

# An Outline to the Books of the Bible

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*By John Nelson Darby*  
– *Lightly Edited by Sosthenes*

**DRAFT**

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# Foreword to Draft Edition

J N Darby wrote his well known Synopsis. In fact this series of five helpful books was originally written in French 'Etudes sur la Parole'. Less known is a short summary of the Bible, the Outline to the books of the Bible.

I have, with God's help, sought to reproduce this Outline, simplifying and modernising the text where necessary. The result is presented below.

I am all too aware of my own inadequacies for such a task and this draft edition is being produced for those who are more spiritual and better taught than myself to offer some corrections.

There is an area I am particularly concerned about – that is the reference to 'two natures' in Hebrews.

Please feel free to email me [Sosthenes@adayofsmallthings.com](mailto:Sosthenes@adayofsmallthings.com), if you feel the need to. I look forward to hearing from you.

Your brother in our Lord and Saviour

Sosthenes

# The Old Testament

## The Pentateuch

### Genesis

In this book we have all the great principles of God's relationship with man, without bringing in redemption which makes a people for God and a dwelling-place for God in man. You never, save in chapter 2:3, get the word "holiness" in Genesis; and you never have God dwelling with men.

Creation is first treated of; then innocence, lordship, and marriage, the figure of union with Christ. Next we have the fall, man's sin against God, and then in Cain man's sin against his brother. There is, at the same time, a witness of certain righteous persons: Abel in sacrifice, Enoch in life, and Noah in testimony of approaching judgment. You then get the complete corruption of the whole system, and the deluge.

Having had in Enoch a figure of the church, we get in Noah deliverance through judgment. Then a new world begins, God entering into covenant with it, and government introduced to prevent violence. But the governor fails, and God's plans as to the races of men are brought out. We find God making nations, in consequence of man's attempt to remain united so as to be independent. In the midst of these nations we have, in Nimrod, imperial despotic power in an individual. It is connected with Babel, the place of man's wickedness. In point of fact, the division of mankind into nations comes by judgment.

Shem's family having been owned on the earth – the Lord God of Shem, national existence is recognized as God's principle of the constitution of the earth. He now begins an entirely new thing. He calls out an individual to be the head of a blest race. Whatever individual saints there had thus far been, there had been no

counterpart of Adam as the head of a race. Abraham was called out to be this. Election, calling, and promise are connected with his calling. Consequently you have Abraham here, as a stranger and pilgrim, with nothing but his tent and his altar. He fails, like everybody, but God judges the world – Pharaoh’s house – for him.

We then get the distinction between a heavenly-minded and an earthly-minded man; the world having power over the earthly-minded (Lot), and the heavenly one (Abraham) having power over the world. In connection with this we have in Melchizedek the future priest upon his throne, linked with God’s supremacy over heaven and earth. Abraham’s separation from the world having been demonstrated, Jehovah presents Himself to Abraham as his shield and reward. We first get the earthly inheritance and people, that is, in promise. Abraham looks for the promise in a fleshly way, and that is all rejected. We have then the promise to Abraham of being the father of many nations, God revealing Himself as God Almighty. We have also His covenant with Abraham, and the principle of separation to God by circumcision. Chapter 18 gives the promise of the heir, the judgment of the world (Sodom), and the connection of a heavenly people (Abraham) with God, by intercession. In chapter 19 we have the connection with the judgment of the earthly people (Lot), saved as by fire through the tribulation.

What follows this, in chapter 20, is the absolute appropriation of the wife, whether Jerusalem or the heavenly bride, as the spouse of the Lord. The old covenant (Hagar) is cast out, and, the true heir (Isaac) comes. He takes the land (chap. 21).

Chapter 22 begins another series of things. The promised heir having being offered up, the promise is confirmed to the seed. Sarah dies (chap. 23): this is the passing away of the old association with God on the earth. Hence, in chapter 24 Eliezer (in figure the Holy Ghost, or His work on earth) is sent to take a wife for Isaac (Christ), who is Heir of all things. Isaac is not permitted to return to Mesopotamia. So, Christ, in taking the church, cannot come down to earth.

However, the moment we get Jacob, we get the head of the twelve

tribes. He goes to Mesopotamia for Rachel and Leah, typical of Israel and the Gentiles. Jacob is the elect, but not the heavenly people. He goes back to Canaan, gets the promises, with all sorts of exercises, as Israel will, but, if he does, he must give up old Israel (Rachel) to get Benjamin, the son of his right hand.

In the brief notice of Esau's offspring we find the world in vigour and energy before God's people are. Then another history commences, that of Joseph. This portrays Christ, though connected with Israel, rejected by Israel, and sold to the Gentiles. He now comes to be the head, having the throne, and governing all Egypt. God has done with Israel, receiving a Gentile wife, and calls his children by names typical of Christ's rejection and blessing outside Israel. He receives back his brethren in the glory. This part closes with two distinct testimonies, the will of Joseph about his bones, and Jacob's prophecy that they will all be back in the land and the promises to Israel be fulfilled.

## **Exodus**

In Exodus we find God visiting His people; redemption, and the establishment of relationships with His people. These relationships are presented in the testing of law, and the arrangements of grace. God bears with His people, with the distinct purpose of dwelling with them, and making them dwell in a place He had prepared for them. There are four immense principles – redemption, bringing to God, God's dwelling among them, and consequently holiness. Priesthood is established to maintain the relationship with God, when the people cannot be in immediate relation. Connected with all this you have, the judgment of the world, and the final deliverance of the earthly people. With Moses, the man of grace, you have Zipporah, who represents the church, whereas the people are witnesses of Christ's abiding connection with Israel.

From the Red Sea to Sinai we find the whole picture of God's dealings in grace in Christ by the Spirit on to the millennium, and the millennium itself.



In chapter 19 the people put themselves under law, and get law instead of worship founded on deliverance and grace.

## **Leviticus**

Leviticus gives us God in the tabernacle, as in the midst of His people, ordering all things that suit their relationship to Him. The feasts represent Him as in the midst of the people, a circle round Himself.

## **Numbers**

Numbers treats the journey through the wilderness, with insight into the inheritance (for us heavenly). It present a full prospect of all God's ways in bringing them in, and of Christ Himself as the One who is to reign. Reference is made in this last remark to Pisgah, and to Balaam's prophecy.

## **Deuteronomy**

Deuteronomy provides a recapitulation of all God's ways and dealings with Israel, as motives to insist on obedience, and to put the people on moral grounds in direct relationship with Himself. The three great feasts (chap. 16) have this character. The testing character of the law is stated, and at the same time the purpose of God in blessing, spite of failure under the law, is revealed; closing with the prophetic blessing of Israel, in respect to their then present condition.

## **The Historical Books**

### **Joshua.**

Joshua gives us the establishment of the people in the land by divine leading and power, according to promise. There is conflict, and the faithfulness of the people's walk with God is tested.

The career of Joshua begins with crossing the Jordan in the power of resurrection, and has its place of power for conflict in Gilgal – circumcision – death to the flesh.

They eat of the corn of the land before they have any conflict.

## Judges

While Joshua is a book of victorious power, Judges is the book of failure in faithfulness, so that power is lost. Only that God intervenes in mercy, from time to time, to deliver and revive. Gilgal is exchanged for Bochim. Gilgal, the denial of the flesh, though seemingly of little importance, was the place of power; Bochim was the place of tears, but the angel of God was there.

## Ruth

The Lord intervenes in grace to bring in the promised seed, and the restoration of Israel, but in the way of grace, on a new footing. Because of a famine in the land, Naomi, who represents Israel, goes away, and loses everything. Ruth comes back with her, and Boaz (strength) raises up the inheritance. It was old Israel, in some sense: the child was born to Naomi, but on the principle of grace, for Ruth had no title to promise.

## 1 Samuel

The judicial priesthood connection is here broken. Both judge and priest go in Eli. The ark is taken – a total breach. Power is lost. Then God comes in, in His own sovereign way, by a prophet, as He had earlier when He brought them out of Egypt. (Everything on the ground of man's responsibility was gone; but God's sending a prophet was sovereign mercy.) Before He brings in strength (the king), He brings in prophecy – note this. Before Christ returns in power, it is the testimony of the Spirit and word, by which a connection is maintained between God and His people. From Eli to David on the throne the

principle is faith and power, not succession.

But flesh requires governmental order,\* and it gets what it wants. However, it breaks down under the power of the enemy. Even believers who cling to the flesh, fall with it (Jonathan). If governmental order is established without Christ, they cannot accept Christ's coming to set it aside. The one in whom hope is (David) must be content to be as a partridge on the mountains.

Saul was raised up to put down the Philistines and Jonathan subdued them. Saul did not, and was destroyed by them. Jonathan was a believer associated with the outward order. The place of faith was with David. It is the place of the power of faith without the king.

*{\*It is quite true that there was a want through the misrule of Samuel's sons. Spiritual energy had failed. The church can only stand in power: when it turned to the principle of succession, all was lost.}*

## 2 Samuel

Saul falls on the mountains of Gilboa. Then we get the royalty of David, in active power, not in the reign of peace. There was the promise that God would maintain David's house, however they conducted themselves. God would chasten them if disobedient, but not take His mercy from them. Then we get David's personal failure when he is king.

There is another element – the ark and the temple come in question. The relationship with God is re-established first by faith, not according to order, but by spiritual power according to grace. The ark was on Mount Zion, and there they were singing, "His mercy endureth for ever". At Gibeon there was the high place, and Solomon went there. The tabernacle was there, but not the ark. Solomon is not seen at Mount Zion till his return from Gibeon, after God answered him. Consequent on God's interfering in deliverance and redemption, the place of ordered worship is set up, connected with earth, at the

threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. It was after judgment: people had been slain, and sacrifice made. God loves Jerusalem; He stays His hand in judgment, and shows by prophecy the path of reconciliation by sacrifice.

## 1 And 2 Kings

Here we have the reign of Solomon, the figure of the great Son of David. We have the establishment of Israel in peace, and the building of the temple. This fails in Rehoboam. The book of Kings then gives us the history of Israel, not Judah, but with sufficient notices of Judah to carry on the history. You get the intervention of God in mercy, by prophets in Elijah and Elisha. In the midst of Israel, Elijah was a testimony to Israel, who had left the temple, on the ground of responsibility; Elisha was a testimony in resurrection-power.

First and Second Kings continue the history in Judah till the captivity, and then Lo-ammi (not my people) was written on the nation. There are, of course, many details and various characters. Hezekiah had faith, Josiah showed obedience, Jehoshaphat had piety, but through association with the world, there never was success.

## 1 And 2 Chronicles

Chronicles gives us the history of the family of David – ending with the Babylonish captivity.

- 1 Chronicles is David himself. At the close, David has the pattern of everything by the Spirit, and leaves it to Solomon to execute.
- 2 Chronicles is David's posterity.

Chronicles is more connected with the establishment of the kingdom on earth; Kings is more figurative of what is heavenly. In the temple in Chronicles there is a veil (2 Chron. 3:14), in Kings there is not. The

veil will not be rent for Israel in the millennium.

## **Ezra**

The re-establishment of the temple and divine service according to the law, while waiting for the Messiah. But there is no ark, no Urim, etc. It was an empty temple.

## **Nehemiah**

The re-establishment of the civil society and state under the Gentiles.

## **Esther**

The providential care of Israel when God is hidden from them, while Lo-ammi (not my people) is written on them. He takes care of them while He is hidden from them and does not own them. God's name is never mentioned. The Gentile queen fails to show her beauty, and the Jewish bride supersedes her.

# The Poetic Books

## Job

In Job we have the possibility of the relationship of a man with God, in the great conflict referring to good and evil between God and the power of darkness. That involves the discipline of saints, in contrast with the allegedly present righteous government of the world (typified by Job's three friends) The necessity of a Mediator is intimated, but He is not revealed. The power of Satan over the world is made known, and his character as accuser of the brethren pointed out.

God is seen as the originator of all (not of the accusations themselves, but of the whole process) for the purpose of blessing His people, while the conscience is thoroughly searched in those He blesses. This whole book has no dispensational reference. You get in Elihu the wisdom of God in His word (Christ really), and then you have the power of God (also Christ) in God answering out of the whirlwind. The book may be regarded as typical of Israel, inasmuch as it is in Israel that these ways of God are shown.

## Psalms

In the Psalms we have the Spirit of Christ working and developing itself in the remnant of Israel in the latter day. It shows His personal relationship, taken, whether in laying the ground for them, or in exercising sympathy with them. The Psalms continue up to the border of the millennium, but do not enter it except prophetically. They are divided into five books.

## Proverbs

Here is the wisdom of God showing its path to man, in contrast with the corruption and violence in man. The first eight chapters give us the principle, showing Christ as wisdom. The remainder of Proverbs enters into details. It is addressed to man in a remarkable way. A

man of the world escapes by knowing the crookedness of the world: this book enables a man to escape without knowing it – wise in that which is good, simple concerning evil.

## **Ecclesiastes**

Here is the result of the pursuit of happiness under the sun. Man's wisdom, as man, is God's law.

## **Canticles Or Song Of Songs**

The Song gives us the relationship, and the affections of the heart of the spouse, with Christ. This special form of the relationship, is to be realised properly in Israel, though we may apply this book, abstractedly, to the church and to the individual. (What Canticles treats of is not relationship, but desires, faith, getting the joy of the relationship with occasional glimpses, but not an established known relationship. The place of the church, though the marriage is not come, is that of being in the relationship. Israel will not have this.)

There is a kind of progress observable. (1) "My beloved is mine" – this is the lowest point. (2) "I am my beloved's" – this is the consciousness of belonging to Him. (3) "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me."

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We have had subsequent to the history, the moral development of the heart of man, and of the Spirit of God working in various ways in his heart. Especially in Ecclesiastes, the heart of man makes itself a centre, and tries to feed itself, In Canticles, the heart is getting out of itself into the heart of Christ.

# The Prophets

## Isaiah

In Isaiah we have the whole framework of God's dealings with Judah, Israel coming in later, with the judgment of surrounding nations, and especially of Babylon. Israel is the centre, and the Assyrian is the great latter-day enemy; Immanuel is the hope of Israel, and the securer of the land. He, though Himself Jehovah, is rejected when coming as a testimony: a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling to the disobedient. We get, in addition, the details of the inroads of the Assyrian, and his judgment in the last days; and, included in the development of all this, we have the blessedness of Israel as re-established. This is the first part - chapters 1-35.

In the historical chapters (36-39) we get two great principles - resurrection, and deliverance from the Assyrians. It is a risen Christ who effects deliverance, which makes it so important. The captivity in Babylon is intimated here. This lays the ground for what follows.

In the last part we have God's controversy with Israel, first on the footing of idolatry, and, secondly, because of the rejection of Christ. In this Israel is first looked at as a *servant*; and in chapter 49 the place of *servant* is transferred to Christ. He is rejected, and the remnant in the last days take the place of servant. All through this, though Israel be the object of favour, you get a definite contrast between the wicked and the righteous, and hence the separation of the remnant, and judgment of the wicked. There can be no peace to the wicked, whether Israel or others (end of chaps. 48, 57).

In the part that refers specially to the rejection of Christ we get the revelation of the call of the Gentiles, the judgment of the people, the coming of Jehovah, and the full blessing of the remnant of Israel at Jerusalem.



## **Jeremiah**

We have in Jeremiah, the present dealing of God with rebellious Judah. Judah becomes Lo-ammi (not my people) by the captivity in Babylon.

Then, from chapter 30, we have the revelation of the infallible love of Jehovah to Israel (Judah and Ephraim). We have the certainty of their establishment under David, according to the order of God, in Jerusalem, Jehovah being their righteousness. Then, after the history of Zedekiah, and the details of what brought in the captivity, and what passed in Palestine after that, we have the judgment of all the nations and Babylon itself.

## **Lamentations of Jeremiah**

In Lamentations we get the sympathy and entering in of the Spirit of Christ into the sorrows of Israel, especially the remnant, and the hope of restoration.

## Ezekiel

Ezekiel gives the judgment of Jerusalem. God comes from without, looking at all Israel, not just Judah. The nations around are judged - the ungodly oppressors in and over Israel, and the way individual souls are judged.

Then we have the setting up of David, and Israel's new birth in blessing. We have the union of Judah and Israel into one stick, and, on their restoration to their land, the destruction of the Assyrian, or Gog, by divine power. This is in fact, by the presence of Christ. Then at the end of the book we have the vision of the restoration of the temple and of the order of the land.

# Daniel

Daniel has two parts:

1. The history of the Gentile empires, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar, the head of gold.
2. Daniel's (beginning with chap. 7), marking out the condition and circumstances of the saints in relation to these empires. We have the coming of judgment to set them all aside in favour of Israel. But he only comes to the door of the millennium without unfolding it.

# The Minor Prophets

## Hosea

In Hosea we have here the rejection of the house of Israel and the house of - Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi. The door is secretly opened to the Gentiles. Israel endures the long deprivation of everything. Then comes the restoration of the whole under Jehovah and David in the latter days. Paul quotes chapter [1:10](#), and [2:23](#); Peter only the latter. From chapter 4 we get the most earnest dealing with the conscience of Israel. The book closes with their return in repentance to the sure blessings of Jehovah. It is the testimony of the ways of the Lord.

## Joel

Under the figure of the desolation left by a plague of insects we have announced the inroad of the northern armies in the last days, and the coming in of the whole power of man against God's people. Then Joel gives us the consequent coming in of Jehovah to judge the whole power of man in the day of the Lord, and the valley of decision. Meanwhile, the pouring out of the Holy Ghost upon all flesh, and the promise of certain deliverance to whoever called on the name of the Lord.

You may add, the summons to repentance of all who have ears to hear.

## Amos

Amos gives the patience of God's dealings and ways, which he rehearses in connection with the precise pointing out of the iniquity of Israel's ways. He marks out the punishment of bordering nations on the same ground of definite moral evil. He notices the rejection of a testimony against the evil, and declares the sure, infallible, unescapable judgment of Jehovah on the whole people. The righteous remnant are certainly saved. The prophecy closes with the promise of building up the tabernacle of David, as head of the nation, and blessing the people.

## Obadiah

Obadiah is the judgment of Edom for their hatred of Israel, warning them that the day of the Lord is upon all the heathen, while deliverance should be in Mount Zion, and thence holiness and blessing, and the kingdom be the Lord's.

## Jonah

Jonah is the witness that, though God has chosen Israel, He has not given up His right as a faithful Creator in mercy over all the earth. Those that are connected with Him must be subject to His power and bow to His grace, otherwise the sense of favour is unfaithfulness and self-exaltation. At the same time we get a type of death and resurrection as the way of blessing.

## Micah

In Micah we have the general judgment of the Samaria and Jerusalem, for their transgressions, iniquities, idolatry, and their rejection of the testimony of God. The whole land is therefore treated as polluted, and no longer the rest of His people, who must arise and depart. He judges the princes and their prophets, brings in the power of the Spirit to judge even the chosen city of the Lord, but announces its re-establishment by Jehovah in grace in the last days. He brings in the siege of Jerusalem by the heathen, in fulfilment of God's counsels, in consequence of the rejection of Christ, on account of which they were given up.

He also shows that the same Christ stands as their peace and defence, when the Assyrian comes in, in the last days. The remnant of Israel becomes the people of blessing *to*, and power *over*, others, while all evil *in it* is judged and destroyed, as well as the heathen who have come up against it. Having spoken of the restoration in the last days he returns and insists on the righteousness of God's ways, contrasting the attempt at ceremonially pleasing Him with the practising of iniquity which He hates. Micah closes looking to God to restore and feed His

people - the God who passes by iniquity.

## **Nahum**

The power of the world, or man as such, is put down for ever in Nahum. We have the testimony of the faithfulness of the Lord in the midst of His vengeance, resulting in blessing to those that trust in Him and wait for Him. It is still the Assyrian. Babylon is another thing altogether.

## **Habakkuk**

Habakkuk gives the soul exercised by the iniquity of God's people - first, with indignation at the iniquity, and then with distress at their being destroyed by those who are God's rod to chasten them.

He then gets the answer of God, showing that He knows the pride of the wicked, and will judge it, and that the righteous man must live by trusting in Him. Lastly, he rises above all to the glorious power of God, exercised in the salvation of His people, so that he trusts in Him, come what will.

## **Zephaniah**

In Zephaniah we get the utter judgment of the land and of all the neighbouring nations around, at the great day of the Lord, because of iniquity, hypocrisy, and idolatry. Man's natural power is dealt with. Because of her iniquity, Jerusalem is distinctly brought out as the special object of displeasure.

The prophecy then singles out the remnant in a very distinct and definite way, calling on them to wait on the Lord, who leaves them as an afflicted and poor people. They are delivered by the judgments which He executes, and rest in His love over Jerusalem, making it a name and praise among all people.

# The Post-Captivity Prophets

In these books, Haggai and Zechariah, the Jews are never called God's people, except in prospect of the future.

## Haggai

Haggai is occupied with the house, and declares that its latter glory will be greater than its first. God says that shakes all nations, and encourages them to build, declaring that His Spirit went with them' as it was when Israel left Egypt. God will overthrow the throne of all kingdoms, and establish Christ under the name of Zerubbabel, as the elect Man, as the signet on His right hand.

## Zechariah

Zechariah is particularly occupied with Jerusalem. He shows the Lord dealing with all nations, having Jerusalem as a centre, using one nation to cast out another, till His purposes are accomplished. Then, when the glory has come, He establishes Himself at Jerusalem. In the person of Joshua, the high priest, He justifies her against the adversary; He declares that He will come, and He puts all wisdom, the omniscience of His government, in Jerusalem. He prophesies as to the perfection of the administrative order in the kingdom and priesthood, and the judgment of all corrupt pretension to it, which is shown to be Babylonish. He builds the temple of the land by means of the Branch, judging the hostile power of the world, using all this to encourage them at that time in building the temple. Thus far is one prophecy (chaps. 1-6).

In the next prophecy he takes occasion, by those who inquire whether they should fast for the ruin of Jerusalem, to promise her restoration (now, for the present, on the ground of responsibility). He declares that He will protect His house against all surrounding enemies. He brings in Christ in humiliation, and carries on to the time of glory. He foresees Christ's executing judgment by Judah upon Greece (Javan), gathering all the scattered ones. In chapters 11-14 we have the details of Christ's rejection, and the foolish and idolatrous shepherd, when He judges all the nations as meddling with Jerusalem. He defends

Jerusalem, bringing them to repentance, and opens the fountain for their cleansing. In contrast to the false spirit of prophecy, we get Christ's humiliation and the sparing of a remnant, when the body of the people are cut off from Judea at the end. We have the final deliverance and the sanctifying of Jerusalem by the presence of the Lord, making her the centre of all worship upon earth.

In [chapter 13:5](#) we see Christ as the servant of man, the rejected one of the Jews, and the smitten of Jehovah. "For man possessed me from my youth." It then appears that it was among His friends that He was wounded in His hands. The great secret of all comes out, that He was Jehovah's fellow, and smitten of Him. (Note, where Christ is owned as God, He calls the saints His fellows; and where, as here, He is in deepest humiliation, God calls Him His fellow.)

## Malachi

Here we have the testimony of the restored Jews' total failure. This was in spite of God's electing love, which He still maintained. Then the Lord comes, sending a messenger before His face. He comes in thoroughly sifting and purifying judgment, owning the remnant who spake one to another in the fear of the Lord, in the midst of the wickedness. He lifts them up, and sets them over the power of the wicked, the Sun of Righteousness rising upon them for healing. But at the same time He calls them back to the law of Moses, with the promise of sending them Elijah the prophet to turn their hearts.



# The New Testament

## The Gospels

### Matthew

In Matthew we have Christ presented as the Messiah: the son of Abraham and son of David. According to the promise, He is Jehovah Emmanuel. He brings in the testimony of the kingdom and its healing power, laying down the principles on which men (in the character of the remnant) could enter into it. Then He displayed the various power which characterised and verified His coming. He passes on, in enduring patience - patience which endures till He comes again - to His rejection by the nation, and the setting up of the kingdom in a mysterious way in the absence of the King. He continues His ministrations till His hour was come, and reveals the kingdom in glory, set up by His presence. He goes up to Jerusalem, arraigns the nation as a whole and in its various classes. Then He subjects Himself to the whole distress and power of evil and of Satan which reigned in Israel. The Lord of Hosts was smitten in the cup which He had to drink. He is raised from the dead; He meets His disciples on the old prophetic ground of the remnant in Galilee, and commands them to make disciples of all nations in the new name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But we do not have His ascension into heaven.

In chapter 10 He gives a testimony exclusively to Israel, embracing all the time from His presence there to His coming as Son of man, the Jews being in the land.

In chapter 23, in speaking to His disciples, He recognizes as occupying Moses' seat.

In chapter 21 He presents Himself as King, riding on an ass, according to Zechariah. then, having, recognised Moses' seat, He declares the utter judgment of that generation as guilty of the blood of all the righteous.

He puts His disciples in the place of the persecuted testimony, the

house being left empty till they own Him as coming in the name of Jehovah.

All time until the setting up of abomination of desolation is passed over. After the great tribulation, He appears in glory, and gathers all Israel. We have also parenthetically the various forms of the judgment of those who profess His name in His absence, and then the judgment of the nations on His return.

Draft

## Mark

In Mark we get the Lord's service (and therefore nothing of His birth) and specially His service as prophet. Matthew brings out the order of the facts, with a view to the development of principles, while Mark gives them chronologically. Luke has the same chronology as Mark, where he has any at all.

In Mark, as he reveals Christ's present service, we have in the parable of the sowing Christ's activity in the field at the beginning, and its cessation till the end, when He is again active in the harvest. All the intermediate particulars given by Matthew are omitted here.

In the prophecy on the Mount of Olives we have more references than in Matthew to the disciples' service. The commission in Mark is to preach the gospel to every creature.

# Luke

In Luke we get a beautiful exhibition of the state of the pious remnant in Israel at the time of our Lord's first appearing. We also get the working of the Spirit of God among them, and at the same time the public state of the nation under the Gentiles (chap. 1).

We get the whole political world set in motion to bring a carpenter to Bethlehem (chap. 2).

In connection with the remnant, John the Baptist comes, announcing Him who is to baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire (chap. 3). We now get the genealogy from Adam. Luke gives us Christ as the Son of man in perfect moral display upon earth. He also gives us the grace of God, displayed in His coming, yet still serving in the midst of Israel.

This service in grace, with particular reference to its moral elements, is unfolded in chapters 4-7. Jesus shows its extension to the Gentiles, and the breaking of covenant relations with the Jews. We have not merely the character of the remnant, but the disciples as the remnant, "*Blessed are ye poor,*" (Ch [6:20](#)) etc. (4-7).

We get (in the demoniac of Gadara – chap. 8) a special picture

- of the healing of the remnant in Israel,
- of the ruin of the people,
- the mission of the delivered remnant, left as a witness instead of going with Him.

In the transfiguration (chap. 9), we find special reference to His intercourse with Moses and Elias as to His decease. Son of man is to be delivered up. The unbelief of the whole generation, including His disciples, will close His whole connection with Israel. Then we see the claim of absolute devotedness to Himself. Meanwhile He insists on the judgment of self in all its forms.

The patient service of Christ to Israel is seen in sending out the seventy (Chap. 10). Israel is warned as to final judgment: whatever power He gave them in connection with the kingdom, their delight

should be rather that they belonged to heaven. We then get, further, the principle of grace in dealing *as* a neighbour, instead of the claim of God *towards* a neighbour.

The word and prayer with the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to those who ask the Father who hears our prayers. After that, we have the judgment of scribes and Pharisees for the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, for He had proved that the kingdom of God had come among them. The power of the enemy is bound, so that He could deliver all who were under it. Now, in the state in which the nation was, He was the test of its deliverance and of its going right. The nation would be left to the power of Satan, in whose power the Lord had been accused of acting.

Hearing the word is more important than being associated with Israel according to the flesh - more than any fleshly tie. Thus the men of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba would rise up in judgment against that generation, and the blood of all the prophets should be found in them. They should be tested by apostles and prophets being sent to them; but these they would slay.

He then teaches the disciples to trust in God for everything, and to confess Him, the Lord Jesus, in the presence of all this opposition. The Holy Spirit would be given to them; so that they who resisted and blasphemed the Holy Spirit in them should be judged.

He taught them (the disciples) that all things should be made manifest. They were to be careful for nothing, but to seek the kingdom which it was the Father's good pleasure to give them. They were to have their treasure in heaven, and wait for the Lord. He then gives the character of the faithful and unfaithful servant in His absence. He shows that His testimony will bring in division among men, even in families, and warns the people to take notice of the signs of the times. They ought to judge what was right, Jehovah being as one going with them to judgment, and they must agree with Him by the way (chap. 12).

We have in chapters 13 and 14, both in a parabolical way and in direct instructions, the setting aside of Israel, and the letting in of the Gentiles. In order to follow Him, men must take up their cross, and be

the salt of the earth.

In chapters 15 and 16, the ways of God in grace we have with sinners, still connected with the setting aside of Judaism. Thus we have,

- grace seeking and receiving sinners
- future hopes substituted for present enjoyment
- the veil drawn aside, so that what is heavenly is contrasted with all that had in Judaism been promised to such as were outwardly faithful.

We then get warnings against being an occasion of stumbling to little ones; and, on the other hand, if we are offended, exhortations to forgive. We have the power of faith in the disciples, but whatever is done, it is no more than duty.

Liberty from Israel is then shown to be the privilege when the Lord is owned in Christ's person. The kingdom was among them in His person; but He would come unexpectedly in His glory, and execute judgment. Meanwhile we are to know how to discern the righteous from the wicked. In the distress of that day, and at all times, men were to persevere in calling on God, and reckoning on His answer. We are to be meek and lowly in mind in respect to our faults. The Lord points out the danger of riches, as a hindrance to entering the kingdom, and assures us of the blessing of giving up all for Christ (chaps. 17, 18).

He now goes up to Jerusalem by Jericho. In all the three synoptic Gospels there is a distinct chronological point when He begins to deal again, and finally, with the Jews. Luke brings out grace in Zacchaeus; and though a publican, the Lord owns him as a son of Abraham. He is owned as Son of David, yet brings in grace; "*for the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost.*" ([Chap. 19:10](#)).

Next the parable of the servants to whom money is entrusted differs in Luke, in that the responsibility of man is more brought out. Each gets the same sum, but receives a different reward according to what he has gained; whereas in Matthew He gives to each according to his wisdom and the capacity of each and they all get the same reward.

In His riding into Jerusalem we notice the expression, "*Peace in heaven,*" (v.38) which is peculiar to Luke. Christ destroys Satan's power in heaven, and settles peace there, in order to introduce the kingdom. He weeps over Jerusalem - the historical place for the incident.

Chap. 20: We see the various sects – Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians etc. In the Lord's answer to the Sadducees, we have the introduction of the power of the first resurrection, as the proof of being the children of God. Here, as in Matthew, we get His exaltation to the right hand of God, and that confounds the Pharisees as to all their expectations of the kingdom. He judges the scribes, and owns the poor widow who puts in her mite as better than all the rich.

Then in the prophecy (chap. 21) He does take notice, which Matthew does not, of the soon coming destruction of Jerusalem. He does not speak of the abomination of desolation, but of Jerusalem being compassed with armies, thus referring to the first destruction in AD70. The times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. He enters a great deal more into the spirit in which His disciples are to give their testimony, and how to meet difficulties as they arise.

We find at the Passover the extreme evil of man's heart: strife among the disciples as to which of them should be the greatest. There is sifting by Satan, with special reference to Simon, for whom Christ had prayed.

Circumstances change now from those of the time in which He exercised power, so as to secure His disciples on the earth.

In chaps. 22 and 23 we have the scenes at Gethsemane and on the cross. The Lord Jesus is presented much more fully as Man in His own perfectness, faithfulness, and grace. It is not here Jehovah smiting His fellow, as in Matthew, but we see Him sweating as it were great drops of blood. It is the suffering man: the perfection of faith and grace.

This characterises Luke all through; We often find Him praying, of which His baptism and His transfiguration are particular examples. Another characteristic of Luke's gospel is the bringing together

circumstances into a single general expression, each bringing out some great moral beauty and truth, such as in the journey to Emmaus.

We have in Luke, Pilate and Herod becoming friends through their enmity to Christ. His opens paradise immediately to the thief on the cross. This is in contrast with the kingdom, and His intercession for the Jews. I may add, natural feeling for Christ is useless unless He is not followed.

We may remark the power of Christ in unspent unexhausted life when commending His spirit to the Father. The centurion owns Him here as the righteous man, and we see the effect also on the spectators and on Joseph the councillor.

In chap. 24 we see the two going to Emmaus. Jesus unfolds the scriptures to them, and makes Himself known in the breaking of bread - the sign of death. He presents Himself very fully as the same Man, Jesus, and eats in the presence of His disciples. He insisted that the scriptures - the Old Testament (law, prophets, and psalms) had being fulfilled in that day. He opened their understanding to understand the scriptures, emphasising *'thus it is written'* (v.46). He gives them the mission to preach repentance and the remission of sins in His name to all the Gentiles, beginning at Jerusalem. They were to be His witnesses, but they had to wait for the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit from heaven. Then, in the act of blessing them, He ascends.

We have nothing here of Galilee, which we have in Matthew and John, where we have the Jewish thing. That was the connection with the remnant of Israel; here His connection is with heaven.



# John

In John we have the divine person of the Lord as life and light. We also have the sending of the Comforter down here in His place. Finally John gives us a brief view of the whole course of the dispensation until the millennial kingdom.

## Chapter 1

John 1:1-18 presents the person of the Lord Jesus. Though largely shown to be God, the Lord is, from v.14 onwards, always looked at in John as a man living on earth, manifesting the Father.

- in verses 1-5 - abstractedly, as to His nature, and the effect of His appearing
- verses 6-11, John's testimony to this, and the effect of his coming
- verses 12, 13, the effect and way of grace
- verses 14-18, the Word made flesh;

Then:

- verses 19-34, John's testimony to what He would be as to His work and effectual power for man - Lamb of God, Baptiser with the Holy Spirit, owned here Son of God by the Holy Spirit descending on Him
- verses 35-42, John's testimony historically gathering to Him (this is the first day of active gathering)
- verse 43 to end, the Lord's gathering

This embraces God's dealing with the remnant during the life of Christ's here, and afterwards, till He is owned by the remnant at the end. This is represented by Nathanael. He is owned as Son of God, King of Israel, but takes a wider title too, that of Son of man, on whom the angels wait.

Note in v. 38-42 that Christ is the divine centre, God is manifest in flesh; and secondly we have the only path through the world when Jesus says, "Follow me".

- The world is condemned,
- Christ separates His own out of it to Himself, as
- God is revealed
- Heaven is opened on Him, and the angels wait upon Him as Man.

Note, we have our part as Stephen had - heaven opened, and He, the Son of man, there. Note too, that Christ does not have an object to look at, but we have one - He is the object.

**Chapter 2** v.1-22 gives the millennial character of the third-day concerning Israel:

- the marriage
- purifying judgment.

In v. 23-25 the Lord does not accept a present reception according to the intelligence of flesh.

However, in **chapter 3**, a man must be born again. This is true even for the earthly promises made to Israel. But the thoughts of God for man go on to heaven, for the divine Son of man came down from heaven and He speaks of it. God loves the world, and gives us to believe in Him by faith individually so as not to perish. This introduces the cross, the Son of man lifted up like the serpent - the Son of God given. Condemnation hangs on believing or not in the Son of God; for light has come into the world, but men love darkness. This is a great moral truth altogether outside Israel. Jesus has fully revealed heaven as He knows it, and made man, by believing in Him, fit for it. John then bears witness to Christ, in contrast to himself and his testimony, as divine and heavenly: the One to whom His Father has given all. Those who believe in Him have life; those who do not believe, will not see life and wrath abides on them. All this ministry was prior to His entering on His public ministry, for this took place after John had been cast into prison.

**Chapter 4:** The jealousy of the Jews drives Him from Judea. The woman of Samaria, who is outside and independent of Judaism is brought in. God is present there to give the living water. The Lord humbly asks her for a drink: this blessedly inspires confidence for her

to ask for it, He having already given her the desire. Now she has a spiritual spring rising up to eternal life within her. But nature cannot receive spiritual things. God reaches the conscience by the word. This is recognised as of Him, and then Christ is known and owned as Saviour of *the world*. And though salvation be of the Jews, God, who is a Spirit, must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. And the Father (the name now revealed in grace) seeks such to worship Him, meeting a needy soul. This is Jesus' joy in grace.

In **Chapter 5** we find that law, with all its ordinances, can do nothing through the weakness of the flesh. The truth however is, that the Father and the Son are working, not man. The Jews cannot have their sabbath in sin and misery. But as the Father has life in Himself, so He has given to Jesus the Son to have life in Himself, and He quickens whom He will; and committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honour Him as they honour the Father. There is no confusion in these ways of honouring Him. He who hears His word, and believes on the Father who sent Him, has everlasting life, and does not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life. There is then a resurrection to life, and another to judgment (see v. 30-47). Jesus is presented as life to the responsible man, witnessed by John Baptist, the Lord's works, the Father, and the scriptures. But the Jews, who rejected Moses' writings speaking of Christ, would not receive Him or His works. When the false one comes in his own name, they will receive him.

**Chapter 6** gives a picture of the order of God's ways in Christ. Already Prophet, He would not be King, but goes on high alone to pray. During this time the disciples are toiling without Him against the wind; He rejoins them, and they are at land. This is in connection with the passover, and Christ's proving Himself the Jehovah of *Psalm 132*. (*Arise, Jehovah, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength*) [v.8JND](#). Instead of that now, He is the bread coming down from heaven to give life to the world, and must be received spiritually and inwardly as the One incarnate, but also as dying, as there is no life in any man. Also He, the Son of man was going up to where He was before.

In **chapter 7**, the Jews (His brethren) do not believe on Him, and He cannot show Himself to the world. This is the feast of tabernacles. He promises the Spirit to those who believe: instead of His visible presence, as rivers of living water, springing up unto eternal life. The

Jews (of Judea) and people (Galilee, etc.) are distinguished.

Chapter 8 gives the word rejected; chapter 9 the works.

In **chapter 8** Christ is the light of the world and the Light to lead. He deals with conscience in contrast with the difference between gross sins and sinfulness. His word is the absolute expression of Himself. He is from above; unbelieving man is of the devil from beneath, The devil is a liar and a murderer, and abides not in the truth. Jesus is God, and the Jews reject Him.

In **chapter 9** He gives eyes to see. This is by incarnation, which in itself gives no spiritual sight. However, by the Spirit and word, He is known as the sent One, there is sight. He is confessed as Prophet, and then through the word received, He is believed on as the Son.

**Chapter 10** gives us His care of the sheep. They are put out, but He goes before. He comes in by, and *is*, the appointed way, giving salvation, liberty, and pasture. He lays down His life for the sheep; He knows them, and they Him, as His Father knew Him, and He His Father. In laying down His life, He becomes the special object and motive for His Father's love. He has other sheep (Gentiles), and there is to be one flock (not fold), one Shepherd. He goes from His obedient lowliness to being one with His Father. Father and Son are the names of **grace**.

In **chapter 11** He is declared Son of God by resurrection power. He is the Resurrection and the Life. When He is present, the dead live, and the living do not die. But while showing divine power, He is the dependent Son as man. He feels for and with us, but He is always heard.

In **chapter 12** He is the Son of David. The time of His glory as *Son of man* has come. But then He must die. Before this, He is received at Bethany, where the taught remnant enter into His death. This lays the ground for the new thing, while the enmity ripens. His death, as rejected by the hopeless and judicially blinded hostility of Israel, now comes fully before us.

**Chapter 13:** His departure does not close His service to His disciples.

He fits them to be *with Him* when He cannot stay with them. This is essentially necessary according to His true nature and glory. He came from God, and went to God; the Father had given all things into His hand. His human nature continued in divine purity and perfectness, whereas man was traitorously hostile. He loved *His own* who were in this world absolutely and He loved them through all, to the end. Having regenerated them by the word, He washes their feet as their servant, and gives them an example in service. He shows His personal love to them, the advantage of habitual nearness to Him to be able to know His mind. After Judas had gone out, He shows that the foundation of the new, but essential and everlasting, relationship with God is laid in the cross, under the title of Son of man. The Son of man is glorified in it, with all the essential attributes of God seen in Him. God is glorified in Him, but does not wait for the kingdom. He glorifies Him in Himself, and does so immediately. He then tells them to love to one another, but warns Peter he could not follow Him now. The path was through death, destruction, and wrath for man, as having only natural life. Note, in the washing: at first one is washed or bathed all over. This cannot be repeated. It is the feet which pick up dirt in the walk; but the believer is fundamentally clean, once and for all.

In **chapter 14**, the Lord first shows that, though absent, He is an object of faith as God is. He was not going to heaven to be at ease, and though they were distressed, He said, '*Let not your heart be troubled*'. If that had been the end, He would have told them. But He went to prepare a place for them in His Father's house, and would come again and receive them. Then we learn what they had in His presence, and what they would have after His departure. They knew where He went, for He was going to the Father, and they had seen the Father in Him. They knew the way, for in coming to Him they found the Father. He could not stay, but on His going He would ask, and the Father would send, another Comforter to stay and dwell in them. He had as yet been only among them. Now they would know Him. If a man kept His words, His Father would love him, and He, Jesus, would manifest Himself to him. If he kept His word, His Father and He would come and make their abode with him. He left peace with them, giving them *His own* peace. Next, he expected in His disciples such love that they should be glad that He went, that is that they should be interested in His happiness, an immense witness of His nearness.

In **chapter 15** Christ replaces Israel, the old but not the true vine on

the earth; the disciples are branches, clean through the word. The Father purified the fruit-bearing, cutting off the unfruitful branches. They were to abide in Him, and He in them. If a man (not they) did not, he would be cast out and burnt. If they abode in Him, and *His words* abode in them, they would be endowed with power. Dependence and confidence (Christ's words) are first; desires and thoughts come next. In bearing fruit they would resemble Him.

Next, they were to abide in His love: this by obedience, and all this that their joy might be full. They were to love one another, as He had loved them. He laid down His life for His friends: they were such (not He their friend - that He is Friend to sinners; but they are His friends) - that they might love one another. The world would hate them, as it had Him. Next, the Comforter would come, and testify of Him. As glorified, *The Father* would send Him; and they would testify of Christ as having been with Him.

Note that in chapter 14 the Father sends the Comforter. He brings to their remembrance that all He had said to them. Thus their witness was made good. But He would also reveal His heavenly glory, sending the Spirit from the Father.

**Chapter 16** gives the Comforter, as present down here and His work in the world and in the church, in contrast with the disciples' own state in a hostile world and with blinded Judaism. The disciples, absorbed with their loss, did not look to what God was bringing about; yet the Comforter's presence was worth His leaving. He would demonstrate to the world sin, righteousness, and judgment:

- Sin in rejecting Christ; for His presence proved the rejected one, gone to the Father.
- Righteousness, as He was deservedly God's righteousness, and the world (disciples and all), who had rejected Him, would never see Him again. The breach was absolute.
- Judgement: the world was convinced of judgment, because its prince, who had led it against Christ, was judged. That was the proof of Christ's power over him and his wickedness. Satan's position was a judged one already.

The Comforter would guide the disciples into all the truth. He would

show them things to come - Christ's things, all the Father had. However soon He would see them again (that is, after His resurrection), and they would enter into the consciousness of their relationship with the Father. As yet they would be scattered, and He would be left alone; but He had the Father with Him. They might be of good cheer because He had overcome the world.

In **chapter 17** Christ addresses the Father before He departs.

Verses 1-5: He lays the ground of all He has to ask. Having finished the work, He is to be glorified as Son. He establishes the glorious relationship, and our title to enter into it. He has power over all flesh, and gives eternal life to those saints that the Father had given Him. The knowledge of the Father, and of Him as sent, is eternal life.

Verses 6-8 put the disciples in their position. He manifested the Father's name to them: so the relationship would be founded. They knew Him as having all things from the Father, not Messiah's Jewish glory from Jehovah. All that the Father had communicated to Him in His position, He had given to them, so that they might enjoy it fully as well as having it.

In verses 9-13 He prays the disciples - those who had been given Him by the Father. He does not pray for the world. They are the Father's (*all is mutually possessed*), and He, Christ, is glorified *in* them. The object is that they might have His joy complete in them.

In verses 14-19 they are put into the place of His testimony. The word (not words) was in connection with the place of relationship: not of the world. Christ was not of the world: they were not to be taken out of it, but kept from evil. They were to be morally set apart to the Father by the truth, the Father's word. They are sent by Christ into the world as He had been sent by the Father. And He set Himself apart to the Father as the heavenly Man. The Holy Spirit might set them apart. It was Christ as well as truth, but still truth.

In verses 20, 21, He prays that those that believe through their word should be one in the Father and Son: that the world may *believe*.

In verses 22, 23, He has given them the glory, in order that they might

be one in the *display* of that glory, and that the world may know it.

In verses 24-26 He would have them where He is: He who was loved before the world was. They are loved as He was. He had and would declare the Father's name, that they might enjoy it, He being in them.

**Chapter 18:** We have to remark the character both of Gethsemane and the cross. It is the Son of God above the temptation, seen out of the suffering. There is no "*if it be possible let the cup pass*", no "*why hast thou forsaken me?*" Those who had been sent to take Him go backward and fall to the ground. He puts Himself forward that the disciples might escape untouched.

In **chapter 19**, He heals in the garden, but Peter denies Him. In calm superiority, He answers the chief priests and Pilate, who witnessed that He was truth. Yet He submits to him as to power given from above, but Pilate leaves it to the priests to settle the matter. The Jews deny having any king but Caesar. The Jews are treated with slight, as everywhere in this Gospel.

On the cross, knowing that one scripture had yet to be fulfilled, He commends His mother to the beloved disciple, and charges him to be to her as a son. He then gives up His spirit. Of Him not a bone is broken, but He is with the rich in His death.

In **Chapter 20** we have a picture of the whole time, from the remnant, through the church period and on to the converted remnant when they see the Lord. Mary Magdalene, who represents the remnant, called as a sheep by her name, is attached personally to the Lord. Then the disciples are now called brethren, in the same relationship to God and the Father as Himself. They are gathered and are told '*Peace be unto you*' (v.19). They receive the Holy Spirit, and are sent by Christ for remission of sins. Lastly the remnant (Thomas), who did not believe at first, does on seeing. But they who have believed without seeing, are especially blessed. Twice therefore, He had shown Himself.

In **Chapter 21** we have the great gathering of the millennial time: the net does not break at all. Christ had some fish on shore already; these had been brought in from the great waters. Peter, restored, has to care for Christ's sheep, especially the Jewish flock. Thus we have



the Peter's ministry to the Jewish church. John is left to watch in his ministry over the saints and witness of God till Christ comes. This carries us on to the Apocalypse. John's epistles and the Revelation refer to Christ's *appearing*. Paul's ministry comes in between, and speaks of the hidden mystery, the church and the rapture, before the appearing.

Draft

## The Acts

This book follows on from the close of Luke. We find the disciples acting in the intelligence of the scriptures, though not yet having been given the power of the Holy Spirit. The Acts of the Apostles embraces the revelation of the gift of the Holy Spirit and His workings: first, at Jerusalem, where He is rejected by Israel; next, in His free operation outside Israel; and, lastly, in Paul, connected with the revelation of the church among the Gentiles at large, closing with his being delivered by the Jews to the Gentiles and his being sent a prisoner to Rome.

The coming of the Holy Spirit, overleaps Babel in grace by the gift of tongues: the first sign of His presence. We see the moral effects of His presence in devotedness and unity, and, forming the assembly, the remnant in Israel are added to it. "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." But He still proposes to Israel the return of Christ (founded on Christ's intercession on the cross) upon their repentance; while declaring that the heavens must receive Him till the times when all that the prophets had said should be established. But Israel rejects His testimony. Christ is exalted and the Holy Spirit comes down. The disciples pursue their testimony in patience in spite of Israel's opposition, and are confirmed in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is manifested in power, as God's presence in the assembly on earth, searching the hearts of men. He ministers to unity and order even in temporal things, acting now in liberty according to faith and faithfulness in instruments of His own choice.

This free action of the Holy Spirit calls out the final judgment of Israel, on every principle of relationship of God with man, but their conduct is characterised throughout by resistance to the Holy Spirit. This is accompanied by the opening of heaven to Stephen, who was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave the testimony that they now resisted. His thorough likeness to Christ, through seeing Him in glory, is beautifully brought out; his death on the earth, and his being received into heaven. The making good church blessings in connection with Israel plainly becomes impossible. Here it is that Saul, the enemy, first comes in.

And now, before turning to any more positive facts, you get the free action of the Holy Spirit extending the gospel outside Jerusalem, consequent on persecution. Next, we find Saul, the apostle of enmity

against Christ, broken and brought down by Christ, revealed in supreme heavenly glory, but identifying all Christians with Himself, as being Himself, "why persecutest thou me?"

Peter's testimony to Christ has been that the Messiah, the Prince of life, whom they had rejected, had been exalted by God. Paul immediately preached that He is the Son of God. Peter never *preached* Him as Son of God. Paul's preaching consequently embraces heavenly glory and the unity of the saints with Christ.

But Saul, while owned of the disciples, is laid aside for a time. Peter's ministry continues; and the first Gentile is added to the church, whilst maintaining its constituted unity. The previous free action of the Holy Spirit outside Jerusalem at Samaria had been connected with it by Peter and John going down, and the disciples' receiving the Holy Spirit by the laying on of their hands.

We now find the same free action of the Holy Spirit going to mere Gentiles in the great Grecian capital, Antioch. The connection with Jerusalem is still kept up by the apostles sending Barnabas there. He goes and fetches Saul. We have then the testimony through prophets (another sign of the Holy Spirit), this same connection being maintained in another way, The prophets come from Jerusalem, and in result they of Antioch send help to those in Judea. We have then the proof of the service of angels to the church. This closes this part of the Acts.

We now have Paul's ministry. The Holy Spirit now calls, separating Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had called them, and they are sent forth by the Holy Spirit. It is a new kind of apostle. The first thing we find is a figure of the total blinding of the Jews who resist the Holy Spirit, and the eyes of Gentiles opened to believe. Notwithstanding this, Paul (for he is now called Paul) according to the Lord's mind always goes first to the Jews, and afterwards to the Greeks. John Mark leaves them. After having preached round, they choose elders for the churches. It is only among the Gentiles that we read of this. He then returns to Antioch, and there we find what the result of the laying on of their hands had been. They had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they had now fulfilled. "And there they abode long time with the disciples."

The church having now been freely established on heavenly principles

outside Jerusalem, Satan seeks to introduce confusion by bringing in the law. ; God, to maintain unity, causes the matter to be referred to Jerusalem, so that the apostles there, and the church, should themselves declare the Gentiles free. The points to which they were subjected were not introduced by the law, but expressed the title of God in Himself and to all life, and the maintenance of the original purity in which God had originally constituted man upon earth. I see authority here within the church in the apostles. "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit *and to us,*" with perfect liberty of ministry.

They dismiss Judas and Silas; and then we get another thing: Paul gathers fellow-labourers round himself: first Silas, then Timothy, whom he circumcises. This was completely illegal. He never rose more above the law than here. Now, we get the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit in the carrying out of his ministry; but he had to be guided by divine intimations. Then we have Paul pursuing his ministry - kept of God everywhere - the very demons forced to own him - and as competent as the other apostles to confer the Holy Spirit: free ministry, under the guidance of God's Spirit, still going on.

As Paul, returns to Jerusalem, he intimates that it was the close of his ministry in those parts to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus. He predicted the efforts of Satan, and calling upon them to watch and labour with the same earnestness and energy as had marked his own labours amongst them. He expected the elders to maintain themselves. He now returns to Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit warning him, and the disciples telling him by the Spirit, not to go up. On the suggestion of the elders at Jerusalem, he accommodates himself to Jewish ceremonies, the believers at Jerusalem being all zealous of the law. This brings him into captivity; but the effect of the captivity is to bring him into the place of testimony before the Jews, who refuse grace to the Gentiles, and then before Lysias, Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and Nero. But he is a prisoner all the time, and as such he worked at Rome. This closes the testimony to the Jews; and thus the history of the dissemination of the gospel in apostolic times.

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- See [A Brief Outline of the Books of the Bible](#) for the original

Draft

# The Epistles

## Romans

This epistle unfolds the gospel of God as the testimony of the righteousness of God. It testifies of God's wrath from heaven, and begins with the depravity of the Gentiles, the hypocrisy of moralisers, and the guilt of the Jews. It concludes that all are under sin, and that our guilt is met by the blood of Christ through faith. This proves at the same time the righteousness of God in bearing with the sins of the past saints, and lays the present foundation of divine righteousness for the future.

From chapter 4 the apostle connects faith with the resurrection, Christ having been delivered for our offences. In chapter 5 he applies this to justification and peace in the assurance of God's love, and traces all up to Adam on one side, and to Christ as head on the other, the law only coming in by the bye. In chapter 6 he applies it to a godly life, and in chapter 7 to the law. He unfolds in chapter 8 the full life and liberty the Christian obtains through the presence of the Holy Spirit. God secures all by what He is for us, all this being made good to us through Christ. And nothing shall be able to separate us from it. There are three parts in chapter 8:

1. The Spirit as life, going on to the resurrection of the body (v. 1-11);
2. The Holy Spirit as a separate Person, dwelling in us for joy, and sympathy with us in infirmities (v. 12-27);
3. God for us - life, God in us, and God for us (v. 28 to the end).

Note that except just for bringing in Christ's intercession, you never get His ascension in Romans. Hence we do not have the unity of the body, which is only alluded in ch. 12 as to in its practical effects, but we have the relationship of the individual with God on the ground of grace reigning through righteousness - God's righteousness being very definitely brought out in contrast with man's, man having the law for his rule, convicting him of transgression, lust, and his powerlessness to do good, despite willing otherwise.

From chapters 9 to 11, Paul reconciles special promises to the Jews

with the no-difference doctrine of divine righteousness. In chapter 9, while professing his own love to the Jews, he recognises all their privileges and the absolute sovereignty of God. This was proved in their own history by the exclusion of Ishmael and Esau, despite their being sons of Abraham and Isaac. It was only the sovereign mercy of God which had spared them at Sinai: likewise it was this sovereign mercy in God's call of Gentiles as well as Jews, confirmed by quotations from Hosea. He then shows that the rejection of the Jews was foretold by prophets - that it is founded on a pretension to human righteousness. In chapter 10, he contrasts the righteousness of the law with that of faith, showing the title of the Gentiles to the latter. The call involved preaching to them, Jews having rebelled, convicted, by their own scriptures.

In chapter 11, Paul raises the question, Has Israel as a people, finally and definitely, been rejected? No. He gives three proofs

1. In his own person.
2. The declaration that the Gentiles will be called would provoke them (Israel) to jealousy, and therefore that they would not be finally rejected.
3. The positive declaration of scripture that the Redeemer would come to Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

In connection with this, he puts the Gentiles, introduced on the principle of faith, upon their own responsibility, showing them that if they did not continue in God's goodness, they would also be cut off from the tree of promise on the earth, as so many of the Jews then were. God could graft the Jews in again, this being the testimony to the wisdom of God. *God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.* (V.32)

In the subsequent part we get exhortations. Only that in chapter 15 Paul resumes the doctrine. Jesus Christ was "a minister of the circumcision for the *truth* of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his *mercy*." (v. 8-9)

In chapter 16:26 substitute "prophetic scriptures" for "scriptures of the prophets."

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# 1 Corinthians

In first Corinthians, we have the internal responsible ordering of the church by the guidance and power of the Spirit of God. Paul acts with it, asserting his own authority in case of need. He begins by owning the power of the Spirit amongst them in gift, and recognises the grace that would keep them to the end. In chaps. 1 and 2, he presses the power of that Spirit in contrast with the wisdom of the flesh, asserting that we, as believers, have the Spirit to search what the eye has not seen nor the ear heard. These things are *revealed by* the Spirit to whomsoever God pleases, *communicated by* the Spirit, and *received* through the Spirit. We thus have revelation, inspired communication, and reception. Also an important thing is that we have the mind of Christ.

Having shown that he had rightly laid the foundation, in chap. 3, the apostle puts the building of God's building on the responsibility of those who carry it on. He defends his own ministry and authority (chap. 4), and then faces the matter of purity and their conduct, insisting on their exercising discipline on the wicked man. He also covers going to law, marriage, and eating things offered to idols (chaps. 5-8). He again defends his own ministry, and calls their attention to the fact that they may be partakers of sacraments and be lost after all. In connection with the Lord's supper, he presses the point of not mixing themselves up with idolatry (chaps. 9, 10). Then, in chapter 11, he treats of comeliness in spiritual service, praying or prophesying, Christ being the Head of all men, and men subordinate. From verse 17, we have order in the assembly, especially at the Lord's supper. He contrasts God's discipline with condemnation.

The subject of spiritual manifestation follows: the place that gifts hold, the unity of the body, and individual membership of it (chap. 12). Note that gifts are of *the Spirit*; administration by them is under *the Lord*; the operations are of *God*. He shows the more excellent way - love is better than the best gifts, (chap. 13). In chapter 14, he returns to the gifts, and shows that those who have gifts and understanding are subject to one another. So all are edified. Then in chap. 15 we have resurrection, Christ's glory, and our place in it. Lastly, chap. 16, he refers to the collection for the saints. At the close we get, in the diverse salutations, the abiding liberty of individual ministry - the principle of some giving themselves up to the Lord's service among the

saints, and that all such are to be respected and submitted to.

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## 2 Corinthians

Paul had received news from Titus that his first epistle had its effect. He had just been in danger of his life, and, now speaking freely to the Corinthians, he opens up his heart at about it, and explains why he did not come to them on his way to Macedonia. In the first five chapters he explains the power of life in Christ, connecting His work, so as to bring in the righteousness of God. He contrasts it with law in chapter 3, showing its supremacy over death in every way. In chapter 4, he shows that the practical power of life may be in earthen vessels and that this power of God. The vessel is held to be dead under the cross. Hence only eternal things are looked at; and we do not know Christ after the flesh. The Lord helps His own. Chapter 5 gives us deliverance from judgment as an occasion of fear, while it urges by the love of Christ to deal with men's souls. We have the ministry of reconciliation, and are to be ambassadors for Christ, saying, "Be reconciled to God."

In chapter 6, he urges entire separation from the world in order to have a relationship with the Father. He presses their perfecting holiness in the fear of God, while recognising their integrity and their repentance, the news of which had comforted his spirit (chap. 7). He next enlarges upon the collection for the saints (chaps. 8, 9), and is then, against his will, forced to legitimise his ministry by speaking of himself (chaps. 10, 11). He closes that part by reference to his being caught up to the third heaven. His strength, though, did not flow directly from that, but from the power of Christ working in his weakness. He was a little uneasy lest not all should be right, and he be forced to be what they might not like (chap. 12). Lastly, in chapter 13, he appeals to their own certainty of their being Christians as proof of Christ's speaking by him.

# Galatians

Galatians contrasts law with God's promises, grace, and the Holy Spirit. It does not refer so much to righteousness, but shows that the law came between the promise and Christ. The law could not annul the promise: - it went only to Christ, by faith. He shows the independence of his ministry, stating that he was dead to the law which brought the curse - dead by the law, crucified with Christ, so that, as living, Christ lived in him, and he lived by the faith of the Son of God (chaps. 1, 2).

In chapter 3:20 the point is, that the fulfilment of an absolute promise depends only on the faithfulness of one. The law requires a mediator. Under Moses, two parties were implied, but God is only one. Hence, blessing under the law depends on the faithfulness of another as well as of God, and therefore, apart from Christ, all fails. The promise was confirmed before God to Christ. Christ came after the failure, and we rest on the work of the Mediator, and not on the work of a second party. The law was added to produce transgression, not sin.

Those who were under the law were delivered by Christ's taking its curse; so that the blessing flows freely, and that they may receive the promise of the Spirit.

In Galatians, death is applied to the law, the flesh, and the world. In chapter 6 we find that the government of God applies to all men, and brings its attendant consequences.

# Ephesians

In Ephesians we have the relationships of the saints with God the Father, and with the ascended Christ.

First we have our calling, involving our relationships with God and with the Father. Then we have our acquaintance with all God's plans, everything being headed up in Christ. Hence we know our inheritance, and our place as heirs, the Holy Spirit having been given as earnest till the redemption of the inheritance.

In chap.1, Paul prays to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ (Christ being looked at as man), that the saints might know what God's calling and inheritance is, and that we might appreciate the power that works in us. This power was shown in Christ, when God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand, setting Him over all things, and making the church His body and completeness.

Then, in sovereign grace, we are quickened, raised, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ. This shows the exceeding riches of His kindness to us. The Gentiles were afar off; the Jews were dispensationally near, all forming one new man in Christ - the dwelling-place of God on earth by the Spirit. Thus we have the assembly connected both with Christ as His body on high, and as God's dwelling-place on earth by His Spirit.

The mystery is now introduced for the first time. It is a witness of the all-various wisdom of God in heavenly places. The apostle then prays to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that we may realise the full blessedness of this, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. Being rooted and grounded in love, we are to be able to comprehend the infinitely wide extent of the character of God's glory, and to know the love of Christ. So we can at the centre of it all according to the fullness of God Himself. With this he ascribes glory to God in the church in all ages, implying the distinct, continuous existence of the assembly.

Note that in chapter 3:15 read "every family," instead of "the whole family." (As in [Darby version](#)) In verse 18, the breadth, and depth, and length, and height is not "of the love." The whole of chapter 3 is

parenthetic, and the first words of chapter 4 connect themselves with the beginning of chapter 3.

At the start of chapter 4 the apostle unfolds, in connection with the headship of Christ, the various unities into which we are brought. There are three unities: a real one, one of profession, and a universal one in God. First, one body, one Spirit and one hope. Secondly, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Thirdly, one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in us all. We are to walk in lowliness, so as to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Then we have the gifts - instruments of building and edification. The gifts are from the ascended Man, who overcame Satan and led him captive, so as to gather and perfect the make those who were formerly Satan's captives, the instruments of His own warfare in power. At the same time He who ascended is the One who first descended into the lower parts of the earth, so as to fill all things. The measure to which the saints are to be brought up is that of the stature of the fullness of Christ Himself; the body being fitted together, and supplied by every joint in order for its own building up. We start with the individual. Then we get exhortations connected with the new man being created of God in righteousness and true holiness. It is only the new man which has to do with righteousness and holiness.

We are to be imitators of God, and act as Christ Himself has acted in love - the perfect expression of God - the new man. Furthermore, in this new man we are light in the Lord. The measure of our walk and works is the light itself, of which Christ, if we are awake, is to us the perfect outshining. Hence we are to be wise in the midst of this world. In going through our relative duties, Paul speaks of the relationship of the church to Christ, founded on the working of His love. He first gives Christ's giving Himself for it; next, Christ sanctifies and cleanses it by the word; and, thirdly, He presents it to Himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Two things are to be noted:

1. That, in the analogy with Adam and Eve, Christ stands in the place both of Adam and God.
2. The intimate connection between Christ's present operation and the glory.

He sanctifies and cleanses the church, so that He might present it to Himself. Then, the church, as well as being His wife, is presented as His body. According to the analogy of Eve. Christ is looked at as nourishing and cherishing it, as a man would his own flesh (chap. 5).

Finally, Christians are exhorted to put on the whole armour of God, and in His might enter into combat, entirely dependent on Him (chap. 6).

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## Philippians

In Philippians, sin and the flesh are never mentioned, except to reject righteousness in the flesh. We have Christian experience - superior to everything in this world. Chapter 2 speaks especially of the gracious and obedient character of Christ's descent, His being obedient to death. This is in contrast with the first man.

In chapter 3 we have the energy of divine life, looking to Christ glorified as its object. In every respect Paul is superior to circumstances: his bonds only furthering the gospel. When Christ is preached of contention, he rejoices in it, and it will all turn to his salvation. Salvation, all through this epistle, is the attainment of the ultimate result in glory, and this is the force of the word "Saviour" in chapter 3:20. Life and death are both so blessed that self disappears, because he can have no wish, though in itself dying is far better. He decides his own trial for his life by the perception of what is for the good of the church. To him to live is Christ. Everything else is dross or dung compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; Paul presses on to glory. Though for four years he was chained to a soldier, he knew what it was to rejoice always in the Lord, being careful for nothing (chap. 4).

God's peace keeps his heart, so as to be instructed in all things, whether full or hungry, whether abounding or suffering want. He is able to do all things through Him who strengthens him. He counts on *his* God for a blessing upon the Philippians.



## Colossians

The Colossians seemed not to have held the Head very fast. Paul therefore brings out the Head's personal glory, the Christian's hope being in heaven. The saints are not seen sitting there yet. The life of the new man is brought out especially. Where we have much of the Spirit in Ephesians, He is only mentioned once in Colossians, *'your love in the Spirit.'* ([Ch.1:8](#))

We get the apostle's prayer for them: to walk worthy of the Lord Himself and according to His power. Now they are viewed as meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. We get the double headship of Christ over creation and the body, along with His divine glory. In - particular:-

1. He is the image of the invisible God
2. All things consist by Him
3. All the fulness is pleased to dwell in Him

You then get the double reconciliation: the saints reconciled already and of the creation in a day to come. You also get the double ministry of Paul: the gospel to every creature under heaven, and the gospel to the church. The hitherto hidden mystery is made good among the Gentiles by Christ, the hope of glory, dwelling in them.

In chapter 2 the Colossians are warned against philosophy and the spirit of ordinances, separating them from the Head. All the fullness of the godhead dwells in Him, and the saints are complete in Him. Hostile powers are overcome by Him: they (believers) are dead and risen, so as not to be subject to fleshly ordinances. Their liberty is founded on their being dead in Christ: the whole of Christian life is founded being risen with Christ, who is our life, as we are entirely associated with Him in this condition. Christ is all, and in all (chap. 3); and whatever we do, we are to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus.

# 1 Thessalonians

In 1 Thessalonians we get the subject of the Lord's coming so that saints might be blessed. In the second epistle, we get the judgment of unbelievers.

In ch. 1, the saints are associated with the Father (who had been revealed in the gospel), the one true God, in contrast with the false gods they had been used to. They are converted, and in faith are a witness in all the world that they now served the living and true God, and were waiting for His Son from heaven. As grace had been received by the Gentiles, the former people of the true God (the Jews) are looked at as in hostility to the gospel.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, the coming of the Lord Jesus is connected with the apostle's joy and crown - in the saints who had been blessed. In chapter 3, we have holiness before the Father, at the coming of the Lord Jesus with all His saints.

Chapter 4 gives the full explanation of the rapture of the church to meet Christ at His coming. Verses 15-18 are to be taken as a parenthesis, verse 14 being carried on to chapter 5:1. Here the character of Christ's coming to the saints is contrasted with His coming to the world. Then, with a number of short exhortations, God is looked to, to keep the saints till Christ comes.

# 2 Thessalonians

In 2 Thes 1, we have the saints set right from the confusion they had got into. They had thought that, because they were subjected to dreadful persecutions, they were already in the day of the Lord. In that day *they* would be at rest, but *the wicked* would be troubled.

In chapter 2, the apostle gives an outline of Christ's coming at the rapture when they would be gathered together to Him, This provided the evidence that the day could not be present. He then shows what the development of wickedness on the earth would be before that day came. In the last chapter he asks for their prayers, and gives them various exhortations.

Their state was very lively in the first epistle. In 1 Thes 1:3, (*Your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*) we see the full character of Christian state and service.

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# 1 Timothy

The epistles to Timothy and Titus are not addressed to churches, nor were they to be communicated to the churches as such. Of course the church of God has them, guiding us as to the individual conduct which is an unceasing obligation for Christians.

Timothy had been charged insist on sound doctrine. However he has to draw attention as to the right order in the church. The first letter gives us the order of the church under normal conditions; 2 Timothy, shows us the path of faith when things are abnormal - in disorder.

You have in [1 Timothy 3:15](#) the principle of Timothy's conduct.

# 2 Timothy

In 2 Timothy Paul was at the close of his career, and though the church had fallen into disorder, there is no other epistle in which he insists so much on the unflinching courage and energy of the saints. He calls upon them to endure the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. We do not have the outward church connected with the body of Christ, but simply individual piety and devotedness wherever he could find it.

[Chapter 2:18-22](#) is indicative of the tone of the instruction as regards the state of the church. The faith of some had been overthrown, so he refers first to the sure foundation of God, the Lord knowing them that are His. Whoever names the name of the Lord is to depart from iniquity. That is individual responsibility. Then he takes the great house as the analogy of the church publicly, showing that in such there are vessels to dishonour, and to be a vessel to honour, a man has to purge himself from these. Then he is to follow righteousness, etc., with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. This distinguishes those who are really saints. Paul associates himself with them, and warns of perilous times in the last days - a form of godliness denying the power. He insists, besides his personal authority, upon the known scriptures as a child might read them, and asserts that they are sufficient to make us wise unto salvation,

through faith in Christ Jesus. They have been given by inspiration of God, and are adequate to make the man of God perfect [or complete, fit], thoroughly prepared for undertaking all good works.

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## Titus

Titus had been commissioned to set in order things which were wanting in the assembly, and ordain elders.. We get a full statement of what may be called the Christian scheme in chapter 2:11-14 - directions and sound doctrine. Chapter 3 gives us exhortations as to patience with all, through the sense of grace bestowed on ourselves.

In the epistles to Timothy and Titus, God has specially the title and character of God the Saviour, with its importance to all men.

## Philemon

Grace enters into the Christian's conduct, and does not merely rest on doctrine. Leaving the recognised authorities of the world where they are, this letter leads the individual Christian to act in grace in the relationships into which he was found.

# Hebrews

Hebrews is founded on the person of Christ in His divine and human natures. (I am not sure whether JND would have used this expression later). Human sympathies are exercised through Christ's priesthood on high, connecting the saints on earth with heaven. Although the saints are not seen as constituting the body united with Christ, all ancient Judaism is set aside. They are seen as answering to a present heavenly call, laying the ground for the introduction of Israel by the new covenant. With the use of comparisons and analogies, Christianity is contrasted with what had gone before.

In chapter 1 we get the authority of the communicated word as to the divinity of Christ. This is continued in from ch. 3:1 to 4:13, where we have Christ's authority as Son over His house (in contrast to Moses), and the promise of rest to the people of God. Chapter 2 lays the foundation of future dominion and present priesthood in the human nature of Christ. This is continued from chapter 4:14, the glory of it being expounded in chapter 5 as to the Person and office of Christ. It is impossible to return to the elements of Judaism. If heavenly Christian things are departed from, things cannot be brought back by another power. God encourages the heirs of promise by word and oath, declaring the immutability of His counsel, and strengthens them to look within the veil, Christ having entered as forerunner, a high priest after the order of Melchisedec (chapter 6).

Chapter 7: The Melchisedec priesthood sets aside of the whole system of the law, the priesthood itself being changed from that of dying men to that of the living Son. That priesthood suits us, *for such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens* (v. 26).

In chapter 8, because the High Priest is set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, offerings are needed. However, before touching on the offerings, we have a change of the covenant on which this ministry is founded, for Christ is the mediator of it. Now, for a better and heavenly tabernacle, we must have better sacrifices.

Chapter 9: In the tabernacle itself there was a difference. The veil was

unrent in the Jewish tabernacle; now the veil is rent. The Holy Spirit showed that, as long as that first tabernacle had any place, the way into the holiest could not be open. Note that in ch. 9:16-17, the Greek word διαθήκη (*diathéké*) has the sense of *testament*; elsewhere it should be *covenant*. The blood of Christ purges the conscience, not merely sins, and cleanses the whole scene of the creature's relationship with God. The next contrast is that He had not to offer Himself often in order to enter into the heavenly tabernacle, otherwise He would have to have suffered often. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The apostle contrasts the lot of man, subject to death and judgment, with Christ, who once offered Himself to bear the sins of many, and is now coming to those who look for Him for salvation, without any further question of sin.

The writer then discusses in chapter 10 the whole bearing of this sacrifice, alleging that a person once cleansed by it has no more conscience of sins; whereas in the repeated sacrifices, there was a continual remembrance of sins. He then unfolds the origin of this sacrifice in God's preparing Christ a body. He offers Himself to accomplish God's will. He does so willingly, and now sits for ever at the right hand of God. He does not stand like the old high priests who had to offer repeated sacrifices. By His one offering He has for ever perfected (i.e. made fit) those who are sanctified by it. The Holy Spirit bears divine testimony to this, declaring, *'Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more'* (ch. 8:12). Thus we have the good will of God, the work of Christ, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, to give us the divine security of unalterable peace. After that, he exhorts them to enter into the holiest, in the full assurance of faith through the new living way. The veil that had been rent, but then the writer warns them that if they abandoned one sacrifice be there would be no other. They are told to be patient: Christ would soon come. Meanwhile they must live by faith.

To this end, the writer shows, in chapter 11, that all the saints who were highly esteemed amongst them had obtained their good report by faith. He lays down four great principles:

1. creation, known by faith,
2. sacrifice, offered to obtain righteousness by faith,
3. walking with God in the power of life by faith, and
4. acting on the prophecy of coming events by faith.



We then get two great aspects of our trust in God: the patient expectancy of faith, and the active energy of faith. All those whose faith is described in detail are persons who lived before Israel went into the land. He then goes through a list of sufferings endured by the saints in faith, showing that the world was not worthy of them. They died, not having received the promises, God having reserved a better thing for us.

Chapters 12 and 13 introduce Christ as the last great Witness. He overcame, and now, having obtained the glory, sits at the right hand of God. He shows them that suffering has the character of parental discipline: they are under grace, not law and terror. In doing this, he gives them the whole millennial result in heaven and earth - that is what they have come to in faith. Everything here will be shaken, but they are to leave the Jewish camp (religion and the world), and go to Jesus, He being the sin-offering. They must be either in heaven where the blood is, or outside the camp, or gate, where the sin-offering was burnt. He closes with a few exhortations.

## James

In James you get the perfect law of liberty applied to the Christian's path. Our wills should not act; we are to be patient with confidence in God, to acquire wisdom and strength. If there is evil, it comes from man - if good, from the unchangeable God, who of His own will begat us by the word of truth (chap. 1).

James then introduces sweeping denunciations against riches and the spirit of the world. He speaks of three laws -

1. the law of God, as to which, if we offend in one point, we are guilty of all
2. the royal law, "love your neighbour as yourself"
3. the law of liberty, by which our conduct is to be judged, and where the will of God and the our own nature run together

Mere faith of the head is treated as worthless; the test of a man's living faith, is in his works. But the works are only viewed as *works of faith*. Any other works are bad works (chap. 2).

We do not get redemption in James; but the apostle insists on self-subjection, especially as regards the tongue: hence we are warned against being many teachers. We are to display the true character of heavenly wisdom, and the fruits of righteousness are sown in peace.

The epistle closes with a strong exhibition of the power of the prayer of faith. The letter is addressed to the twelve tribes; but faith in Christ, and the existence of the assembly, are distinctly recognised, even though the synagogue is also still in existence.

# 1 Peter

The Epistles of Peter, while referring to redemption, concentrate especially to the government of God.

- In 1 Peter His government is in favour of the saints.
- In 2 Peter we have the judgment of the wicked.

The saints are not seen as risen with Christ, but begotten again to a living hope by His resurrection. They pursue their pilgrimage as strangers, towards an incorruptible inheritance, reserved in heaven for them. They are kept by the power of God through faith, waiting for the appearing of Christ for full deliverance, the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls.

He marks out the progress of this revelation:

1. the prophets testifying beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glories following,
2. the same things reported in the gospel preached by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,
3. patience till the revelation of Jesus Christ brought these things to them.

On this ground they are called on to walk in sobriety, obedience, and holiness, on the double ground, that He who called them is holy, and that they call on the Father, who judges without respect of persons every man's work. But this is founded on redemption by the blood of Christ, and being born again of the incorruptible seed of the word. They believe in God through Christ, whom He had raised from the dead, and to whom He had given glory, all flesh being as grass, but the word of the Lord endures for ever.

The persons addressed are the scattered believing remnant of Israel in various countries of Asia Minor. Hence he distinguishes them as living stones, owned of God, built on the precious living Stone, a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to disobedient Israel. He then applies [Exodus 19:6](#) and [Hosea 2:23](#), and exhorts them to walk blameless in the midst of the Gentiles who spake against them. This would force

them to glorify God in the day of their visitation. He then exhorts them to suffer patiently, seeing that, like Christ, it was the Christian's place to do good, suffer for it patiently. This leads him to refer again to Christ bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, referring to *Isaiah 53*.

Then in the remainder of chap. 2 and in chap. 3 there are exhortations on details of conduct. He refers to the government of God securing us in peacefulness: if the saints suffered for righteousness' sake they were happy, beautifully adding that Christ had suffered once for sins, and that this ought to suffice. They ought to suffer for righteousness, if they suffered at all. He then refers to His being put to death in the flesh. They were to arm themselves with the same mind, for in death sin had been done away with. He then reminds them that with God, they have ability for all things, spiritual or temporal. He encourages them in suffering reproach for Christ's sake, an advance on suffering for righteousness' sake. This is the only place where they are called Christians. They are to rejoice in the reproach as partakers of Christ's sufferings, with the consciousness that the time had come for judgment to begin at the house of God.

We then get exhortations to elders and to the younger, and to humbleness under God's hand, sobriety and diligence, and resistance to Satan. The apostle finally commends them to the God of all grace.

## 2 Peter

In this second Epistle, which he writes to the same persons who had received, not the Messiah in glory, but the same precious faith as the apostle had received through God's righteousness. He shows that in the midst of evil, God's divine power had given everything necessary to life and godliness, the saints knowing God having been called by glory and virtue. He then urges them to be diligent in everything that would give them an abundant entrance into the kingdom. Without this they would be of impaired vision as Christians. He tells them that he must shortly put off this tabernacle; and writes that they might maintain the testimony after he had gone. He showed them that the mount of transfiguration had confirmed the prophetic testimony of the kingdom

they were waiting for, asserting that all scripture tended to one common purpose, the fruit of one Spirit, and not of the will of man.

Peter then warns them about false teachers, who deny the authority of Christ, though many would follow them. He names them as wicked, but shows how God can deliver the righteous, and hold the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished. He states their character, especially in the working of the will of man in immorality and insubordination; adding to this another characteristic - their scoffing at the doctrine of the Lord's return. He next refers to the deluge as a judgment already executed, and the day of the Lord, as a judgment by fire to come. All that nature trusted in would disappear. This urges the saints to greater holiness.

# 1 John

John shows us the divine life and its characteristics, and proves it to be in the person of Christ. He first speaks about this life as he had known it in Christ when He was here on earth. He then shows it as the means of communion with the Father and the Son, so that our joy may be full.

But He who was, and is this life in Himself, has given us the absolute revelation of God as light. We are therefore placed here to walk in the light, as God is in the light, the blood of Christ cleansing us that we may do so. Thus we have fellowship together.

But chapter 1 shows the sin in ourselves. We have the intercession or advocacy of Christ with the Father, founded on His being the righteous One. His is the propitiation for our sin: this is the means of our being restored to communion in the light, after we have failed through weakness, in our walk down here.

John next presents in ch. 2, obedience to Christ's commandments, practical righteousness and love of the brethren. These prove our the possession of this life. Before this though, he gives the ground of writing to the saints: that all are forgiven, and that babes in Christ have the Spirit of adoption.

He divides Christians into three classes - fathers, young men, and little children. This classification he repeats twice:

- The fathers have but one mark; they know Him who is from the beginning.
- The young men are strong, are in conflict, have overcome the wicked one, the word of God abiding in them. They are warned not to love the world.
- The little children, while knowing the Father, are warned as to deceivers; but they are competent, as having the Holy Spirit, and hence they are responsible to judge the spirits.

In chapter 3, he shows them that as sons, they have the same name as Christ. They know that they will be like Him when He appears, so they purify themselves as He is pure. The contrast of the new nature and sin is brought out distinctly, sin being lawlessness (not the transgression of the law).

This new nature is evidenced in their practical righteousness and love for the brethren. Moreover, the obedient person dwells in God, and God in him. The proof of God's dwelling in us is, that He has given us the Holy Spirit.

He then gives directions to distinguish the Holy Spirit from evil spirits, by referring in chapter 4 to our owning Christ as come in the flesh. John had introduced the Holy Spirit in connection with the new nature. He now shows that this new nature involves partaking in the divine nature, which is love. Hence, he that loves is born of God and knows God, for God is love. This love is displayed in that He first loved us; and if this is true, we love the brethren. God has commanded us to do that.

The term 'brethren' includes all that are born of God but the truth of this love to the brethren is tested by love to God, which is proved by keeping His commandments. To this end faith overcomes the world.

Eternal life is given to us. This life to is in the Son, so that he that has the Son has life, and he who has not the Son has not life. The life is in Christ, not in the first Adam or his children. We therefore have a threefold witness - the Spirit, the water, and the blood: the water and the blood coming out of Christ's side in death, and the Holy Spirit given consequent on His ascension. This gives us confidence for asking everything according to God's will. So we can pray for a brother who has failed, provided it is not a sin to death.

The new nature that we have received is incapable of sin: he who has it keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. Finally, an absolute distinction is made between Christians and the world. "*We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness.*" (Ch. 5:19). Further, we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, that is, in His Son Jesus Christ, who is the true God and eternal life.

## 2 John

Written to a faithful lady, John insists upon love being governed by the truth. Whoever does not abide in the doctrine of Christ has not God.

Also, one who brings a doctrine denying Him is not to be greeted nor invited into the house.

### 3 John

Whereas in 2 John it is a question of refusing entry to one not bringing the doctrine of Christ, in 3 John the apostle urges the reception of those who go about preaching the truth. John denounces one who hindered the functioning of the local assembly, but he commends Gaius, and as a fellow-helper of the truth itself.

He supports the doctrine of reward to the workman engaged full-time in the Lord's service. He commends the perseverance of his spiritual children in v. 4.

Notice that v.7 throws light on the word 'ours' in 1 John 2:2 (*He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*)

- Firstly, towards us, by God sending His only-begotten Son, that we might live through Him, and to make propitiation for our sins.
- Secondly, as dwelling in love, we dwell in God, and God in us, He having given us of His Spirit. Thus His love is perfected in us. This is true of every one who really confesses that Jesus is the Son of God.
- Thirdly, the love of God is perfected in us, so as to give us boldness in the day of judgment. Christ is our life, and the Spirit of God dwells in us. As Christ is so are we in this world. We love God because He first loved us.

### Jude

Jude is similar to 2 Peter 2, but is based on a very different principle. Peter speaks of wickedness; Jude, of apostasy - that is leaving the first estate. He traces this in the course of Christian history, from the creeping in of false brethren, to the judgment executed by Christ when He comes again. He declares the objects of Christ's judgment to be the same persons. He notices at the same time distinct characters of evil



in Cain, Balaam and Korah: natural departure from God, ecclesiastical corruption, teaching error for reward; and, lastly, open rebellion. Immorality and insubordination are clearly evident.

The saints are exhorted to build themselves up in their most holy faith. They are to pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, and keep themselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. They are to make a difference between persons who have been dragged in, and those who have been spotted: the latter they are to save with fear. In spite of all the evil, He looks to the saints to be kept from falling. They are to be presented faultless before the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy. God is able to do it.

## The Revelation

The Book of Revelation presents the return of the Holy Spirit's witness to God's relationship with the earth. At first we have the church, as an earthly witness, but then the saints of the heavenly calling are seen only in heaven. It sets the stage for the return of God's First-Begotten to the world. Then we have a prophetic view of God's judgments, the book introducing the King of kings and Lord of lords Himself to execute judgment and to set up the kingdom which shall never be removed. He is accompanied by the heavenly saints.

At the beginning and end, we have the thoughts and feelings of the saints:

- The first refers to the cross, and its bearing on the saints, looking back at their *own* part in that which laid the foundation of Christ's title. This brought judgment on the world.
- At the end we have the saints' own portion with Christ Himself. They look forward to His glory. Meanwhile they are conscious of it and its present fruit.

Ch. 1 presents God as supreme and eternal. We have the Holy Spirit in His attributes of divine administration, and Christ in His glory as connected with the earth. He is coming. He calls John's attention to His glory on earth, not in service but in judgment. He walks in the midst of the candlesticks, the place of light in the world, judging the state of the churches. We find a divine person, the Son of man having subordinate representative authority in

His hand: the stars and the angels of the churches. These are the things that were seen.

Next we have 'the things that are'. We get:

- Ephesus - departure from first love.
- Smyrna – persecution
- Pergamos - the world its dwelling-place
- Thyatira and Sardis - false teachers seducing the saints; their corruption settled there, and the saints thus to wait for Christ's coming, who is given to them in His own heavenly unseen associations, and the visible kingdom too.
- Philadelphia – a little power
- Laodicea - spued out of His mouth

In the four first churches it is a question of personal fidelity of that church to Christ. Christ is walking amidst the candlesticks. In the last three, the stars are not said to be in His hand; they all refer with warnings or promises to the coming of the Lord.

The vision then switches to heaven. The world's judgment flows from there, and the saints are viewed as enthroned and crowned there. God's throne of judgment is set up in heaven, and the ministers of His government proclaim His glory, while the saints worship.

Ch. 4-5: The Lamb appears; His glory is celebrated. Heaven owns His title to open the book of God's ways, and the angels stand around the inner circle of those connected with the throne (24 elders, 4 living creatures). The elders give their reasons for worship. The Lamb now opens the book.

Ch. 6: The providential history of God's dealings in the Western Roman earth is presented. We see the martyrs who cry for judgment. There is a universal subversion of the subsisting powers, so that men are alarmed as if the day of the Lord were come.

Ch. 7: The remnant of Israel is marked out for preservation; the multitude of the Gentiles to be spared are owned.

Ch. 8: The first four trumpets are the specific judgments on earthly prosperity and the power of the Western Roman Empire.

Ch. 9-11: The next two judgments are on the men of the East. Then we get a parenthesis: the great Western beast. A testimony is given, which comes to a close before the end of the period of the second woe. At last we have the seventh trumpet, which closes the whole scene.

Ch. 12: A new vision of special dealings is now opened, more connected with the religious condition of men. The Jewish people are seen, as heaven sees them, in the counsels and purposes of God. So a Son is to be born, Christ, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron. The whole church is united to Him. But this is taken to heaven and God's throne, out of the way of the dragon. The woman - the Jewish people in the latter day in distress - flees from three and a half years' persecution into the wilderness. There is war in heaven. Satan is cast down, having great rage, knowing that his time is short. His career in heaven is ended. He can no longer accuse the saints on the earth, but he persecutes the Jews. They flee, so he turns to persecute the witnesses amongst them.

Ch. 13: Next, we see the earthly agents: the beast, with seven heads and ten horns, who receives his power from Satan for 1260 days. He blasphemes what is heavenly, and persecutes the saints. Then a second beast, in the prophetic and royal character of a messiah, exercises his power, making the world worship him. He does miracles, and gives breath to the image which he has caused to be made.

Ch. 14: We now have the remnant who suffer like Christ. We also have the testimony, judgments and warnings of God. Finally, we have the judgment of the earth, and the destruction of the wicked by the Son of man.

Ch. 15: Another great sign follows, not necessarily at the same time or immediately after it. It reaches down to the throne of the beast. The saints, who pass through the time of tribulation, are viewed as at rest. The sea of glass is mingled with fire.

Ch. 16: The vials are poured out. They are on the earth, and particularly strike the beast's kingdom, and those who dwell in it. Then all the kings of the earth gather themselves together. The smiting does not correct them, but galls their pride. Finally, the last judgment of God is executed even on Babylon, the beast remaining to be defeated by the Lamb.

Ch. 17-18: We have a description of what the woman is: how she rides the horned beast, corrupting all nations. The Lamb overcomes both of them. Babylon is Rome.

Ch. 19: After Babylon is judged, the marriage of the Lamb takes place. He comes forth out of His heavenly seclusion,

as King of kings and Lord of lords, to be revealed in the earth. As he comes out as the word of God in judgment, the saints, witnessed in righteousness in the fruit of their works, accompany Him. The beast and the false prophet (the second beast), are taken and cast to their final doom, their royal character having disappeared. The rest are slain. This is the judgment of power and war.

Note that the rapture of the church belongs to the church revelation, so it could not come into the Book of Revelation. However, we see the saints in heaven.

Ch. 20: Then Satan is bound, and shut up in the abyss for a thousand years. Sessional judgment follows. All the heavenly saints are on thrones, for this is royal judgment, and judgment is given to them - this is the first resurrection. After that we have the second resurrection, in which the dead are to be judged and condemned.

Ch. 21:1-8: Heaven and earth flee away; death and hades give up all. God is all in all in a new heavens and new earth.

Ch. 21:9-22:5: The Spirit returns to give a description of the heavenly Jerusalem during the millennium (as He had of Babylon and its relationship to the earth).

Ch. 22:6-21: After warnings to those who are in the time of the book, Christ comes forward Himself as the One who had given the revelation. This draws out in the bride, with whom is the Spirit, to express the desire of His coming. Expressed is her position - towards Christ, towards those who hear the word, and towards sinner. John seals the book with his own desires those of the church, *'Amen.*

*Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'*

The re-introduction of God's government into this world in Christ, in this book, and the discovery of the heavenly position of the church, is full of interest and doctrine. Meanwhile judgment of the world and its course, is confided to the church which closes the book both historically and doctrinally, the church herself being above the world.

This closes the canon of scripture.