of your Bible will make it simple for you. You can follow along by looking at the list of books.

The Bible contains two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. (Testament in this case means “covenant” or “contract,” so the Old and New Testaments can be thought of as the old and new binding agreements between God and man.)

The Old Testament is a compilation of the Holy Scriptures of the Jews, written over a 1,100-year period. The Old Testament has many prophecies about a Messiah or “Anointed One,” who would be a “son” who would be called “Mighty God,” or “Eternal Father.” These prophecies were written hundreds of years before Jesus Christ was born.

The New Testament contains the sacred writings of the early Christian period. The 27 books of the New Testament were written in Greek over a period of about 100 years. They tell of Jesus’ life and ministry and the growth of the Early Church, and present the basics of Christian faith.

## ► **Old Testament Groups**

The Old Testament has 39 books. Scholars generally agree that they were written over a period of about 1,100 years, from the 14th to the 4th century B.C. They were written in Hebrew, except for a few passages in the book of Daniel, which were written in Aramaic.

The Old Testament is divided into three major divisions: Historical, Poetical and Prophetic. The books are organized partly chronologically and partly according to content. The Bible is very well organized and it was put in this order to make it clearer for us.

## ► **Old Testament Historical books**

The Old Testament begins with 17 historical books. The historical books begin with the first five “Books of Moses.” They are called the “Pentateuch” or the “Five Books of Moses” and they are also spoken of by Jesus and others as the “Law” or the “Torah.”

Esther is the last of what are called the Historical Books. All those first Books from Genesis to Esther are classified as Historical Books.

- ① *You can show the students a good way to illustrate this by drawing a line across the Bible’s TOC page under Esther, and then between the page numbers and the columns write vertically “History” to categorize the Historical Books of the Bible.*

Those first historical books are about the history of the world, history of God’s people, and history of God’s dealings with man before the birth of Christ.

*1 Corinthians 10:11—Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.*

## Outline of historical books: Five books of Moses

**Genesis.** The book of Origins. The origin of the universe, human race, etc. Largely a record of the early history of God's people. The first part of the book covers the history of early mankind, narrating the events of the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the Dispersion of the races (people scattered across the world following the Tower of Babel). The second section concerns the lives of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

**Exodus.** The bondage, deliverance, and beginnings of the history of the Hebrews on the way to Canaan, under the leadership of Moses. Includes the life story of Moses and the Hebrews' deliverance from Egypt, and the giving of the law.

**Leviticus.** The book of Mosaic laws. It teaches access to God through sacrifices. We are no longer under these laws since Jesus' death. The book has mostly priestly legislation and the practical application of the law among the people. Much importance is placed upon the Hebrews' separation from all heathen influences so that the nation would retain its religious purity.

**Numbers.** The book of the pilgrimages of Israel. It is a continuation of Exodus, describing the forty years' wanderings in the wilderness.

**Deuteronomy.** A repetition of the laws given shortly before the children of Israel entered Canaan. It is a sequel to Numbers. The last three chapters tell the last days of Moses.

## Outline of other Historical Books

**Joshua.** This tells the story of Joshua, Moses' successor. It was Joshua who led the people into the Promised Land after the death of Moses. The book records the conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, and the division of the land among the twelve tribes.

**Judges** is so called because it relates the times of various rulers, or judges, of Israel from the possession of Canaan until the time of Samuel. Covers 300 years of history—the six conquests and subjugations of the Israelites, and the various deliverances of the land through the fifteen judges. Includes the adventures of Samson.

**Ruth.** A beautiful story of how Ruth, a foreigner, became the ancestress of David and of Jesus. A love story! Ruth, the Moabitess, goes to Judah with her mother-in-law, Naomi. There Ruth meets and marries Boaz.

**1 and 2 Samuel.** The history of Samuel (priest and prophet) and the beginning and early years of the monarchical period in Israel (when they were first ruled by kings) under the reigns of Saul and David.

1 Samuel tells of the organization of the kingdom, the actions of Samuel, how Saul was made king, his fall, and the beginning of the reign of King David. 2 Samuel tells of the reign of David.

**1 and 2 Kings.** The early history of the kingdom of Israel, and later of the divided Kingdom. (Israel and Judah split.) Includes the lives of Elijah and Elisha, prominent prophets.

**1 and 2 Chronicles.** Largely a record of the reigns of David, Solomon, and the kings of Judah up to the time of the Captivity (when Babylon conquered Judah and carried many Jews away to become slaves in Babylon). Some repetition of what is in the books of Samuel and Kings.

**Ezra.** Continues from Chronicles. A record of the return of the Jews from captivity in Babylon, and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

**Nehemiah.** An account of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and a "revival" amongst God's people.

**Esther.** The story of Queen Esther's (Jewish wife of the Persian king) deliverance of the Jews from the plot of Haman in the courts of the king of Persia.

## ► Old Testament Poetical Books

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon are called the Poetical Books. They are the poetry of the Bible, and they were grouped together because they were used largely in devotional services, being either read or sung.

Psalms and Proverbs are beautiful books to read at your devotional times.

Psalms is also a tremendous prophetic book full of Messianic prophecies.

Parts of the book of Proverbs are proverbs of other kings and other men, as it says in the Bible, but King Solomon wrote most of it. Of course, in many of those proverbs he was repeating the wisdom which had been given by God to men down through the ages. He was simply making a list and recording them.

As there are 31 chapters in Proverbs, a good project is to read one chapter each day, corresponding with the day of the month.

### Outline of Poetical Books

**Job.** The problem of affliction, showing the malice of Satan, the patience of Job, the problem of self-righteousness, the vanity of human philosophy, the divine wisdom, and the final deliverance of the sufferer. This is generally accepted as the oldest book in the Bible, and probably was written before the time of Moses.

**Psalms.** A collection of 150 spiritual songs, poems, praises, prayers, and prophecies. King David wrote many of these. Psalms are very inspiring to read during your devotional quiet times. Some key chapters of Psalms are also very beautiful and helpful to memorize.

**Proverbs.** A collection of moral and religious maxims, and discourses on wisdom, temperance, justice, etc. King Solomon wrote many, and the rest are considered to be authored by others.

**Ecclesiastes.** Wise Solomon's reflections on the vanity of life, and man's duties and obligations to God, etc.

**Song of Solomon.** A beautiful, passionate love poem. Some people look at this simply as a literal love poem; others take it as an allegory of our relationship with the Lord describing the love of Jesus for His Bride (us).

## ► Old Testament Major Prophets

There are 17 prophetic books. Five are "major" and twelve are "minor."

The four major prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. They are considered major not because of the size of the books but because of the importance of the prophet and what he predicted. Even though Daniel is a relatively small book with just 12 chapters, there are more specific amazing prophecies about the future, and time prophecies, than there are in the other Major Prophets.

Isaiah was the Messianic Prophet because he prophesied a good deal about Jesus, both about His first coming and about His second coming! There are more prophecies about the Millennium\* in Isaiah than anywhere else in the Bible. Isaiah is devotional reading, not only a study of Bible Prophecy. Isaiah is easier reading because it's so beautiful and poetic and so much about the coming Messiah and the Millennium, His Messianic Kingdom, etc.

(\*The Millennium: The coming thousand-year reign of Christ and His saints upon earth that will take place after His return.)

Jeremiah was known as the "Weeping Prophet," concerned mostly about the Jews—their history, their fall, and their future and the restoration when they would return to Israel, which has since happened.

Ezekiel also prophesied mostly about the Jews, but he had many more prophecies regarding the distant future, particularly about the Antichrist and the Battle of Armageddon, even clear up to the Heavenly City.

Daniel was a Prophet of the Endtime, the future! They all prophesied about the Endtime, but he especially prophesied about the distant future—very little about the current history of Israel at his time or even shortly after, mostly about the prophecies of the distant future. He was told to shut up the book until the Time of the End, because it wouldn't be revealed what it meant until the very End.

*Daniel 12:4—But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.*

In a later class we will study some of Daniel's prophecies.

## Outline of Major Prophets

**Isaiah.** A book rich in Messianic prophecies, and other prophecies of the future, mingled with woes pronounced upon sinful nations.

**Jeremiah.** Jeremiah lived from the time of King Josiah to the captivity in Babylon. The main theme of the book is the backsliding, bondage, and restoration of the Jews. Jeremiah received the call to prophesy while very young. It was his mission to predict doom upon his nation for its many sins. For this the priests and the people hated him. Jeremiah warned the Jews not to fight Babylon, but to surrender, and God would temper their punishment.

**Lamentations.** Also written by Jeremiah. A dirge over the desolation of Jerusalem.

**Ezekiel** lived during the exile (in Babylon). The book is divided into two sections: The first denounces the sins and abominations of Jerusalem and the second looks to the future with the hope that the city will be restored after it has been cleansed. The latter also contains prophecies about the coming Kingdom of Heaven and of Jesus.

**Daniel.** Prophecies of the future: some have been fulfilled, some are specific prophecies of the End-time which were only meant to be understood in the Last Days.

## ► Minor prophets

Then come the twelve Minor Prophets. The final book in the series is Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament.

## Outline of Minor Prophets

**Hosea.** Lived at the same time as Isaiah and Micah. The central thought: The apostasy of Israel characterized as spiritual adultery. The book is filled with striking pictures describing the sins of the people. Hosea was even instructed by the Lord to marry a harlot as a picture of God's unfailing love for His errant bride! He urges a return to God.

**Joel.** A prophet of Judah, he wrote this book during a plague of locusts, a time of great distress for the people. This book contains discussion of repentance and its blessings, and predictions of the Holy Spirit.

**Amos** was a herdsman prophet who denounced selfishness and sin. The book contains a series of five visions and predicts the ultimate universal rule of the Lord. Amos proclaimed that God was the ruler of the whole world.

**Obadiah.** Leading topic—the doom of Edom and final deliverance of Israel. The shortest book in the Old Testament, it has only one chapter.

**Jonah.** The story of the "reluctant missionary" to the great city of Nineveh who was taught by bitter experience the lesson of obedience and the depth of divine mercy. This is the man who was "swallowed by the great fish" or whale.

**Micah.** This book gives a dark picture of the moral condition of Israel and Judah, and foretells the establishment of the Kingdom of the Lord in which righteousness shall prevail.

**Nahum.** The destruction of Nineveh, capital of Assyria. Also contains a classic rebuke against warfare and militarism.

**Habakkuk.** Written in the Chaldean period. This book is concerned with the problem of unpunished evil in the world. It was revealed to Habakkuk that the Chaldean (Babylonian) armies were to be God's means of punishing the wicked and that evil would destroy itself. The book concludes with a poem of thanksgiving and great faith.

**Zephaniah.** This book is filled with God's threatenings to the rebellious, but ends with a vision of the future glory of God's people.

**Haggai.** A colleague of Zechariah. He reproves the Jewish people for slackness in building the second temple; but promises a return of God's glory when the building should be completed.

**Zechariah.** Contemporary of Haggai. He helped to arouse the Jews to rebuild the temple. He had a series of eight visions, and saw the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom. Zechariah gives very specific predictions about the coming of Jesus the Messiah: His death to remove sin, Christ as King and Priest, His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, being betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, His hands pierced at the crucifixion, and more.

**Malachi.** He gives a graphic picture of the closing period of Old Testament history. He shows the necessity of reforms before the coming of the Messiah. The final message to a disobedient people.

## ► New Testament Groups

The New Testament is composed of 27 books. It is divided into three major categories: History (the Gospels and book of Acts), Epistles (letters) and Prophetic. It parallels the same arrangement as the Old Testament with one exception: The central section, instead of Poetic books, contains Epistles.

## ► Historical: Gospels and Acts

The first five books of the New Testament are historical: four Gospels and the book of Acts.

The Gospels deal with the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. The book of Acts tells of some of the major happenings of the Early Church over the next 30 years, and is a sort of sequel to the Gospels.

The first three Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—are called the “Synoptic Gospels” because they are similar in content. The Gospel of John is the Gospel of Salvation. Each Gospel tells the same basic story—of the life and ministry of Jesus, and the meaning of His coming—yet they each tell it in a slightly different way. The authors mention what was important to them about certain events, which explains why the accounts of the same events are slightly different.

### Outline of New Testament Historical Books

**Matthew.** Matthew had been a tax collector and became one of the apostles. His book was written mostly with the Jews in mind, to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah. You'll find many references to the Old Testament in this book as Matthew wanted to show how Jesus was fulfilling the prophecies. Matthew was an eyewitness to many of the events that he wrote about.

**Mark** was a companion of Peter, as well as Paul. His Gospel contains what he heard Peter recount. He emphasized the supernatural power of Jesus over nature, disease, and demons. All this divine energy was exercised for the good of man.

**Luke** was a Greek physician (the only non-Jewish author in the New Testament) and was a companion of Paul. He wrote the most complete biography of Jesus, portraying Him as the Son of man, full of compassion for the sinful and the poor.

**John** was one of the original 12 apostles. John understood the spiritual depths of the Love of God and His salvation and what Jesus meant to the whole world, and not just to the Jews. The book of John contains more of the actual quoted words of Jesus than any other book.

**Acts** follows on from the Book of Luke and is believed to be written by the same author. It tells what happened to Jesus' disciples after His resurrection, then going on to explain the history of the Early Church, the conversion of Paul and his journeys, etc. Acts emphasizes that the Church is guided continually by the Holy Spirit.

## ► The Epistles

“Epistles” means letters. Paul wrote the 14 so-called “Pauline Epistles.” Then there are seven “General” Epistles. They are called “General Epistles” because they are not addressed to anybody in particular, whereas the earlier Epistles were written specifically to certain people. Paul's Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians and Ephesians, etc., are all addressed to specific individuals or

groups of believers and are named after whom the letters were addressed to. The following Epistles from James, Peter, John and Jude are named after those who wrote them..

Paul's epistles are deep, legal theology, as Peter said:

*2 Peter 3:16—As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*

Paul was a religious lawyer and he was trying to interpret the Gospel for the sake of lawyers and brilliant minds and legalists like himself, to his own kind like the Pharisees and the scribes, trying to prove to them in legal language and legal arguments that he was right.

He does a very good job of it, but many people can only understand some of it, and a lot of it they can't; a lot of it is quite lengthy, as Peter says, and a little bit difficult to comprehend. That's why many of us like reading the Gospels best, particularly the words of Jesus.

Paul's writings were necessary too. It was important for Paul to explain in convincing legal arguments why the Gospel had to be so, why Jesus had to come and why things were different now—no longer under law, but grace. He gives legal arguments like he's talking before a judge to convince a judge of his case, and if you have that kind of a mind, you'll enjoy his writings.

You should also bear in mind when reading the Epistles that some of what Paul wrote on behavior and so on, was pertaining to the customs of the day and does not necessarily apply today, just as much of the Old Testament law is no longer relevant.

## Outline of 14 Epistles of Paul

Most of these were written to the churches in that specific area. If you look at a map of the area in New Testament times (you'll probably find one in the back of your Bible), you'll be able to find these locations. These places still exist today! Corinth, for instance, is near Athens.

**Romans.** Addressed to Roman Christians. Chapters 1–11 discuss the plan of salvation. Chapters 12–16 are largely exhortations relating to spiritual, social, and civic duties.

**1 Corinthians.** Addressed to the Corinthian church. Leading topics—the cleansing of the church from various evils, together with doctrinal instructions.

**2 Corinthians.** The characteristics of the ministry and vindication of Paul's apostleship.

**Galatians.** Important book because it explains clearly the concept of salvation by faith, not works.

**Ephesians.** The plan of salvation. All barriers between Jews and Gentiles have been broken down.

**Philippians.** A letter to the Philippian church. It reveals Paul's intense devotion to Christ, his experience in prison, and his deep concern that the Church should be steadfast in sound doctrine.

**Colossians.** Counsel to abandon worldly philosophy and sin. Jesus is the head of the Church.

**1 Thessalonians.** Exhortations and counsel. Also prophecies of the Endtime.

**2 Thessalonians.** More about Jesus' Second Coming and warnings to believers.

**1 Timothy.** Counsel to a young pastor concerning his conduct and ministry.

**2 Timothy.** Paul's last letter, written shortly before his death, giving counsel to his beloved "son in the Gospel."

**Titus.** Counsel given to a trusted friend.

**Philemon.** A private letter written to Philemon, beseeching him to receive and forgive Onesimus, a runaway slave.

**Hebrews.** Author is most likely Paul. Written to Jewish Christians, this explains the doctrine of salvation. Also contains very inspiring history of God's people (Chapter 11).

## Outline of 7 General Epistles

**James.** Probably written by James, the brother of Jesus. Addressed to Jewish converts who had dispersed from Israel. The main theme is practical religion, manifesting itself in good works, as contrasted with only a profession of faith.

**1 Peter.** A letter of encouragement written by the Apostle Peter to the believers scattered throughout Asia Minor. Leading topic: The privilege of believers following the example of Jesus, to have victory in the midst of trials, and to live consecrated lives in an unfriendly world.

**2 Peter.** A warning against false teachers and scoffers.

**1 John.** Written by the Apostle John. It lays great importance upon the believer's privilege of spiritual knowledge, the duty of fellowship, and brotherly love.

**2 John.** A brief message on divine truth and worldly error.

**3 John.** A letter of commendation written to Gaius.

**Jude.** The writer was probably the brother of James, and brother of Jesus. Historical examples of apostasy and divine judgments upon sinners.

## ► The Prophetic Book: Revelation

Revelation or the Apocalypse is the last book in the New Testament. Note that the title is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ to St. John." This is a message that Jesus gave to John. Revelation is the one thoroughly Prophetic book in the New Testament, although many of the other New Testament books contain Endtime prophecies. Revelation is the only book of the New Testament devoted entirely to prophecy.

### Outline of Revelation

**Revelation.** It was written by the Apostle John (while in exile), who was also the author of the Gospel of John and three Epistles. The book of Revelation contains complex and detailed prophecies about the future, with much detail on the Endtime, the events preceding and following Jesus' Second Coming, on into the Millennium. It concludes with a wonderful description of Heaven.

## ► How the Bible came into being

The first recorded instance in the Bible of God telling someone to write is in the book of Exodus. Following a victory in battle, God instructed Moses to "Write this for a memorial in the book" (Exodus 17:14). In another example several chapters later, "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord ... Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people" (Exodus 24:4, 7). From that time until the end of the New Testament age, the writing of the many books and parts of the Bible continued.

None of the original biblical documents has survived. But before the original documents disappeared, they were copied. These precise copies of the original writings are the texts on which current translations of the Bible are based.

The process of copying and recopying the Bible has continued to our time. Until the middle of the 15th century A.D., all the copying was done by hand. Then, with the invention of the printing press in Europe, copies could be made in greater quantities by using this new process. Before, each copy of the Bible had to be produced slowly by hand, but now the printing press could produce thousands of copies in a short time. This made the Scriptures available to many people, rather than just the few who could afford expensive handmade copies.

## ► How the Bible was put together

It's quite amazing when you realize that here is a Book that was written over a 1,500-year span—40 generations. It was written by over 40 authors from every walk of life including kings, shepherds, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, etc. Yet the Biblical authors wrote in harmony and continuity from Genesis to Revelation. There is one unfolding story: God's redemption of man.

This grouping of the Old Testament that you study today was put in this final canonical form and organized in this order by a group of 70 scholars in Alexandria, Egypt, somewhere between 250-100 B.C.

These 70 scholars decided on which were authentic books, recognized as genuinely inspired. That was probably the most important gathering of scholars for thoroughly translating all of the Old Testament Hebrew-language books.

Their product was a translation into Greek and became the accepted Authorized Greek Version of the Old Testament, which was the literary language of the people of that day, of both the Greek and Roman empires. They called it the Septuagint, meaning the one produced by 70 men, and that has been the accepted Authorized Version of the Old Testament ever since.

In the second century A.D., when officials of the Early Church sought to make a list of books about Jesus and the Early Church that they considered authoritative, they retained the Old Testament, on the authority of Jesus and His apostles. Along with these books they recognized as authoritative the new writings—four Gospels, or biographies on the life and ministry of Jesus; the 14 letters of Paul; and letters of other apostles and their companions. The Gospel collection and the apostolic collection were joined together by the book of Acts, which served as a sequel to the Gospel story, as well as a narrative background for the earlier Epistles.

The primary standard applied to a book was that it must be written either by an apostle or by someone close to the apostles. This guaranteed that their writing about Jesus and the Early Church would have the authenticity of an eyewitness account. The apostolic writings formed the charter, or foundation documents, of the Christian movement.

## ► Language and translation

The beautiful poetic books in the Bible, in the original language, had both meter and rhyme! They were beautifully translated, but you can imagine how difficult it would be to try to translate them into our modern language with meter and rhyme.

The Old Testament was mostly written in Hebrew. That's one reason why it is simple to read, as Hebrew is a simple language. You don't find nearly as many big words in the Old Testament as you do in the New Testament. The New Testament was written in Greek, a far more prolific and expressive language.

The Old Testament was first translated from Hebrew, and the New Testament from Greek. The Jews, of course, spoke Hebrew, but in the New Testament era, because of the domination of the Greek Empire they also spoke Greek as the language of culture, philosophy, religion, art, and music. After the Roman conquest, they also spoke Latin, which was the language of the law or the government.

Most of the early Christians already knew three languages. The educated ones knew Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. And because the Greek language is by far the most expressive, much more even than Hebrew or Latin, they used Greek to write the New Testament in.

The common language or vernacular of the time in the area around Israel was Aramaic and Jesus could have also spoken Aramaic.

## ► Compiling the Bible and its division into chapters and verses

The Bible originally was not divided into chapters and verses; in fact, in the original manuscripts or scrolls they didn't write in the vowels nor even divide the words. There were no spaces between the words, no punctuation, and it just all ran together.

Scribes wrote and copied the Scriptures. It was a very important, highly technical task, and they were checked and checked and re-checked by others to make sure they got every jot and tittle!

Do you know where that expression comes from, "jot and tittle"? It is part of the Hebrew alphabet. Jot comes from the Hebrew "Jod," which is nothing but a little tiny apostrophe, but it's actually a Hebrew letter sort of like a "Y." And the tittle comes from the next smallest Hebrew character.

Can you imagine what it would look like if you didn't put spaces between your words or any punctuation or vowels? Scholars learnt the text by heart and knew what it said.

① *Teachers: If you have a whiteboard, you can write up an example like this segment from John 3:16—part of a verse, without any punctuation or spaces.*

frgdsldthwrlldththgvhsnlybgttnsn

(For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.)

The Bible was not divided into chapters and verses until the 1200's. It certainly is handy to have it divided into chapters and verses so you can find something. In the days of the apostles and the Old Testament, all they could say was, "Well, it's in David" or "It's in Isaiah" or "It's in this or that!"—And you had to hunt for it.

The Bible, or portions of it, have been translated into approximately 2,233 languages, making its message available to about 98% of the world's population. The history of how the Bible was put together, and how it was translated into English and other languages is fascinating, but we don't have time to get more into it now.

## Optional Section: Archaeological Finds Confirm the Bible

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Now we'll take a little time to look at some of the archaeological finds that are encouraging confirmations of the Bible's veracity. The main reasons we know the Bible is truly the Word of God is because it works and because we know the Author! Even without archaeological evidence, we know it's true, but the archaeological finds are faith building. Science and the artifacts of archaeology confirm the Bible; they do not disprove it but are proving it more every day.

Nelson Glueck, the renowned Jewish archaeologist (1900–1971), wrote: "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference."

Dr. W. F. Albright (1891–1971), leading Biblical archeologist and scholar, author of more than 800 publications, wrote: "Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history."

① *Teachers: In explaining these archaeological finds, you shouldn't go into every detail and tell every name and date. We are including the information so you'll have the "full story," but we're not expecting you to read every detail with your students. We have underlined some of the key facts to make this easier to teach.*

① *You don't need to read every one of these, but you can select one or more that you find most interesting, depending also on how much time you have left in the meeting.*

### ► King David

① *Also in Study Notes book.*

King David is one of the key figures of the Old Testament. Known as perhaps the greatest king of Israel, a shade of mystery has covered his existence: Outside of the pages of the Bible, no reference had been found to King David or his ruling dynasty.

This changed in the 1990s, when archaeologists made an interesting discovery in Tel Dan, Israel.

They uncovered a rock fragment inscribed with an ancient text referring to "the House of David," a phrase used for the ruling dynasty founded by King David. The rock appears to be a victory monument erected by a Syrian king nearly 3,000 years ago, after a battle described in the book of First Kings.

Yet again, archeology has confirmed the biblical record!

## ► The finding of Babylon

The remains of Babylon have now been discovered, but for a long time no one could find it! Some higher critics of the Bible said, "Well, it shows you the Bible's wrong, if it had been such a great city and all that, we should have found the remains by this time, so the Bible must not be so." Yet they have been found!

Details:

BABYLON, the mightiest metropolis of the ancient world, was largely built by the efforts of Hammurabi (1728–1686 B.C.) and Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 B.C.). It declined after the death of Nebuchadnezzar and came to ruin about 130 B.C. at the hands of the Parthians. Archaeologists probed the ruins of the place, which lay on both sides of the river.

The discoveries in Babylon were no less than phenomenal. Among the more important finds were almost 300 cuneiform tablets relating mostly to the distribution of oil and barley to captives and skilled workmen from many nations who lived in and around Babylon between 595 and 570 B.C. Among those mentioned were Yow-keen (Jehoiakim) King of the land of Yehud (Judah) and his five young sons who were in the hands of Keniah, their attendant.

To understand the significance of this: In the third year of Jehoiakim, the eighteenth king of Judah (B.C. 605), Nebuchadnezzar, having overcome the Egyptians at Carchemish, advanced to Jerusalem with a great army. After a brief siege he took that city, and carried away the vessels of the sanctuary to Babylon, and dedicated them in the Temple of Belus. He also took captives, including King Jehoiakim.

*2 Kings 24:1—In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him.*

*2 Chronicles 36:6–7—Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against him [Jehoiakim], and bound him in bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon. (7) Nebuchadnezzar also carried off some of the articles from the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.*

## ► Ancient kings

An obelisk (stone pillar with pyramidal top) found in Calah, on the banks of the Tigris River, was set up by Shalmaneser II. It mentions by name a king of Syria and king of Israel who are also mentioned in the Bible.

Details:

The place of Calah, now called Nimrud, lies about twenty miles south of Nineveh, on the west bank of the Tigris River. According to Gen.10:11, it was first built by Nimrud:

*Genesis 10:11—From that land he [Nimrud] went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah.*

Austin Henry Layard, during his excavations between 1847 and 1851, found that the remains of the ancient city walls measured 7,000 by 5,500 feet. Within these walls he found the remains of the palaces of three kings: Ashur-nasir-pal (885–860 B.C.), Shalmaneser III (860–825 B.C.), and Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.), along with many wall sculptures.

The most interesting of these sculptures was a series that record the victories of Tiglath-pileser III, the Pul of 2 Kings.15:19. These figures show, in graphic style, the evacuation of a city, military operations connected with a siege, and the harsh treatment meted out to prisoners.

The most important of all discoveries was the Black Obelisk which had been set up by Shalmaneser III in the central building. It is a large, imposing monument of black marble, six feet, six inches high; and tapering at the top. It has twenty small bas-reliefs, five on each side, showing the officials from five different countries bringing tribute to the king. Above, below, and between the reliefs are 210 lines of cuneiform inscription which tell the story of the monarch's achievements in war and peace during the first thirty-one years of his reign.

Among other individuals it mentions "Hazeal of Damascus and Jehu of Israel."

*2 Kings 19:15–17—Then the Lord said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazeal as king over Syria. Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place."*

On the obelisk Shalmaneser says:

In the eighteenth year of my reign I crossed the Euphrates for the sixteenth time. Hazael of Damascus put his trust in his large army, and mustered his troops in great numbers, making Mount Senir (sa-ni-ru), facing the Lebanon, as his fortress. I fought with him and inflicted defeat upon him, killing with the sword 16,000 of his experienced soldiers. I took away from him 1121 chariots, 470 riding horses as well as his camp. He disappeared to save his life, but I followed him in Damascus, his royal residence. There I cut down his gardens outside the city and took my departure. I marched as far as Mount Hauran destroying, tearing down and burning innumerable towns, carrying booty away from them that was beyond counting. I then marched as far as the mountains of Ba'lira'si, by the sea-side, and erected there a stela\* with my image as King. At that time I received the tribute of the inhabitants of Tyre, Sideon, and of Jehu, son of Omri. (\*stela or stele: an ancient stone slab or pillar, usually engraved, inscribed, or painted, and set upright.)

Then, later, comes the section that is of even greater interest to the Bible student. It reads:

The tribute of Jehu, son of Omri: I received from him silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden goblets, pictures of gold, bars of lead, staffs for the hand of the king, and javelins, I received.

Jehu is shown kneeling, with tribute, in front of Shalmaneser. The Assyrian monarch is accompanied by two attendants (one holding a sunshade above him), and stands proudly, with the symbols of Ashur and Ishtar in the area above. King Jehu of Israel wears a short, rounded beard, a soft leather cap, and a sleeveless jacket, which marks him as a prisoner. Following him come Israelites dressed in long garments and carrying precious metals and other tribute. This is the only sculptured relief we have of any Israelite king.

## ► The Dead Sea Scrolls

“Dead Sea Scrolls” is the name given to a collection of ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts (and fragments of manuscripts), found in a number of caves in the barren foothills of the Judean Wilderness, west of the Dead Sea. More than one-third of these are copies of books of the Old Testament, which are older by at least 1,000 years than the hitherto earliest known Old Testament manuscripts.

The jars that they found around the Dead Sea, with parts of the book of Isaiah in them, sealed with clay, had been preserved for 2,000 years!

God saw to it that they were preserved, because they destroyed the higher critics of Isaiah who claimed that the book of Isaiah had been written by two authors at different times, because the prophecies in the book were so accurate and came to pass so perfectly. They said therefore that the prophetic part of Isaiah must have been written a long time after the first Isaiah, by some other Isaiah. But they have discovered the actual scrolls of the writings of Isaiah, which date back before the prophecies were fulfilled. So now it can't be denied that Isaiah wrote it, and they were genuine prophecies!

Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript previously known (980 A.D.), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.

Details:

The discovery of the scrolls began in the spring of 1947 when an Arab shepherd boy missed one of his goats. While searching for it in one of the steep valleys, he threw a stone into a hillside cave and heard what sounded to him like the breaking of pottery. Summoning his companion, the two entered the cave and found some pottery jars 25 to 29 inches high and about 10 inches wide. In these, they found objects which looked much like miniature mummies, but were actually leather scrolls wrapped in squares of linen cloth, and covered over with a pitch like substance possibly derived from the Dead Sea. With a vague idea that they had discovered antiques that might bring them money, they divided the scrolls and set off for Bethlehem where they located an antique dealer and offered him the scrolls for twenty pounds. He refused them. Afterwards they were directed to Jerusalem where, after bargaining for weeks, they sold four of the scrolls to Archbishop Athanasius Samuel of St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Monastery, and three to E. L. Sukenik, Professor of Archaeology at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Archbishop Samuel showed his scrolls to several authorities who were uncertain about their content and value. Finally they were taken to Dr. John C. Trever, acting director of the American School of Ori-

ental Research (Jerusalem), who photographed and studied some of them, then sent copies to Dr. W. F. Albright of Johns Hopkins University. This well-known authority tentatively dated them about 100 B.C., and declared them an amazing discovery.

The Arab shepherds revealed the cave where the scrolls had been found, but war between the Arabs and Jews made scientific investigation impossible until February of 1949, when Dr. Laukester Harding of the Jordan Department of Antiquities, and Pere R. de Vaux of the Dominican Bible School of Jerusalem carefully excavated its floor level. Within three weeks they found some 800 scroll fragments belonging to about seventy-five different leather scrolls, a few fragments of papyrus scrolls, portions of linen in which scrolls had been wrapped, Roman lamps, and portions of jars and potsherds belonging to about fifty different jars.

Apparently some 200 scrolls had been hidden away in the cave. Origen, an Alexandrian church father who lived during the third century, is said to have used certain manuscripts which he found in a jar near Jericho. Also, Timotheus, Patriarch of Baghdad, wrote a letter to Sergius, Archbishop of Elam, about A.D. 800, saying that a certain person from Jerusalem told him of an Arab hunter's dog that went into a cave entrance near Jericho. When the animal did not return for some time, his master went in after him, and found himself in a little house in the rock in which were many manuscripts. He reported the find to some Jewish scholars in Jerusalem who came down to the cave and removed many of the scrolls, which they said were books of the Old Testament and other Hebrew works.

Thirty-seven caves in the Qumran were examined during 1952 and found to contain pottery; but eleven of them also contained manuscript material, in large or small quantities. Cave II yielded biblical and apocryphal fragments. In Cave III were 274 portions of manuscripts, and two copper scrolls which originally were made up of three strips of copper, riveted together and measuring nearly eight feet in length. But in Cave IV were found over four hundred manuscripts, and about a hundred thousand fragments, varying in size from a thumbnail to a sheet of legal-size paper. Altogether, the remains of more than 500 different manuscripts, or large portions of manuscripts, and multiplied thousands of fragments were found in these eleven caves. About one-third of the manuscripts are books of the Old Testament, the remainder are commentaries on some Old Testament books, Apocryphal and wisdom books, hymns and psalms, liturgies, theological works, and works relating to the people who lived at Qumran and wrote the scrolls. There are manuscripts or fragments of every book of the Old Testament, except Esther. The most popular books, to judge from the number of copies found of each, were Isaiah, the Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Genesis. These were written on rolls of leather which had been carefully ruled to guide the scribes. A few were written on papyrus, and one on copper.

Some of the most important and best preserved of all these manuscripts were:

The scroll of Isaiah, known as St. Mark's Isaiah Scroll, which was written on seventeen sheets of parchment sewn together end-to-end, making a scroll 24 feet long and 10.2 inches high. It is the largest and best preserved of all the scrolls, and was written in an early form of the square letter, which according to Dr. Albright places it in the second century B.C. This makes it the oldest known complete Hebrew manuscript of any biblical book, and it agrees in almost every respect with our traditional Hebrew texts, as used in the translation to the King James Version of our Bible.

Discoveries at Kirbet Mird: In 1950 members of the Ta'amireh Bedouin tribe found manuscript material of great interest at Kirbet Mird, a ruined Christian monastery on top of a conical peak 2 miles northeast of Mar Saba. A Belgian expedition made further searches there in February and March of 1953. Altogether, these discoveries include papyrus fragments of private letters in Arabic, a fragment of the Andromache of Euripides, and a number of Biblical texts in Greek and Syriac. The Greek texts include fragments from Mark, John, and Acts. Those in Syriac include fragments of Joshua, Luke, John, Acts, and Colossians. They all date from the 7th and 8th centuries of our Christian Era.

## Prayer and Closing Activity

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**5 minutes**

① *Have a brief prayer to close the meeting.*

# Songs and Skits

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## Skit: "The Pen that Wrote"

**Characters:** Managing Director, Sales Manager, Secretary

Secretary sits with notebook in front of her and a large pen.

Sales Manager enters and asks the secretary to take dictation. He dictates a memo to the Managing Director with an idea about opening a new shop. He leaves.

Secretary takes the letter out of the room.

She re-enters and sits down to work. A little while later, Managing Director comes in, raving about the idea of the shop. It's just a fantastic idea, he says. He starts congratulating the secretary for her fantastic idea, and then he asks her how did she write it? She shows him the pen. He picks up the pen, holding it high in front of him, and starts lavishly praising the pen for its intelligence and forethought and good business sense. Secretary tries to interrupt him to let him know that it wasn't the pen, but she who wrote the letter. He finally gets the point, and starts praising her with the same compliments he'd used for the pen. She doesn't mention that she had just taken dictation. Director leaves.

Sales Manager comes in and makes small talk with the secretary, and then wonders out loud what the Director's reaction is going to be to his plan for the new shop, and how he'd been thinking about this for the past month and planning it. Secretary remarks that the Director seems to think that it's her idea. Manager expresses his surprise. She concludes, well, it's better that he thinks it's my idea than the pen's!

Of course, neither is the case. The people who wrote the Bible did so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It was the Lord who was inspiring them and telling them what to write. He used them, just like they used the pens in their hands. But neither the pens nor the people should get the credit; the Lord was the One behind the Bible and they are His Words that have been recorded in it.

## Skit: "The Way to the Post Office"

**Characters:** Newsboy or girl, Evangelist.

Newsboy stands there selling newspapers. Evangelist comes up and asks him the way to the Post Office. Boy gives directions. Evangelist thanks him and then says, "Okay, now you come out to my meeting tonight, and I'll tell you how to get to Heaven!"

Newsboy replies, "Huh! You want to show me the way to Heaven? You don't even know the way to the Post Office!"

## Skit: "The Love Letter"

**Characters:** Narrator, Maiden, Man.

**Optional characters:** Tutor

This story can be acted out and dialogue added.

Once, long ago in a far away land, lived a simple young maiden. She lived a humble life, working on her family's farm, milking cows and cooking meals and sewing clothes. One summer's day, in the beautiful meadows where the sun was shining and the flowers dancing in the breeze, a man of obvious importance rode by on his horse. He stopped to greet the maiden. It was love at first sight. In the following weeks and months, the man, an emissary of the king, stopped often to visit the maiden, and their love grew.

Then the king sent the man on a mission. He would travel to a far away land. "Never fear," he told the maiden, "for I will write to you often. And will you write to me?"

"Alas," said the young maiden, "I do not know how to read or write." The man looked kindly on his humble lover. He arranged for a tutor from the royal castle to visit her, and she soon learned to read and to write. The letters then began to arrive at the farmhouse. How delighted was our maiden to receive

them! She studied each letter carefully. She could only write simple letters herself to her love, but just enough that he knew with joy that she was receiving each of his missives. As the pile of letters grew and grew, so did the love between them. Even though the man's return was delayed, the warmth and closeness between them only grew more, because she delighted in reading and re-reading each letter, the older ones as well as the new.

Much time passed, and at length, the man returned. His visit to the farmhouse brought exclamations of joy and warm hugs from the maiden. "Here are all of your letters, my dear one. I have kept them all safely." Wrapped in ribbons, the letters sent each month had been placed in small piles. The corners of the papers were well worn, and it was clear that the letters had been read many times over.

Upon their marriage (a wonderfully joyous affair), these great treasures, the words of love they had shared, were placed in a wooden chest.

Time passed and war broke out in the land. The armies of the enemies swept through the country. The man's residence would be a target, so our fair maiden went to the relative safety of her family's inconspicuous farmhouse. The war raged and then passed, as the enemies were vanquished. The maiden and her husband returned to their home, only to find it had been burned to the ground. She wept at the greatest loss of all—the loss of her husband's love letters, which she had treasured above all. He comforted her, taking her in his arms. "Don't cry, my dear one. For though the papers are lost, the words that I had written to you are forever in your memory. The love is not lost." And it was true. For the maiden had read the papers so many times, that she knew forever his words of love, and was able to write them again from memory.

But most important of all, she was living with the man she loved, and daily heard his new words. She daily lived his love, and the treasure of the older words, mingled with the fresh words he spoke daily, were the greatest riches she possessed.

Even so are the Words of God to us. There are older treasures, which we should study now while we have the opportunity. We should know them so well that if we ever lose them because of persecution or problems, the words will forever be in our hearts. And it is always the case that we also have the Living Words, God's fresh words for us each day. We have treasures new and old, and each has their place and their time. Each has their purpose. Each should be studied and meditated upon, for we need them all.

We show our love to the author of the Bible by reading and treasuring that which He has spoken. Even if we cannot understand and have to study hard, so must the Words be so important to us that we take the time to study, to learn of His Words.