

The Bible - Its 66 Books in Brief

New Testament

by L M Grant

Foreword

These brief outlines of the 66 Books of the Bible first appeared on the pages of the "Lord Is Near" - a daily Scriptural meditation calendar - which is available through many Christian Bookstores or from the publishers of this book (Believers Bookshelf).

Leslie Grant has, in his usual concise and straightforward style, set forth the highlights of each book of the Bible. Individuals, Bible students and teachers alike, will find these outlines to be very helpful in gaining an overall view of the Scriptures. It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will use these outlines to stimulate all who read them to a fuller and deeper study of God's Holy word.

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Matthew

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:29, 30

Matthew ("Gift of Jehovah"), the first book of the New Testament, is necessarily written from a Jewish point of view, and preserves admirable continuity with the Old Testament. It presents the Lord Jesus Christ as the long - looked • for Messiah of Israel; His genealogy therefore is traced to

David and Abraham. This genealogy is that of Joseph, therefore establishing official title to the throne.

But Matthew is also the only book of Scripture that uses the phrase "the kingdom of heaven." This shows us that, while under law the authority of the kingdom of Jehovah had been committed to the Jews, and Jerusalem therefore had been its headquarters, yet because of Israel's utter failure, God was revoking this, and His kingdom now would have its headquarters in heaven. He had once spoken on earth among the Jews: now He was speaking from heaven. For this reason Matthew often speaks of the kingdom of God as "the kingdom of heaven." The Gospel marks a most striking and complete change in the dispensational ways of God; for the Christ, the true King, has come and has in fact returned to heaven.

Consistently with this, we must expect Matthew to insist upon thorough subjection and obedience to the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus • not to law, but to One higher than law. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." Emphasis therefore is placed upon works, works of faith, of course; because authority (not grace, as in Luke) is Matthew's great subject. How good if such lessons implant themselves deeply in our hearts.

Mark

For also the Son of man did not come to be ministered to, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many.

Mark 10:45

Mark ("a defence") gives a terse, energetic account of the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he portrays Him as the perfect Servant of God. His language is direct and simple, and his description of events is in chronological order, that is, in the order in which they actually happened. None of the other Gospel writers follows this order, but each uses an order that is appropriate to his particular theme. But the lowliness and unwearying service of the Lord Jesus shines out beautifully in this Gospel, as rapidly passing from one scene to another, He meets the need of unnumbered souls, at the perfect time and in perfect manner.

His death, too, is the sacrifice of One perfectly devoted to the will of God, a service to meet the deepest needs of the souls of men.

The sin-offering character of His sacrifice is seen here not simply that He has

borne our sins, but that He has taken the full judgment against sin, the dreadful root of sins, the very principle of all that has opposed God. And He has served God in absolute devotion in this matter, even to the dread necessity of being abandoned by God in those hours of unalleviated agony.

Observe Mark's frequent use of the words "Immediately," "straightway," "forthwith," "anon". In this precious character of Servant the Lord Jesus is not only to be admired for His devotion, but to be followed as an Example by those who are saved by His grace.

Luke

And he said to them, Why are ye troubled? and why are thoughts rising in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see me having.

Luke 24: 38, 39

Luke ("a light") is the only known Gentile employed to write Scripture. Here Christ is presented beautifully as "the Son of Man," every part of the book combining to set forth the reality and perfection of His manhood. Here we have His birth announced and described, His increasing in wisdom and stature, His accessibility as One tenderly interested in the welfare of mankind, His "desire" of eating with His disciples, His forgiving words from the cross, His demonstrating to His disciples the reality of His bodily resurrection, His ascension bodily to heaven.

If authority is seen in Matthew, and service in Mark, it is grace that shines so brilliantly in Luke, grace that comes not only to Israel, but overflows to Gentiles as well. This will be seen strikingly here in the parables and miracles of the Lord Jesus.

Hence too, that grace which delights to bless, and to lift the soul into the presence of God, cannot be satisfied with anything less than the warm, unhindered communion of His saints.

This is involved in the peace-offering character of His sacrifice, which is predominant in Luke. It emphasizes that work as bringing God and man together in peace and concord, God receiving His portion of the food of the offering, the Priest (Christ) receiving His portion also, and the offerers also having their portion to partake of • all as it were eating together.

John

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only•begotten with a Father), full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

John ("Jehovah is gracious giver") is a Gospel unique in its majestic glory. Here the Lord Jesus is manifested as Himself the Creator, the eternal, only •begotten Son of God, sent from the Father to fully reveal His glory. This is much more than authority, service, or grace, but the light and love of the eternal God. He is here the Object of our adoring worship.

The Gospel is not therefore synoptic (that is, providing a general view of the Lord's life and works on earth), as are the other three, but draws special attention to His person and to His words, as witnessed even by His enemies: "Never man spoke thus, as this man speaks" (ch. 7:46).

The miracles and parables here recorded also provide clearest witness to His personal divine glory. It is here that we find those words from His lips, "Before Abraham was, I am" (ch. 8:58). And the seven "I Am's" of John's Gospel are well known.

The calm, noble dignity of the record of His crucifixion surely draws our rapt attention, too; for here is seen the burnt•offering character of His service, the burning speaking of everything ascending as a sweet savor to God •the sacrifice predominantly for God's glory.

The sweet simplicity of the book gives it a wonderful drawing power for the most unintelligent; and yet its more hidden depths of meaning have awakened the unfeigned admiration of the most profound scholars.

Acts

And with great power did the apostles give witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Acts 4:33

The Acts of the Apostles is a history of the way in which divine wisdom ordered events to gradually lead souls out from God's previously established

dispensation of law into the full liberty of the "dispensation of the grace of God.

The power and working of the Holy Spirit is beautifully seen here, as the apostles are used of God for the establishing of Christianity.

The work begins at Jerusalem with the descent of the Holy Spirit in chapter 2, but spreads out; and when Israel as a nation has, by their martyrdom of Stephen (ch. 7) coldly refused this second call of grace (for they had before rejected their blessed Messiah Himself), then the apostle Paul is raised up of God a special messenger to Gentiles, and the grace of God extends to the whole world. Thus the Church of God is formed by the power of the Spirit of God, both Jewish and Gentile believers being baptized into the one body.

Let us notice, too, the great care of our God in this book to preserve a true and vital unity of this work and of the saints in every place.

The reality, the simplicity, the freshness of these early days, the godly maintenance of order and unity without the necessity of human organization and arrangement, gives most blessed instruction for our souls. All this beautifully shows us the sufficiency of Christ as the gathering Center of His people, and the sufficient power of the Spirit of God for every spiritual activity, whether worship, communion, service, or testimony.

Romans

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:24

Romans ("strong ones") gives truth that stands at the foundation of Christianity. Here God is the Sovereign Judge, absolute in righteousness, discovering and exposing the sin of all mankind, allowing no excuse, sparing no evil of whatever degree, so that all are brought in "guilty before God".

Yet in pure righteousness also He offers complete justification from guilt, for this is based on "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus," who Himself is seen as the great Substitute in the bearing of sin's penalty by the sacrifice of Himself. Every true believer in Him is thereby cleared from every charge, and constituted righteous before God.

The significance of the cross is seen, too, in reference to deliverance from the power of indwelling sin. The truth is so presented as to meet the sinner where he is at the outset, and lead him through soul•exercise out of bondage and darkness into liberty and light, establishing the feet in paths of righteousness.

In chapters 9, 10, and 11 God's counsels and ways concerning Israel are shown to be consistent with these truths now revealed in Christianity. God is the great Victor, and hence all who trust Him are blessed.

From chapter 12 on, instructions are given as to practical conduct based upon the solid and eternal foundation of God's justifying grace.

How grand a book to establish and settle the soul, and to encourage every godly virtue!

1 Corinthians

But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews an offence, and to all nations foolishness; but to those that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ God's power and God's wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1: 23, 24

1 Corinthians (Corinth means "satiated") is an Epistle written to correct the disorders allowed at Corinth in the early Church. The Epistle lays down solid, practical principles of assembly government and order, most necessary for the Church of God worldwide.

This authoritative universal application is pressed in chapters 1:2; 4:17; 11:16, and 14:33, 37.

Corinth was a center of Greek philosophy, but of moral corruption: hence the world's wisdom is discarded in chapter 1, and chapter 2 replaces it with God's revelation by His Spirit.

Human wisdom cannot order the path of the Assembly of God, but the Word of God applied by the Spirit of God to hearts and consciences is sufficient to maintain thorough order according to the mind of God. In chapters 1 and 2 intellectual pride is rejected; from chapter 3 to 7 fleshly corruption is as fully

judged; and chapters 8 to 10 guard against fellowship with any demon influence through idolatry.

The unity of the, body of Christ, but in separation from unholy associations, is stressed throughout the book. Yet the unity is seen to be displayed in a precious diversity of gifts which call for godly exercise. The importance of sound doctrine is a vital matter, too, and chapter 15 strongly stresses the truth of the resurrection of Christ, and that of His saints at His coming, as being basic to the testimony of the Assembly of God.

1 Corinthians is a valuable book to encourage appreciation and concern for every member of the body of Christ and to strengthen collective testimony.

2 Corinthians

Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6

Second Corinthians deals, not with the order of the assembly, but with ministry in connection with the assembly, the manifestation in practical life and service of the Spirit's presence in the assembly. Paul is himself the example of this self•denying labor, spending and being spent for the sake of the saints of God. His sufferings because of his devotion to the ministry of Christ, his persecution from the world, the cruel attacks by false brethren, the resentment even of saints for whose blessing he longed, his deep anguish of soul, his sorrows, his distresses, his tender affections, his sympathies, his compassions • all of these stand out in this touching Epistle.

But his sufficiency is of God, the great God, whose light has shone in His heart, manifesting the transcendent glory of His Being in the face of Jesus Christ. Though in an earthen vessel, it is a treasure to be manifest in ministry to all who will hear. This ministry of the glory of Christ is to Paul of such surpassing blessedness that he is borne on wings of infinite grace through all the trials of the way, and says, I am filled with encouragement; I over - abound in joy under all our affliction."

Marvellous then is this book's encouragement to steadfast consistency in ministering to others, in spite of whatever the effort of Satan may be to

discourage the heart and weaken the hands.

Galatians

But far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 6:14

Galatians, written to the assemblies in the region of Galatia, is an earnest remonstrance against the evil doctrine that works of law form the standard for a believer's walk and conduct. While being saved by grace through faith, yet they had added law as the principle of maintaining their salvation, and this mixture is abominable to God, the God of all grace.

The apostle shows that the blessed Person of Christ, not law, is the standard of a believer's walk, and the Spirit of God the power for a walk with God. The cross of Christ is presented powerfully as cutting off all expectation of good coming from man under law; and by it the believer is crucified to the world, cut off therefore from the very realm in which legality is the ruling principle. He is seen now connected with a "new creation," and therefore to walk no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

The death of Christ, too, is seen in chapter 4 as our redemption from the bondage of law, in order that we should be brought into the dignity and liberty of sonship before God, a position that could never have been known in the Old Testament, but is true of all saints in this dispensation of grace.

How needful a book Galatians is to preserve us from selfishness, from confidence in the flesh, and from innumerable evils that are engendered by a legal attitude.

Ephesians

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.

Ephesians 1:3

Ephesians (Ephesus means "one desire") is an Epistle of no reproofs. It declares in fullest terms the grand counsels of God concerning the saints of God in this present dispensation of grace, their present "spiritual blessings in

the heavenlies in Christ," their position "in Christ" as "seated together in the heavenlies".

Christ, in accordance with the glory of His person and the infinite virtue of His work, is the decreed Center of the blessing of all the universe: and "in Him" we have obtained an inheritance. He is seated upon His Father's throne, and there represents us perfectly: we are "in Him." Jewish and Gentile believers form "one body," united to Christ the Head in glory.

As well as being the body of Christ, the Church is seen too as the household of God, a building growing to a holy temple in the Lord for a habitation of God; and as eventually to be presented as a bride fitted for her Husband. Such truths were not known nor prophesied of in former ages, but are now revealed through apostles and prophets. Our conflict also is seen to be "in the heavenlies", against spiritual hosts of wickedness, Satanic powers, engaged in opposing our discernment and enjoyment of the truth as to our rightful heavenly possessions.

No book is more important than Ephesians as regards cultivating a character conformable to our true union with Christ in the proper home of our souls, heaven itself.

Philippians

But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8

Philippians ("Lovers of horses" • or "of the race") is a pastoral epistle, encouraging and refreshing. It is written to an assembly afflicted by poverty, which had yet maintained a devoted affection for Paul since being converted through his labors eleven years before.

The epistle presents **true Christian experience** as a racecourse leading on the glory of God. Paul is himself the example of this experience, and though in prison, the vibrant yet peaceful joy of the apostle permeates the whole book. The secret is simply that in a practical way Christ is everything to him:

- in chapter 1, Christ his very Motive in life;
- in chapter 2, Christ his Example;
- in chapter 3, Christ his Object;
- in chapter 4, Christ his Strength.

Chapter 2 contains a magnificent declaration of the greatness of the willing humiliation of the Lord Jesus, from the place of highest glory to that of deepest suffering and the death of the curse. This is then followed by God's blessed answer in exalting Him as Man to the place of highest preeminence (vv. 5•11).

Such a Person engaging the affections and admiration of the apostle Paul, he not only bears patiently with every unpleasant adversity, but rejoices in seeing in each of these an occasion of fuller blessing and of greater glory to the Lord Jesus.

This grand triumph of faith makes the book of sweetest value in encouraging similar faith in our own souls.

Colossians

Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.

Colossians 1:12, 13

Colossians ("monstrosities") has much in common with Ephesians. It does not, however, at all present the saints as seated in heavenly places, but rather considers them as still walking through a wilderness world. Yet provision for the journey is heavenly, and the blessed fulness of this provision in the person of Christ is beautifully seen. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (ch. 2:9).

In connection with this fulness, the word "all" is constantly used. And this was needful in warning them against the dangers of philosophy on the one hand, and of religious mysticism on the other: the one an appeal merely to intellect, and the other a gross insult to intellect, though often found curiously intermixed, a monstrosity indeed with two heads in contradiction. The pre-
• eminent headship of Christ is of course the blessed answer to this.

Christ is seen as Head of all creation, and also as Head of the body, the Church. He will reconcile all things in earth and in heaven; but He has now reconciled all believers. He has provided both the ministry of the gospel and that of the Church through the apostle Paul. In all of this there is double provision: that toward the world, and that for His saints.

Nourishing, heavenly food then is found in this book •that which will preserve us from evil in its most refined forms.

First Thessalonians

And for this cause we also give thanks to God unceasingly that, having received the word of the report of God by us, ye accepted, not men's word, but, even as it is truly, God's word, which also works in you who believe.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

1 Thessalonians ("victory over falsity") from point of view of time is the first of Paul's epistles. It is full of freshness, energy, and warmth. Pastoral in its character, it is addressed to "the church of the Thessalonians," thus exemplifying true shepherd care, not only of individuals, but of the assembly of God. This assembly, formed during a very brief visit to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1•4), amid circumstances of bitter persecution, had become a model to the others for their godly energy of faith in sounding out the Word of God (1 Th. 1:7, 8). Faith, love, and hope are beautifully seen throughout this book and the Second Epistle as well.

The coming of the Lord is a most prominent subject. In chapter 1: 10 this is seen as deliverance from the coming wrath of tribulation. In chapter 2:19 it is connected with the joy of Paul's seeing his own converts in the glory above. In chapter 3:13 it has in view the confirming of saints unblameable in holiness. In chapter 4:15•18 it is a precious prospect to give present comfort to those in sorrow. In chapter 5:23 it is seen as an ultimate total sanctification of spirit, soul, and body.

But the above verse shows the reason for the devoted energy of the Thessalonians. The word of God to their souls was real: it was God who had spoken: they accepted that word as such. It is by this that true results are produced. Is the book then not most encouraging and stimulating?

Second Thessalonians

But our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us, and given us eternal consolation and good hope by grace, encourage your hearts, and establish you in every good work and word.

2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17

2 Thessalonians, like 1 Thessalonians, is pastoral in character, but deals with those subtle influences that so soon threatened to rob this young assembly of its fresh, ardent affection for the Lord, its vigorous faith, and its endurance of persecution. Faithfully the apostle warns of the future coming of the Antichrist, but that even then already the mystery of iniquity was at work to undermine what was of God. Therefore, added to the refreshing encouragement of the First Epistle are faithful admonitions, the seasoning of salt, to preserve the testimony of God.

Letters, purporting to have come from Paul, had told the Thessalonians that the Day of the Lord had come • a crafty deceit of the enemy by which he sought to undermine their confidence as to Christ's coming first for the Church, before the awesome day of His judgment of the world. Paul corrects this, and chapter 2 is a most striking prophetic Scripture about the Day of the Lord, which cannot take place until the Church has been removed to heaven.

In contrast to the evil works and words of Antichrist, the saints are encouraged to be established in every good work and word. It is a book therefore to endue us with spiritual discernment and firmness as regards those things that would tend to lower Christian testimony. Again, the Lord's coming is prominent in every chapter.

First Timothy

And confessedly the mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh, has been justified in the Spirit, has appeared to angels, has been preached among the nations, has been believed on in the world, has been received up in glory.

1 Timothy 3:16

1 Timothy ("honoring God") is written to an individual, a young man for whom Paul evidently had deep affection. Being of a timid, retiring nature, and yet gifted by God, he needed to be stirred up to a sense of responsibility as regards proper behavior "in God's house, which is the assembly of the living God."

His ministry was given, not for its independent exercise, but for the sake of the welfare of the Assembly, the body of Christ. He is called upon also to see that sound doctrine is maintained in the local assembly, and that order is kept by the instrumentality of faithful elders and deacons.

The assembly too was to be a place of prayer (ch. 2); and in chapter 3 is stated to be the pillar and base of the truth • a witness of God's being made manifest in flesh, is true, blessed Manhood, the Spirit of God publicly justifying Him in His descent upon Him at His baptism, and in the power of this anointing seen in His life. It is also a witness to the act that in Christ God had appeared to angels, who had never before seen Him. And He has been preached to Gentiles, providing a world•wide gospel for all mankind. "Believed on in the world," whether by many or few makes no difference, but faith has responded to such a revelation. "Received up in glory" completes this list of blessed facts to which the assembly bears witness.

Second Timothy

Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but suffer evil along with the glad tidings, according to the power of God.

2 Timothy 1:8

2 Timothy deals also with individual responsibility in connection with the Church. But Paul writes this epistle from prison. It is in fact his last epistle, written knowing that he is about to be put to death for his witness to the Lord. Here he no longer speaks of "the house of God," but of "a great house" (ch. 2:20); for that which had once been God's house in some measure of purity and truth had degenerated to the point of allowing gross error and vessels to dishonour. Also, all in Asia had turned away from Paul, doubtless no longer desiring his teaching.

But he is not discouraged. Indeed, with a rejoicing heart he encourages this young man to strengthen him against his own natural timidity. Timothy is to

be unashamed of the testimony of the Lord, to rightly divide the word of truth, to make full use of all that blessed truth in acting with firmness and decision for God. He is not to neglect any of it, whether in the work of an evangelist or in ministry to the people of God. The second chapter shows the believer in eight important aspects of life and is excellent for any soul who honestly desires to serve the Lord today.

Thus for days of departure and spiritual carelessness this book holds grand encouragement for the upright heart. It declares the blessedness of God's provision in view of His foreknowledge of present conditions, so that whatever may be the dishonor done to God's name in professing Christendom, one may yet be true to the meaning of Timothy's name, "honoring God."

Titus

The word is faithful, and I desire that thou insist strenuously on these things, that they who have believed God may take care to pay diligent attention to good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

Titus 3:8

Titus ("nurse") is again individual, but its subject is not exactly that of godliness in maintaining the truth in the Church of God (as in Timothy), but rather the truth producing godliness and order in the Church. If there is truth, it is "according to godliness."

Titus had remained in Crete for the purpose of appointing elders in each city there. Paul and Barnabas had done such work, as Acts 14:23 shows, and Paul had delegated authority to Titus to do it. He may also have delegated such authority to Timothy, though this is not stated; but he did write Timothy as to the qualifications of an elder or overseer. There is of course insistence here on godliness if one were to be appointed to such work.

Today there is no one who has authority to make such appointments, yet the saints should easily recognize men of such qualifications, and respect their experience and judgment, apart from any appointment.

Let us notice the insistence too on godliness in the various relationships of

the saints of God toward one another, and that Titus was exhorted to be an example to them all. Those who had believed God were to be earnestly exhorted to pay diligent attention to good works. This is not simply refraining from wrongdoing, but engaging in that which is positively beneficial for the sake of others. "Nursing" souls along these lines is valuable work.

Philemon

For we have great thankfulness and encouragement through thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Philemon 7

Philemon ("one who kisses") is not, strictly speaking, an epistle to an individual, for others also are addressed: a sister who may likely be the wife of Philemon; and a brother, Archippus, spoken of as "our fellow•soldier," a man particularly gifted with ministry from the Lord (cf. Col. 4:17); and also the assembly that met in the house of Philemon. Though written in a personal strain, yet it was made a matter of interest and concern to all the assembly.

It is a beautiful example of divine grace seeking to awaken in hearts of saints a true rejoicing in the salvation of a runaway slave who, converted through Paul in prison, is now sent back by the apostle to Philemon, his master. And Paul desires him to be received, not only by Philemon but by his wife, by one who labors in the Word, and by the assembly. Grace delights in fullest restoration, not merely in part•way measures.

But Paul wisely and kindly appeals to Philemon on the basis of the grace that He knew had already deeply influenced this dear brother in his refreshing the bowels of the saints. The great thankfulness and encouragement felt by the apostle because of this would surely dissolve any resentment that Philemon might have felt towards Onesimus.

The meaning of Philemon's name is a lovely indication of the joy of reconciliation; and the book surely would draw out the most tender sentiments of delight in the restoring grace of God.

Hebrews

How much rather shall the blood of the Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God, purify your conscience from

dead works to worship the living God.

Hebrews 9:14

Hebrews ("passengers") mentions no writer (though the writer was no doubt Paul), but begins with God and shows the New Testament revelation to be consistent with and yet in great contrast to that of the Old Testament. Indeed, prophecies, types, and typical persons are seen to have their marvellous fulfillment in God's now speaking from heaven in the person of His Son, the Creator and Upholder of all things. His eternal Godhead and His true Manhood are clearly and carefully declared, and He Himself supersedes every Old Testament partial revelation of the mind of God.

His great work of redemption is seen in its eternal value before God. He is seen entered into heaven itself, establishing a heavenly and eternal inheritance for every redeemed soul, a contrast to the earthly hope of Israel. He is the Great High Priest, passed through the heavens, by whom we approach and worship God, and who sustains and sympathizes with His saints in all their present needs.

Thus the believer is seen as on earth but possessing a heavenly hope, and so in a real sense a "passenger" through an adverse world. All religion of earthly character (even Judaism, previously established by God) is seen as a "camp" hostile to the glory of this heavenly revelation. The believer is then called upon to go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp."

Hebrews is a book precious for the clearness of its lines of demarcation as regards the Christian's faith, walk, and, worship.

James

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, yielding, full of mercy and good fruits, unquestioning, unfeigned.

James 3:17

James (the Greek form of the name Jacob) does not address the Church but "the twelve tribes scattered abroad." Early Christianity from the point of view of Jewish believers is therefore its evident theme. There had been as yet no separation from the Jewish synagogues (ch. 2:2), such as the Epistle to the Hebrews later insists upon.

For this reason James has been called "the cradle of Christianity." It deals with elementary principles.

Yet let us not think it unnecessary to us because we suppose ourselves advanced in the truth. If we have not properly learned elementary principles, then we are not rightly learning more advanced truth; and it is important, too, that these primary truths should be reviewed continually in order to have a consistent, practical application of Christianity in its entirety. For as a student learns more in the higher grades, he may too easily forget what he once learned in the lower grades.

Nor are these things learned by mere natural wisdom. They require the wisdom from above as a living reality in the heart; and the believer knows well that only true, consistent communion with the Lord can maintain this.

This book insists upon faith being shown by means of works. Not that this justifies before God, but it does so before men. It is mere hypocrisy to talk about having faith, yet not to show it in one's conduct.

This epistle therefore is deeply needed in order for the child of God to check up on himself with regard to the simplest responsibilities of conduct.

First Peter

Blessed be the God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead.

1 Peter 1:3

1 Peter ("a stone") is also addressed to Jewish believers, dispersed in Asia Minor, but not as still connected with Judaism. Rather, they are those separated and suffering, strangers and pilgrims in more than one sense. In a far higher sense than had ever been true of the nation Israel, they were a people "not reckoned among the nations." Theirs was an eternal election of God, sanctification of the Spirit (not of mere formal ordinances), and an inheritance reserved in heaven, because Christ is raised and at the right hand of God.

Their suffering was also but the needed chastening of a Father's governing hand. He governs wisely among His own children for their good in view of

eternity. On the other hand, their suffering would manifest the woeful end of those who obey not the gospel.

This line of truth is clearly that of the kingdom of God rather than of the body of Christ, the Church; for to Peter were given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, in Peter personally is seen the effective dealings of the Father's government; and it is precious to see him graciously and powerfully used of God after so sad a failure in his denying the Lord.

This book is simple to be understood, vigorous and stirring, begetting a wholesome fear of God, and pressing every exercised conscience to walk in subjection of heart.

Second Peter

As his divine power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us by glory and virtue.

2 Peter 1:3

2 Peter is a provision of God in view of the dread corruption of Christendom in its bold defiance of the authority of the Lord Jesus and the government of the Father. False teachers would not only ignore, but systematically undermine every true principle of God's government.

Would this therefore absolve the godly from their responsibility of obedience? Quite the reverse. Rather, the fullest provision is made to encourage implicit subjection of heart to Him. His authority will yet absolutely triumph, with awful judgment to be meted out, not only to the ungodly world, but to the ungodly professors of Christianity.

God's divine power has marvellously and graciously supplied every necessary thing to sustain that fresh, vibrant life that is in contrast to the stagnant deadness of apostasy. It also furnishes the godliness that is so valuable at a time when ungodliness is predominant. And this provision is connected with the vital knowledge of Himself personally, the Living God revealed in the Person of the Lord Jesus. He calls us by glory and virtue, that, is, He sets before our eyes glory as the end in view, and virtue as a precious, present incentive; for it is such virtue as is seen in all the history of the Lord Jesus.

Here the certainty of the coming judgment of God is spoken of in sobering, awe - inspiring terms - and this not only the judgments of the Tribulation, but of the conflagration of heaven and earth. And such themes are intended to have a sanctifying effect in souls.

First John

And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

1 John 5:20

1 John beautifully dwells upon the great truth of eternal life abiding in the believer, the life which is the very nature of God, and which has been manifested perfectly in the blessed Person of His Son. If we desire to rightly learn its characteristics, they shine radiantly in all the history of the Lord Jesus on earth.

Two grand expressions summarize for us the blessedness of this divine nature: "God is light," and "God is love." Thus, three marvellous and deeply necessary mysteries of nature • life, light, and love • become but symbols of infinitely greater spiritual mysteries, which nevertheless are known and enjoyed by faith in the Son of God.

The word "know" and derivatives of it appear frequently in this book, making its truth a living, absolute reality in the hearts of believers. No doubts whatever can be left that the Son of God has come, and in coming has given believers an understanding • not merely of regulations or doctrines • but in knowing the personal glory of Him who is true, and in knowing ourselves to be seen by God as "in Him." Clearly seen also is the perfect unity of the Father and the Son in this infinitely blessed work.

How valuable indeed is this book then in giving settled assurance to the believer of the reality of his vital relationship as a child of God. It also encourages filial devotion and affection to his God and Father.

Second John

Whosoever goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ has not God. He that abides in the doctrine, he has both the Father and the Son.

2 John 9

2 John is the only epistle in Scripture addressed to a woman. 1 John has laid down the blessed principles of truth (or light) and of love revealed in the person of the Son of God. Now this epistle emphasizes the truth as necessary to be maintained faithfully, even by a gentle, tender - hearted woman.

Many deceivers were then circulating everywhere, and Satan's chief target was the home. He would especially appeal to the courteous, responsive nature of the woman. Though John intended soon to visit there, yet God required him to write without delay. This godly woman must be protected from such insidious wickedness. Such deceivers are multiplied today, those not confessing Jesus Christ come in flesh. His eternal Deity and His true, pure Manhood are vital matters. If one "goes forward" in this respect, claiming to have advanced truth and knowledge over what is revealed in the person of Christ, that one "has not God."

Many of this class today • so-called "Jehovah's Witnesses," Mormons, and many others • seek to enter homes with their subtle and deadly doctrines.

Not only was the "elect lady" to refuse them entry, but she was not to give them a common greeting. For this would involve her as linked with their evil deeds. She must not show love to evil; for love must be "in truth".

Let us also solemnly abhor such evil, detaching ourselves totally from it in true devotion to Him who is "the Son of the Father in truth and love."

Third John

Beloved, I desire that in all things thou shouldest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospers.

3 John 2

3 John again has much to say about truth and love, but emphasizes love as being the necessary accompaniment of truth. For another type of evil had arisen: that of a man in the assembly apparently claiming to be acting for the

truth and yet casting others out • even refusing the apostle John. If love for the saints of God is ignored in this way, then no claims of "truth" can stand. Truth and love must stand together, as complements of one another, for in these is the very nature of God.

Gaius, to whom John writes, is himself commended because his soul prospered, and John expresses the wish that in health he should prosper similarly. He may not have been blessed with physical strength to bear much in the way of controversy; but his walking in the truth and his faithful care and love toward those who had gone forth in the work of the Lord is highly commended.

In this case the "strangers" mentioned are so different from the "deceivers" in 2 John. They were brethren before unknown to Gaius who were unselfishly devoting themselves to the work of Christ, taking nothing from the Gentiles • that is of course, from those unsaved. Just as fully as deceivers were to be refused, so fully were true servants of Christ to be received.

Let us cultivate this godly warmth of affection in a proper balance of truth by attending to the ministry of this Epistle. Again the apostle writes though he intended to come shortly.

Jude

Beloved, using all diligence to write to you of our common salvation, I have been obliged to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Jude 3

Jude ("praise"), though deeply desirous of writing, had not intended at all to write as he did. No doubt it would have been a much more pleasant and precious employment to write of the common salvation, but God, who had given him the desire to write, had Himself decided that Jude's message was to be one of intensely serious exhortation that the saints should contend earnestly for the faith.

His book has been spoken of as contemplating "the decay and death of Christianity in the world." For its subject is the apostasy, the deliberate turning of the grace of God into lasciviousness through evil men creeping into the circle of professing Christendom.

Its language is strong and prophetic. He uses the history of past occasions of revolt against the gracious authority of God to illustrate the condition that would develop in Christianity in the last days. Though Israel was blessed in being delivered from Egypt, yet through unbelief many perished in the wilderness. Even angels, greatly blessed of God, were brought down to eternal darkness because of rebellion. Sodom and Gomorrha, Cain, Balaam, Korah, all provide dreadful warnings of God's just judgment.

If all this seems somberly negative, yet Jude's closing words, beginning "But ye, beloved," are a lovely positive encouragement to a faith that trusts the Living God; and "Praise" remains the becoming attitude of the child of God where God's great name has been dishonored.

Revelation

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star.

Revelation 22: 16

Revelation, written by John the apostle, is a prophetic summing up of God's ways with man. A history that began in Genesis in pure freshness and simplicity now ends in great involvements and complications occasioned by man's accumulated guilt and willful disorder.

But our great God in calm, majestic deliberation unravels the tangled mass, and judges in perfect time and order according to His divine wisdom.

Three major divisions in the book will be of great help to the student: 1. "The things which thou hast seen" (ch. 1); 2. "The things which are" (chs. 2•3); 3. "The things which shall be after these (chs. 4•22). The first is past; the second present, applying to the Church age; and the third is future. In chapters 2 and 3 the Lord Jesus is seen in sublime judicious discernment of the state of the seven assemblies, these being prophetic of the entire history of the Church from its inception to the coming of the Lord. For judgment must begin at the house of God.

The victory of the Lord Jesus over all things, His millennial kingdom, His great white throne judgment, the eternal glory of God in the new heavens and the

**new earth • these are some of the great issues of the book. Glorious
culmination of the magnificent counsels of God!
How fitting, too, that this last word from God should declare blessing for
those who read, hear, and keep its sacred truths.**