

Book of Genesis - Printer Friendly



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Question: "Book of Genesis"

Answer: Author: The author of the Book of Genesis is not identified. Traditionally, the author has always assumed to have been Moses. There is no conclusive reason to deny the Mosaic authorship of Genesis.

Date of Writing: The Book of Genesis does not state when it was written. The date of authorship is likely between 1440 and 1400 B.C., between the time Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and his death.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Genesis has sometimes been called the "seed-plot" of the entire Bible. Most of the major doctrines in the Bible are introduced in "seed" form in the Book of Genesis. Along with the fall of man, God's promise of salvation or redemption is recorded (Genesis 3:15). The doctrines of creation, imputation of sin, justification, atonement, depravity, wrath, grace, sovereignty, responsibility, and many more are all addressed in this book of origins called Genesis.

Many of the great questions of life are answered in Genesis. (1) Where did I come from? (God created us - Genesis 1:1) (2) Why am I here? (we are here to have a relationship with God - Genesis 15:6) (3) Where am I going? (we have a destination after death - Genesis 25:8). Genesis appeals to the scientist, the historian, the theologian, the housewife, the farmer, the traveler, and the man or woman of God. It is a fitting beginning for God's story of His plan for mankind, the Bible.

Key Verses: Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Genesis 12:2-3, "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis 50:20, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Brief Summary: The Book of Genesis can be divided into two sections: Primitive History and Patriarchal History. Primitive history records (1) Creation (Genesis chapters 1-2); (2) the Fall of man (Genesis chapters 3-5); (3) the Flood (Genesis chapters 6-9); and (4) the dispersion (Genesis chapters 10-11). Patriarchal history records the lives of four great men: (1) Abraham (Genesis 12:1-25:18); (2) Isaac (Genesis 21:1-35:29); (3) Jacob (Genesis 25:21-50:14); and (4) Joseph (Genesis 30:22-50:26).

God created a universe that was good and free from sin. God created humanity to have a personal relationship with Him. Adam and Eve sinned and thereby brought evil and death into the world. Evil increased steadily in the world until there was only one family in which God found anything good. God sent the Flood to wipe out evil, but delivered Noah and his family along with the animals in the Ark.

After the Flood, humanity began again to multiply and spread throughout the world.

God chose Abraham, through whom He would create a chosen people and eventually the promised Messiah. The chosen line was passed on to Abraham's son Isaac, and then to Isaac's son Jacob. God changed Jacob's name to Israel, and his twelve sons became the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. In His sovereignty, God had Jacob's son Joseph sent to Egypt by the despicable actions of Joseph's brothers. This act, intended for evil by the brothers, was intended for good by God and eventually resulted in Jacob and his family being saved from a devastating famine by Joseph, who had risen to great power in Egypt.

Foreshadowings: Many New Testament themes have their roots in Genesis. Jesus Christ is the Seed of the woman who will destroy Satan's power (Gen. 3:15). As with Joseph, God's plan for the good of mankind through the sacrifice of His Son was intended for good, even though those who crucified Jesus intended it for evil. Noah and his family are the first of many remnants pictured in the Bible. Despite overwhelming odds and difficult circumstances, God always preserves a remnant of the faithful for Himself. The remnant of Israelites returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity; God preserved a remnant through all the persecutions described in Isaiah and Jeremiah; a remnant of 7000 priests were hidden from the wrath of Jezebel; God promises that a remnant of Jews will one day embrace their true Messiah (Romans 11). The faith displayed by Abraham would be the gift of God and the basis of salvation for both Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 11).

Practical Application: The overriding theme of Genesis is God's eternal existence and His creation of the world. There is no effort on the part of the author to defend the existence of God; he simply states that God is, always was, and always will be, almighty over all. In the same way, we have confidence in the truths of Genesis, despite the claims of those who would deny them. All people, regardless of culture, nationality or language, are accountable to the Creator. But because of sin, introduced into the world at the Fall, we are separated from Him. But through one small nation, Israel, God's redemptive plan for mankind was revealed and made available to all. We rejoice in that plan.

God created the universe, the earth, and every living being. We can trust Him to handle the concerns in our lives. God can take a hopeless situation, i.e. Abraham and Sarah being childless, and do amazing things if we will simply trust and obey. Terrible and unjust things may happen in our lives, as with Joseph, but God will always bring about a greater good if we have faith in Him and His sovereign plan. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

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Book of Exodus - Printer Friendly



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Question: "Book of Exodus"

Answer: Author: Moses was the author of the Book of Exodus (Exodus 17:14; 24:4-7; 34:27).

Date of Writing: The Book of Exodus was written between 1440 and 1400 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The word "exodus" means departure. In God's timing, the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt marked the end of a period of oppression for Abraham's descendants (Genesis 15:13), and the beginning of the fulfillment of the covenant promise to Abraham that his descendants would not only live in the Promised Land, but would also multiply and become a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3, 7). The purpose of the book may be expressed as tracing the rapid growth of Jacob's descendants from Egypt to the establishment of the theocratic nation in their Promised Land.

Key Verses: Exodus 1:8, "Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt."

Exodus 2:24-25, "God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them."

Exodus 12:27, "It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians." Then the people bowed down and worshiped."

Exodus 20:2-3, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."

Brief Summary: Exodus begins where Genesis leaves off as God deals with His chosen people, the Jews. It traces the events from the time Israel entered Egypt as guests of Joseph, who was powerful in Egypt, until they were eventually delivered from the cruel bondage of slavery into which they had been brought by "...a new king...which knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8).

Chapters 1-14 describe the conditions of oppression of the Jews under Pharaoh, the rise of Moses as their deliverer, the plagues God brought upon Egypt for the refusal of their leader to submit to Him, and the departure from Egypt. God's sovereign and powerful hand is seen in the miracles of the plagues"ending with the plague of death of the firstborn and the institution of the first Passover"the deliverance of the Israelites, the parting of the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptian army.

The middle portion of Exodus is dedicated to the wandering in the wilderness and the miraculous provision by God for His people. But even though He gave them bread from heaven, sweet water from bitter, water from a

rock, victory over those who would destroy them, His Law written on tablets of stone by His own hand, and His presence in the form of pillars of fire and cloud, the people continually grumbled and rebelled against Him.

The last third of the book describes the construction of the Ark of the Covenant and the plan for the Tabernacle with its various sacrifices, altars, furniture, ceremonies, and forms of worship.

Foreshadowings: The numerous sacrifices required of the Israelites were a picture of the ultimate sacrifice, the Passover Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. The night of the last plague on Egypt, an unblemished lamb was killed and its blood applied to the doorposts of the houses of God's people, protecting them from the angel of death. This foreshadowed Jesus, the Lamb of God without spot or blemish (1 Peter 1:19), whose blood applied to us ensures eternal life. Among the symbolic presentations of Christ in the book of Exodus is the story of the water from the rock in Exodus 17:6. Just as Moses struck the rock to provide life-giving water for the people to drink, so did God strike the

Rock of our salvation, crucifying Him for our sin, and from the Rock came the gift of living water (John 4:10). The provision of manna in the wilderness is a perfect picture of Christ, the Bread of Life (John 6:48), provided by God to give us life.

Practical Application: The Mosaic Law was given in part to show mankind that they were incapable of keeping it. We are unable to please God by law-keeping; therefore, Paul exhorts us to "put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

God's provision for the Israelites, from deliverance from captivity to the manna and quail in the wilderness, are clear indications of His gracious provision for His people. God has promised to supply all our needs. "God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

We are to trust in the Lord, for He can deliver us from anything. But God does not allow sin to go unpunished forever. As a result, we can trust Him in His retribution and justice. When God removes us from a bad situation, we should not seek to go back. When God makes demands of us, He expects us to comply, but at the same time He provides grace and mercy because He knows that, on our own, we will not be able to fully obey.

Book of Leviticus - Printer Friendly



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Question: "Book of Leviticus"

Answer: Author: Moses was the author of the Book of Leviticus.

Date of Writing: The Book of Leviticus was written between 1440 and 1400 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: Because the Israelites had been held captive in Egypt for 400 years, the concept of God had been distorted by the polytheistic, pagan Egyptians. The purpose of Leviticus is to provide instruction and laws to guide a sinful, yet redeemed people in their relationship with a holy God. There is an emphasis in Leviticus on the need for personal holiness in response to a holy God. Sin must be atoned for through the offering of proper sacrifices (chapters 8-10). Other topics covered in the book are diets (clean and unclean foods), childbirth, and diseases which are carefully regulated (chapters 11-15). Chapter 16 describes the Day of Atonement when an annual sacrifice is made for cumulative sin of the people. Furthermore, the people of God are to be circumspect in their personal, moral, and social living, in contrast to the then current practices of the heathen roundabout them (chapters 17-22).

Key Verses: Leviticus 1:4, "He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him."

Leviticus 17:11, "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."

Leviticus 19:18, "'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD."

Brief Summary: Chapters 1–7 outline the offerings required of both the laity and the priesthood. Chapters 8–10 describe the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. Chapters 11–16 are the prescriptions for various types of uncleanness. The final 10 chapters are God's guidelines to His people for practical holiness. Various feasts were instituted in the people's worship of God, convened and practiced according to God's laws. Blessings or curses would accompany either the keeping or neglect of God's commandments (chapter 26). Vows to the Lord are covered in chapter 27.

Foreshadowings: Much of the ritualistic practices of worship picture in many ways the person and work of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 10 tells us that the Mosaic Law is "only a shadow of the good things that are coming" by which is meant that the daily sacrifices offered by the priests for the sin of the people were a representation of the ultimate Sacrifice" Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice would be once for all time for those who

would believe in Him. The holiness imparted temporarily by the Law would one day be replaced by the absolute attainment of holiness when Christians exchanged their sin for the righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Practical Application: God takes His holiness very seriously and so should we. The trend in the postmodern church is to create God in our own image, giving Him the attributes we would like Him to have instead of the ones His Word describes. God's utter holiness, His transcendent splendor, and His "unapproachable light" (1 Timothy 6:16) are foreign concepts to many Christians. We are called to walk in the Light and to put away the darkness in our lives so that we may be pleasing in His sight. A holy God cannot tolerate blatant, unashamed sin in His people and His holiness requires Him to punish it. We dare not be flippant in our attitudes toward sin or God's loathing of it, nor should we make light of it in any way.

Praise the Lord that because of Jesus' death on our behalf, we no longer have to offer animal sacrifices. Leviticus is all about substitution. The death of the animals was a substitute penalty for those who have sinned. In the same way, but infinitely better, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was the substitute for our sins. Now we can stand before a God of utter holiness without fear because He sees in us the righteousness of Christ.

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Question: "Book of Numbers"

Answer: Author: Moses was the author of the Book of Numbers.

Date of Writing: The Book of Numbers was written between 1440 and 1400 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The message of the Book of Numbers, is universal and timeless."It reminds believers of the spiritual warfare in which they are engaged, for Numbers is the book of the service and walk of God's people. The Book of Numbers essentially bridges the gap between the Israelites receiving the Law (Exodus and Leviticus) and preparing them to enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy and Joshua).

Key Verses: Numbers 6:24-26, "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."

Numbers 12:6-8, "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

Numbers 14:30-34, "Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. But you " your bodies will fall in this desert. Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the desert. For forty years " one year for each of the forty days you explored the land " you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you."

Brief Summary: Most of the events of the Book of Numbers take place in the wilderness, primarily between the second and fortieth years of the wandering of the Israelites. The first 25 chapters of the book chronicle the experiences of the first generation of Israel in the wilderness, while the rest of the book describes the experiences of the second generation. The theme of obedience and rebellion followed by repentance and blessing runs through the entire book, as well as the entire Old Testament.

The theme of the holiness of God is continued from the book of Leviticus into the book of Numbers, which reveals God's instruction and preparation of His people to enter the Promised Land of Canaan. The importance of the Book of Numbers is indicated by its being referred to in the New Testament many times. The Holy Spirit called special attention to Numbers in 1 Corinthians 10:1-12. The words "all these things happened to them for examples" refers to the sin of the Israelites and God's displeasure with them.

In Romans 11:22, Paul speaks about the "goodness and severity of God." That, in a nutshell, is the message of Numbers. The severity of God is seen in the death of the rebellious generation in the wilderness, those who

never entered the Promised Land. The goodness of God is realized in the new generation. God protected, preserved, and provided for these people until they possessed the land.

This reminds us of the justice and love of God, which are always in sovereign harmony.

Foreshadowings: God's demand for holiness in His people is completely and finally satisfied in Jesus Christ, who came to fulfill the law on our behalf (Matthew 5:17). The concept of the promised Messiah pervades the book. The story in chapter 19 of the sacrifice of the red heifer "without defect or blemish" prefigures Christ, the Lamb of God without spot or blemish who was sacrificed for our sins. The image of the bronze snake lifted up on the pole to provide physical healing (chapter 21) also prefigures the lifting up of Christ, either upon the cross, or in the ministry of the Word, that whoever looks to Him by faith may have spiritual healing.

In chapter 24, Balaam's fourth oracle speaks of the star and the scepter who is to rise out of Jacob. Here is a prophecy of Christ who is called the "morning star" in Revelation 22:16 for His glory, brightness, and splendor, and for the light that comes by Him. He may also be called a scepter, that is, a scepter bearer, because of his royalty. He not only has the name of a king, but has a kingdom, and rules with a scepter of grace, mercy, and righteousness.

Practical Application: A major theological theme developed in the New Testament from Numbers is that sin and unbelief, especially rebellion, reap the judgment of God. First Corinthians specifically says "and Hebrews 3:7-13 strongly implies" that these events were written as examples for believers to observe and avoid. We are not to "set our hearts on evil things" (v. 6), or be sexually immoral (v. 8), or put God to the test (v. 9) or gripe and complain (v. 10).

Just as the Israelites wandered in the wilderness 40 years because of their rebellion, so too does God sometimes allow us to wander away from Him and suffer loneliness and lack of blessings when we rebel against Him. But God is faithful and just, and just as He restored the Israelites to their rightful place in His heart, He will always restore Christians to the place of blessing and intimate fellowship with Him if we repent and return to Him (1 John 1:9).

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Question: "Book of Deuteronomy"

Answer: Author: Moses wrote the Book of Deuteronomy, which is in fact a collection of his sermons to Israel just before they crossed the Jordan. "These are the words which Moses spoke" (1:1). Someone else (Joshua, perhaps) may have written the last chapter.

Date of Writing: These sermons were given during the 40-day period prior to Israel's entering the Promised Land. The first sermon was delivered on the 1st day of the 11th month (1:3), and the Israelites crossed the Jordan 70 days later, on the 10th day of the 1st month (Joshua 4:19). Subtract 30 days of mourning after Moses' death (Deuteronomy 34:8), and we're left with 40 days. The year was 1406 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: A new generation of Israelites was about to enter the Promised Land. This multitude had not experienced the miracle at the Red Sea or heard the law given at Sinai, and they were about to enter a new land with many dangers and temptations. The book of Deuteronomy was given to remind them of God's law and God's power.

Key Verses: "Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you." (Deuteronomy 4:2)

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

"He said to them, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you"they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess." (Deuteronomy 32:46-47)

Brief Summary: The Israelites are commanded to remember four things: God's faithfulness, God's holiness, God's blessings, and God's warnings. The first three chapters recap the trip from Egypt to their current location, Moab. Chapter 4 is a call to obedience, to be faithful to the God Who was faithful to them.

Chapters 5 through 26 are a repetition of the law. The Ten Commandments, the laws concerning sacrifices and special days, and the rest of the law are given to the new generation. Blessings are promised to those who obey (5:29; 6:17-19; 11:13-15), and famine is promised to those who break the law (11:16-17).

The theme of blessing and cursing is continued in chapters 27-30. This portion of the book ends with a clear choice set before Israel: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing." God's desire for His people is found in what He recommends: "choose life" (30:19).

In the final chapters, Moses encourages the people; commissions his replacement, Joshua; records a song; and gives a final blessing to each of the tribes of Israel. Chapter 34 relates the circumstances of Moses' death. He climbed Mt. Pisgah, where the Lord showed him the Promised Land that he could not enter. At 120 years old, but still with good eyesight and the strength of youth, Moses died in the presence of the Lord. The book of Deuteronomy ends with a short obituary on this great prophet.

Foreshadowings: Many New Testament themes are present in the Book of Deuteronomy. The foremost among them is the necessity of keeping perfectly the Mosaic Law and the impossibility of doing so. The endless sacrifices necessary to atone for the sins of the people "who continually transgressed the Law" would find their fulfillment in the final "once for all" sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10:10). Because of His atoning work on the cross, we would need no further sacrifices for sin.

God's choosing of the Israelites as His special people foreshadows His choosing of those who would believe in Christ (1 Peter 2:9). In Deuteronomy 18:15-19, Moses prophesies of another prophet "the ultimate Prophet to come who is the Messiah. Like Moses, He would receive and preach divine revelation and He would lead His people (John 6:14; 7:40).

Practical Application: The book of Deuteronomy underscores the importance of God's Word. It is a vital part of our lives. Although we are no longer under the Old Testament law, we are still responsible to submit to the will of God in our lives. Simple obedience brings blessing, and sin has its own consequences.

None of us is "above the law." Even Moses, the leader and prophet chosen by God, was required to obey. The reason that he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land was that he disobeyed the Lord's clear command (Numbers 20:13).

During the time of His testing in the wilderness, Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy three times (Matthew 4). In so doing, Jesus illustrated for us the necessity of hiding God's Word in our hearts that we might not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11).

As Israel remembered God's faithfulness, so should we. The crossing of the Red Sea, the holy presence at Sinai, and the blessing of manna in the desert should be an encouragement to us as well. A great way to keep going forward is to take some time to look back and see what God has done.

We also have a beautiful picture in Deuteronomy of a loving God Who desires a relationship with His children. The Lord names love as the reason that He brought Israel out of Egypt "with a mighty hand" and redeemed them (Deuteronomy 7:7-9). What a wonderful thing to be free from the bondage of sin and loved by an all powerful God!

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Question: "Book of Joshua"

Answer: Author: The Book of Joshua does not explicitly name its author. More than likely Joshua the son of Nun, the successor of Moses as leader over Israel, penned much of this book. The latter part of the book was written by at least one other person after the death of Joshua. It is also possible that several sections were edited / compiled following Joshua's death.

Date of Writing: The Book of Joshua was likely written between 1400 and 1370 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Joshua provides an overview of the military campaigns to conquer the land area that God had promised. Following the exodus from Egypt and the subsequent forty years of the wilderness wanderings, the newly-formed nation is now poised to enter the Promised Land, conquer the inhabitants, and occupy the territory. The overview that we have here gives abbreviated and selective details of many of the battles and the manner in which the land was not only conquered, but how it was divided into tribal areas.

Key Verses: Joshua 1:6-9, "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Joshua 24:14-15, "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

Brief Summary: The Book of Joshua continues the story of the Israelites after the exodus from Egypt. The book chronicles the approximately 20 years of Joshua's leadership of the people after Moses anointed him at the end of Deuteronomy. The twenty-four chapter divisions of the Book of Joshua can be summarized as follows:

Chapters 1-12: Entering and conquering the Promised Land.

Chapters 13-22: Instructions for distributing the portions of the Promised Land.

Chapters 23-24: Joshua's farewell address

Foreshadowings: The story of Rahab the harlot and her great faith in the God of the Israelites gives her a place with those honored for their faith in Hebrews 11:31. Hers is a story of God's grace to sinners and salvation by faith alone. Most importantly, by God's grace she was in the Messianic line (Matthew 1:5).

One of the ceremonial rituals of Joshua 5 finds its perfect fulfillment in the New Testament. Verses 1-9 describe God's commandment that those who were born in the wilderness were to be circumcised when they came into the Promised Land. By so doing, God "rolled away the reproach of Egypt" from them, meaning that He cleansed them from the sins of their former life. Colossians 2:10-12 describes believers as having been circumcised in their hearts by Christ Himself, by whom we have put off the sinful nature of our former lives without Christ.

God established cities of refuge so that those who accidentally killed someone could live there without fear of retribution. Christ is our refuge to whom we "have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us" (Hebrews 6:18).

The Book of Joshua has an overriding theological theme of rest. The Israelites, after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, finally entered the rest God had prepared for them in the land of Canaan. The writer of Hebrews uses this incident as a warning to us not to let unbelief keep us from entering into God's rest in Christ (Hebrews 3:7-12).

Practical Application: One of the key verses of the Book of Joshua is 1:8 "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it." The Old Testament is replete with stories of how the people "forgot" God and His Word and suffered terrible consequences. For the Christian, the Word of God is our lifeblood. If we neglect it, our lives will suffer accordingly. But if we take to heart the principle of verse 1:8, we will be complete and able to be of use in God's kingdom (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and we will find that God's promises in Joshua 1:8-9 will be ours as well.

Joshua is a prime example of the benefits of a worthy mentor. For years he remained close to Moses. He watched Moses as he followed God in an almost flawless manner. He learned to pray in a personal way from Moses. He learned how to obey through the example of Moses. Joshua apparently also learned from the negative example that cost Moses the joy of actually entering the Promised Land. If you are alive, you are a mentor. Someone, somewhere, is watching you. Some younger person or someone that you are influencing is seeing how you live and how you react. Someone is learning from you. Someone will follow your example. Mentoring is far more than the words that are spoken by the mentor. His or her entire life is on display.

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Question: "Book of Judges"

Answer: Author: The Book of Judges does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that the Prophet Samuel was the author of Judges. Internal evidence indicates that the author of Judges lived shortly after the period of the Judges. Samuel fits this qualification.

Date of Writing: The Book of Judges was likely written between 1045 and 1000 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Judges can be divided into two sections: 1) Chapters 1-16 which gives an account of the wars of deliverance beginning with the Israelites' defeat of the Canaanites and ending with the defeat of the Philistines and the death of Samson; 2) Chapters 17-21 which is referred to as an appendix and does not relate to the previous chapters. These chapters are noted as a time "when there was no king in Israel (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25)." The Book of Ruth was originally a part of the Book of Judges, but in A.D. 450 it was removed to become a book of its own.

Key Verses: Judges 2:16-19: "Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the LORD's commands. Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways."

Judges 10:15: "But the Israelites said to the LORD, 'We have sinned. Do with us whatever you think best, but please rescue us now.'"

Judges 21:25: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."

Brief Summary: The Book of Judges is a tragic account of how Yahweh [God] was taken for granted by His children year after year, century after century. Judges is a sad contrast to the book of Joshua which chronicles the blessings God bestowed on the Israelites for their obedience in conquering the land. In Judges, they were disobedient and idolatrous, leading to their many defeats. Yet God has never failed to open His arms in love to His people whenever they repent from their wicked ways and call upon His name. (Judges 2:18) Through the 15 judges of Israel, God honored His promise to Abraham to protect and bless his offspring (Genesis 12:2-3).

After the death of Joshua and his contemporaries, the Israelites returned to serving Baal and Ashtaroah. God allowed the Israelites to suffer the consequences of worshiping false gods. It was then that the people of God would cry out to Yahweh for help. God sent His children judges to lead them in righteous living. But time after time they would turn their backs on God and return to their lives of wickedness. However, keeping

His part of the covenant with Abraham, God would save His people from their oppressors throughout the 480-year span of the Book of Judges.

Probably the most notable judge was the 12th judge, Samson, who came to lead the Israelites after a 40-year captivity under the rule of the ruthless Philistines. Samson led God's people to victory over the Philistines where he lost his own life after 20 years as judge of Israel.

Foreshadowings: The announcement to Samson's mother that she would bear a son to lead Israel is a foreshadowing of the announcement to Mary of the birth of the Messiah. God sent His Angel to both women and told them they would "conceive and bear a son" (Judges 13:7; Luke 1:31) who would lead God's people.

God's compassionate delivery of His people despite their sin and rejection of Him presents a picture of Christ on the cross. Jesus died to deliver His people "all who would ever believe in Him" from their sin. Although most of those who followed Him during His ministry would eventually fall away and reject Him, still He remained faithful to His promise and went to the cross to die for us.

Practical Application: Disobedience always brings judgment. The Israelites present a perfect example of what we are not to do. Instead of learning from experience that God will always punish rebellion against Him, they continued to disobey and suffer God's displeasure and discipline. If we continue in disobedience, we invite God's discipline, not because He enjoys our suffering, but "because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son" (Hebrews 12:6).

The Book of Judges is a testament to God's faithfulness. Even "if we are faithless, He will remain faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13). Though we may be unfaithful to Him, as the Israelites were, still He is faithful to save us and preserve us (1 Thessalonians 5:24) and to forgive us when we seek forgiveness (1 John 1:9). "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:8-9).

Book of Ruth - Printer Friendly

2/12/2018



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Question: "Book of Ruth"

Answer: Author: The Book of Ruth does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that the Book of Ruth was written by the Prophet Samuel.

Date of Writing: The exact date the Book of Ruth was written is uncertain. However, the prevalent view is a date between 1011 and 931 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Ruth was written to the Israelites. It teaches that genuine love at times may require uncompromising sacrifice. Regardless of our lot in life, we can live according to the precepts of God. Genuine love and kindness will be rewarded. God abundantly blesses those who seek to live obedient lives. Obedient living does not allow for "accidents" in God's plan. God extends mercy to the merciful.

Key Verses: Ruth 1:16, "But Ruth replied, 'Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.'"

Ruth 3:9, "'Who are you?' he asked. 'I am your servant Ruth,' she said. 'Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer.'"

Ruth 4:17, "The women living there said, 'Naomi has a son.' And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David."

Brief Summary: The setting for the Book of Ruth begins in the heathen country of Moab, a region northeast of the Dead Sea, but then moves to Bethlehem. This true account takes place during the dismal days of failure and rebellion of the Israelites, called the period of the Judges. A famine forces Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, from their Israelite home to the country of Moab. Elimelech dies and Naomi is left with her 2 sons, who soon marry 2 Moabite girls, Orpah and Ruth. Later both of the sons die, and Naomi is left alone with Orpah and Ruth in a strange land. Orpah returns to her parents, but Ruth determines to stay with Naomi as they journey to Bethlehem. This story of love and devotion tells of Ruth's eventual marriage to a wealthy man named Boaz, by whom she bears a son, Obed, who becomes the grandfather of David and the ancestor of Jesus. Obedience brings Ruth into the privileged lineage of Christ.

Foreshadowings: A major theme of the Book of Ruth is that of the kinsman-redeemer. Boaz, a relative of Naomi on her husband's side, acted upon his duty as outlined in the Mosaic Law to redeem an impoverished relative from his or her circumstances (Lev. 25:47-49). This scenario is repeated by Christ, who redeems us, the spiritually impoverished, from the slavery of sin. Our heavenly Father sent His own Son to the cross so that we might become children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ. By being our Redeemer, He makes us His kinsmen.

Practical Application: The sovereignty of our great God is clearly seen in the story of Ruth. He guided her every step of the way to become His child and fulfill His plan for her to become an ancestor of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5). In the same way, we have assurance that God has a plan for each of us. Just as Naomi and Ruth trusted Him to provide for them, so should we.

We see in Ruth an example of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. In addition to being devoted to her family (Ruth 1:15-18; Proverbs 31:10-12) and faithfully dependent upon God (Ruth 2:12; Proverbs 31:30), we see in Ruth a woman of godly speech. Her words are loving, kind and respectful, both to Naomi and to Boaz. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 “opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness” (v. 26). We could search far and wide to find a woman today as worthy of being our role model as Ruth.

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Question: "Book of 1 Samuel"

Answer: Author: The author is anonymous. We know that Samuel wrote a book (1 Samuel 10:25), and it is very possible that he wrote part of this book as well. Other possible contributors to 1 Samuel are the prophets/historians Nathan and Gad (1 Chronicles 29:29).

Date of Writing: Originally, the books of 1 and 2 Samuel were one book. The translators of the Septuagint separated them, and we have retained that separation ever since. The events of 1 Samuel span approximately 100 years, from c. 1100 B.C. to c. 1000 B.C. The events of 2 Samuel cover another 40 years. The date of writing, then, would be sometime after 960 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: First Samuel records the history of Israel in the land of Canaan as they move from the rule of judges to being a unified nation under kings. Samuel emerges as the last judge, and he anoints the first two kings, Saul and David.

Key Verses: "But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king" (1 Samuel 8:6-7).

"You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command" (1 Samuel 13:13-14).

"But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king" (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

Brief Summary: The book of 1 Samuel can be neatly divided into two sections: the life of Samuel (chapters 1-12) and the life of Saul (chapters 13-31).

The book starts with the miraculous birth of Samuel in answer to his mother's earnest prayer. As a child, Samuel lived and served in the temple. God singled him out as a prophet (3:19-21), and the child's first prophecy was one of judgment on the corrupt priests.

The Israelites go to war with their perennial enemies, the Philistines. The Philistines capture the ark of the covenant and are in temporary possession of it, but when the Lord sends judgment, the Philistines return the ark. Samuel calls Israel to repentance (7:3-6) and then to victory over the Philistines.

The people of Israel, wanting to be like other nations, desire a king. Samuel is displeased by their demands, but the Lord tells him that it is not Samuel's leadership they are rejecting, but His own. After warning the people of what having a king would mean, Samuel anoints a Benjamite named Saul, who is crowned in Mizpah (10:17-25).

Saul enjoys initial success, defeating the Ammonites in battle (chapter 11). But then he makes a series of missteps: he presumptuously offers a sacrifice (chapter 13), he makes a foolish vow at the expense of his son Jonathan (chapter 14), and he disobeys the Lord's direct command (chapter 15). As a result of Saul's rebellion, God chooses another to take Saul's place. Meanwhile, God removes His blessing from Saul, and an evil spirit begins goading Saul toward madness (16:14).

Samuel travels to Bethlehem to anoint a youth named David as the next king (chapter 16). Later, David has his famous confrontation with Goliath the Philistine and becomes a national hero (chapter 17). David serves in Saul's court, marries Saul's daughter, and is befriended by Saul's son. Saul himself grows jealous of David's success and popularity, and he attempts to kill David. David flees, and so begins an extraordinary period of adventure, intrigue, and romance. With supernatural aid, David narrowly but consistently eludes the bloodthirsty Saul (chapters 19-26). Through it all, David maintains his integrity and his friendship with Jonathan.

Near the end of the book, Samuel has died, and Saul is a lost man. On the eve of a battle with Philistia, Saul seeks for answers. Having rejected God, he finds no help from heaven, and he seeks counsel from a medium instead. During the seance, Samuel's spirit rises from the dead to give one last prophecy: Saul would die in battle the next day. The prophecy is fulfilled; Saul's three sons, including Jonathan, fall in battle, and Saul commits suicide.

Foreshadowings: The prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 makes several prophetic references to Christ. She extols God as her Rock (v. 2), and we know from the gospel accounts that Jesus is the Rock upon whom we should build our spiritual houses. Paul refers to Jesus as the "rock of offense" to the Jews (Romans 9:33). Christ is called the "spiritual Rock" who provided spiritual drink to the Israelites in the wilderness just as He provides "living water" to our souls (1 Corinthians 10:4; John 4:10). Hannah's prayer also makes reference to the Lord who will judge the ends of the earth (v. 2:10), while Matthew 25:31-32 refers to Jesus as the Son of Man who will come in glory to judge everyone.

Practical Application: The tragic story of Saul is a study in wasted opportunity. Here was a man who had it all—honor, authority, riches, good looks, and more. Yet he died in despair, terrified of his enemies and knowing he had failed his nation, his family, and his God.

Saul made the mistake of thinking he could please God through disobedience. Like many today, he believed that a sensible motive will compensate for bad behavior. Perhaps his power went to his head, and he began to think he was above the rules. Somehow he developed a low opinion of God's commands and a high opinion of himself. Even when confronted with his wrongdoing, he attempted to vindicate himself, and that's when God rejected him (15:16-28).

Saul's problem is one we all face—a problem of the heart. Obedience to God's will is necessary for success, and if we in pride rebel against Him, we set ourselves up for loss.

David, on the other hand, did not seem like much at first. Even Samuel was tempted to overlook him (16:6-7). But God sees the heart and saw in David a man after His own heart (13:14). The humility and integrity of David, coupled with his boldness for the Lord and his commitment to prayer, set a good example for all of us.

2/25/2018

Book of 2 Samuel - Printer Friendly



Question: "Book of 2 Samuel"

Answer: Author: The Book of 2 Samuel does not identify its author. It could not be the Prophet Samuel, since he died in 1 Samuel. Possible writers include Nathan and Gad (see 1 Chronicles 29:29).

Date of Writing: Originally, the books of 1 and 2 Samuel were one book. The translators of the Septuagint separated them, and we have retained that separation ever since. "The events of 1 Samuel span approximately 100 years, from c. 1100 B.C. to c. 1000 B.C." "The events of 2 Samuel cover another 40 years." "The date of writing, then, would be sometime after 960 B.C."

Purpose of Writing: 2 Samuel is the record of King David's reign. This book places the Davidic Covenant in its historical context.

Key Verses: "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16).

"But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 19:4).

"The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior" from violent men you save me. I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies" (2 Samuel 22:2-4).

Brief Summary: The book of 2 Samuel can be divided into two main sections "David's triumphs (chapters 1-10) and David's troubles (chapters 11-20). The last part of the book (chapters 21-24) is a non-chronological appendix which contains further details of David's reign.

The book begins with David receiving news of the death of Saul and his sons. He proclaims a time of mourning. Soon afterward, David is crowned king over Judah, while Ish-bosheth, one of Saul's surviving sons, is crowned king over Israel (chapter 2). A civil war follows, but Ish-bosheth is murdered, and the Israelites ask David to reign over them as well (chapters 4-5).

David moves the country's capital from Hebron to Jerusalem and later moves the Ark of the Covenant (chapters 5-6). David's plan to build a temple in Jerusalem is vetoed by God, who then promises David the following things: 1) David would have a son to rule after him; 2) David's son would build the temple; 3) the throne occupied by David's lineage would be established forever; and 4) God would never take His mercy from David's house (2 Samuel 7:4-16).

David leads Israel to victory over many of the enemy nations which surrounded them. He also shows kindness to the family of Jonathan by taking in Mephibosheth, Jonathan's crippled son (chapters 8- 10).

Then David falls. He lusts for a beautiful woman named Bathsheba, commits adultery with her, and then has her husband murdered (chapter 11). When Nathan the prophet confronts David with his sin, David confesses, and God graciously forgives. However, the Lord tells David that trouble would arise

from within his own household.

Trouble does come when David's firstborn son, Amnon, rapes his half-sister, Tamar. In retaliation, Tamar's brother Absalom kills Amnon. Absalom then flees Jerusalem rather than face his father's anger. Later, Absalom leads a revolt against David, and some of David's former associates join the rebellion (chapters 15-16). David is forced out of Jerusalem, and Absalom sets himself up as king for a short time. The usurper is overthrown, however, and "against David's wishes" is killed. David mourns his fallen son.

A general feeling of unrest plagues the remainder of David's reign. The men of Israel threaten to split from Judah, and David must suppress another uprising (chapter 20).

The book's appendix includes information concerning a three-year famine in the land (chapter 21), a song of David (chapter 22), a record of the exploits of David's bravest warriors (chapter 23), and David's sinful census and the ensuing plague (chapter 24).

Foreshadowings: The Lord Jesus Christ is seen primarily in two parts of 2 Samuel. First, the Davidic Covenant as outlined in 2 Samuel 7:16: "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" and reiterated in Luke 1:31-33 in the words of the angel who appeared to Mary to announce Jesus' birth to her: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." Christ is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant; He is the Son of God in the line of David who will reign forever.

Second, Jesus is seen in the song of David at the end of his life (2 Samuel 22:2-51). He sings of his rock, fortress and deliverer, his refuge and savior. Jesus is our Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:7-9), the Deliverer of Israel (Romans 11:25-27), the fortress to whom we "have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18 KJV), and our only Savior (Luke 2:11; 2 Timothy 1:10).

Practical Application: Anyone can fall. Even a man like David, who truly desired to follow God and who was richly blessed by God, was susceptible to temptation. David's sin with Bathsheba should be a warning to all of us to guard our hearts, our eyes and our minds. Pride over our spiritual maturity and our ability to withstand temptation in our own strength is the first step to a downfall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

God is gracious to forgive even the most heinous sins when we truly repent. However, healing the wound caused by sin does not always erase the scar. Sin has natural consequences, and even after he was forgiven, David reaped what he had sown. His son from the illicit union with another man's wife was taken from him (2 Samuel 12:14-24) and David suffered the misery of a break in his loving relationship with his heavenly Father (Psalms 32 and 51). How much better to avoid sin in the first place, rather than having to seek forgiveness later!

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Question: "Book of 1 Kings"

Answer: Author: The Book of 1 Kings does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that it was written by the Prophet Jeremiah.

Date of Writing: The Book of 1 Kings was likely written between 560 and 540 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: This book is the sequel to 1 and 2 Samuel and begins by tracing Solomon's rise to kingship after the death of David. "The story begins with a united kingdom, but ends in a nation divided into 2 kingdoms, known as Judah and Israel." 1 and 2 Kings are combined into one book in the Hebrew Bible.

Key Verses: 1 Kings 1:30, "I will surely carry out today what I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place."

1 Kings 9:3, "The LORD said to him: 'I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there.'"

1 Kings 12:16, "When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: 'What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse's son? To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David!'"

1 Kings 12:28, "After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'"

1 Kings 17:1, "Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.'"

Brief Summary: The book of 1 Kings starts with Solomon and ends with Elijah. The difference between the two gives you an idea as to what lies between. Solomon was born after a palace scandal between David and Bathsheba. Like his father, he had a weakness for women that would bring him down. Solomon did well at first, praying for wisdom and building a temple to God that took seven years to construct. But then he spent thirteen years building a palace for himself. His accumulation of many wives led him to worship their idols and away from God. After Solomon's death, Israel was ruled by a series of kings, most of whom were evil and idolatrous. The nation fell further away from God, and even the preaching of Elijah could not bring them back. Among the most evil kings were Ahab and his queen, Jezebel, who brought the worship of Baal to new heights in Israel. Elijah tried to turn the Israelites back to the worship of Yahweh, challenging the idolatrous priests of Baal to a showdown with God on Mount Carmel. Of course, God won. This made Queen Jezebel angry (to say the least). She ordered Elijah's death, so he ran away and hid in the wilderness. Depressed and exhausted, he said, "Let me die." But God sent food and encouragement to the prophet and whispered to him in a "quiet gentle sound" and in the process saved his life for further work.

Foreshadowings: The Temple in Jerusalem, where God's Spirit would dwell in the Holy of Holies, foreshadows believers in Christ in whom the Holy Spirit resides from the moment of our salvation. Just as the Israelites were to forsake idolatry, so are we to put away anything that separates us from God.

We are His people, the very temple of the living God. Second Corinthians 6:16 tells us, "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Elijah the prophet was forerunner of Christ and the Apostles of the New Testament. God enabled Elijah to do miraculous things in order to prove that he was truly a man of God. He raised from the dead the son of the widow of Zarephath, causing her to exclaim, "'Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth.'" In the same way, men of God who spoke His words through His power are evident in the New Testament. Not only did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, but He also raised the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14-15) and Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:52-56). The Apostle Peter raised Dorcas (Acts 9:40) and Paul raised Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12).

Practical Application: The Book of 1 Kings has many lessons for believers. We see a warning about the company we keep, and especially in regard to close associations and marriage. The kings of Israel who, like Solomon, married foreign women exposed themselves and the people they ruled to evil. As believers in Christ, we must be very careful about whom we choose as friends, business associates, and spouses. "Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Elijah's experience in the wilderness also teaches a valuable lesson. After his incredible victory over the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, his joy turned to sorrow when he was pursued by Jezebel and fled for his life. Such "mountaintop" experiences are often followed by a letdown and the depression and discouragement that can follow. We have to be on guard for this type of experience in the Christian life. But our God is faithful and will never leave or forsake us. The quiet, gentle sound that encouraged Elijah will encourage us. © Copyright 2002-2018 Got Questions Ministries. www.GotQuestions.org

Question: "Book of 2 Kings"

Answer: Author: The Book of 2 Kings does not name its author. The tradition is that the prophet Jeremiah was the author of both 1 and 2 Kings.

Date of Writing: The Book of 2 Kings, along with 1 Kings, was likely written between 560 and 540 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of 2 Kings is a sequel to the Book of 1 Kings. It continues the story of the kings over the divided kingdom (Israel and Judah.) The Book of 2 Kings concludes with the final overthrow and deportation of the people of Israel and Judah to Assyria and Babylon, respectively.

Key Verses: 2 Kings 17:7-8: "All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced."

2 Kings 22:1a-2: "Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left."

2 Kings 24:2: "The LORD sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him. He sent them to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants the prophets."

2 Kings 8:19: "Nevertheless, for the sake of his servant David, the LORD was not willing to destroy Judah. He had promised to maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever."

Brief Summary: Second Kings depicts the downfall of the divided kingdom. Prophets continue to warn the people that the judgment of God is at hand, but they will not repent. The kingdom of Israel is repeatedly ruled by wicked kings, and, even though a few of Judah's kings are good, the majority of them lead the people away from worship of the Lord. These few good rulers, along with God's prophets, cannot stop the nation's decline. The Northern Kingdom of Israel is eventually destroyed by the Assyrians, and about 136 years later the Southern Kingdom of Judah is destroyed by the Babylonians.

There are three prominent themes present in the Book of 2 Kings. First, the Lord will judge His people when they disobey and turn their backs on Him. The Israelites' unfaithfulness was reflected in the evil idolatry of the kings and resulted in God exercising His righteous wrath against their rebellion. Second, the word of the true prophets of God always comes to pass. Because the Lord always keeps His word, so too are the words of His prophets always true. Third, the Lord is faithful. He remembered His promise to David (2 Samuel 7:10-13), and, despite the disobedience of the people and the evil kings who ruled them, the Lord did not bring David's family to an end.

Foreshadowings: Jesus uses the stories of the widow of Zarephath from 1 Kings and Naaman in 2 Kings to illustrate the great truth of God's compassion toward those the Jews deemed unworthy of God's grace—the poor, the weak, the oppressed, tax collectors, Samaritans, Gentiles. By citing the examples of a poor widow and a leper, Jesus showed Himself to be the Great Physician who heals and ministers to those in the greatest need of

divine sovereign grace. This same truth was the basis of the mystery of the body of Christ, His Church, which would be drawn from all levels of society, male Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 3:1-6).

Many of the miracles of Elisha foreshadowed those of Jesus Himself. Elisha raised the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:34-35), healed Naaman of leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-19), and multiplied loaves of bread to feed a hundred people with some left over (2 Kings 4:42-44).

Practical Application: God hates sin and He will not allow it to continue indefinitely. If we belong to Him, we can expect His discipline when we disobey Him. A loving Father corrects His children for their benefit and to prove that they indeed belong to Him. God may at times use unbelievers to bring correction to His people, and He gives us warning before delivering judgment. As Christians, we have His Word to guide us and warn us when we go astray from His path. Like the prophets of old, His Word is trustworthy and always speaks truth. God's faithfulness to His people will never fail, even when we do.

The stories of the widow and the leper are examples for us in regard to the Body of Christ. Just as Elisha had pity on these from the lowest levels of society, we are to welcome all who belong to Christ into our churches. God is no "respector of persons" (Acts 10:34), and neither should we be.

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Question: "Book of 1 Chronicles"

Answer: Author: The Book of 1 Chronicles does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that 1 and 2 Chronicles were written by Ezra.

Date of Writing: The Book of 1 Chronicles was likely written between 450 and 425 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Books of 1 & 2 Chronicles cover mostly the same information as 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings. 1 & 2 Chronicles focus more on the priestly aspect of the time period. The Book of 1 Chronicles was written after the exile to help those returning to Israel understand how to worship God. The history focused on the Southern Kingdom, the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi. These tribes tended to be more faithful to God.

Key Verses: 1 Chronicles 11:1-2, "All Israel came together to David at Hebron and said, 'We are your own flesh and blood. In the past, even while Saul was king, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the Lord said to you, "You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'""

1 Chronicles 21:13, "David said to Gad, 'I am in deep distress. Let me fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is very great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men.'"

1 Chronicles 29:11, "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all."

Brief Summary: The first 9 chapters of 1 Chronicles are dedicated to lists and genealogies. Further lists and genealogies are scattered throughout the rest of 1 Chronicles. In between, the Book of 1 Chronicles records David's ascension to the throne and his actions thereafter. The book concludes with David's son Solomon becoming King of Israel. Briefly outlined, the Book of 1 Chronicles is as follows: Chapters 1:1-9:23 - Selective Genealogies; Chapters 9:24-12:40 - David's ascent; Chapters 13:1-20:30 - David's reign.

Foreshadowings: In David's song of thanksgiving to God in 1 Chronicles 16:33, he refers to the time when God will come "to judge the earth." This foreshadows Matthew 25, in which Jesus describes the time when He will come to judge the earth. Through the parables of the ten virgins and the talents, He warns that those who are found without the blood of Christ covering their sins will be cast into "outer darkness." He encourages His people to be ready because when He comes, He will separate the sheep from the goats in judgment.

Part of the Davidic Covenant which God reiterates in chapter 17 refers to the future Messiah who would be a descendant of David. Verses 13-14 describe the Son who will be established in God's house and whose throne will be established forever. This can only refer to Jesus Christ.

Practical Application: Genealogies such as the ones in 1 Chronicles may seem dry to us, but they remind us that God knows each of His children personally, even down to the number of hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:30). We can take comfort in the fact that who we are and what we do is written forever in God's mind. If we belong to Christ, our names are written forever in the Lamb's book of Life (Revelation 13:8).

God is faithful to His people and keeps His promises. In the Book of 1 Chronicles, we see the

fulfillment of God's promise to David when he is made king over all Israel (1 Chronicles 11:1-3). We can be sure that His promises to us will be fulfilled as well. He has promised blessings to those who follow Him, who come to Christ in repentance, and who obey His Word.

Obedience brings blessing; disobedience brings judgment. The Book of 1 Chronicles, as well as 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings, is a chronicle of the pattern of sin, repentance, forgiveness, and restoration of the nation of Israel. In the same way, God is patient with us and forgives our sin when we come to Him in true repentance (1 John 1:9). We can take comfort in the fact that He hears our prayer of sorrow, forgives our sin, restores us to fellowship with Him, and sets us on the path to joy.

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Answer: Author: The Book of 2 Chronicles does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that 1 and 2 Chronicles were written by Ezra.

Date of Writing: The Book of 2 Chronicles was likely written between 450 and 425 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Books of 1 & 2 Chronicles cover mostly the same information as 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings. The Books of 1 & 2 Chronicles focus more on the priestly aspect of the time period. The Book of 2 Chronicles is essentially an evaluation of the nation's religious history.

Key Verses: 2 Chronicles 2:1, "Solomon gave orders to build a temple for the Name of the LORD and a royal palace for himself."

2 Chronicles 29:1-3, "Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the LORD and repaired them."

2 Chronicles 36:14, "Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem."

2 Chronicles 36:23, "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you—may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.'"

Brief Summary: The Book of 2 Chronicles records the history of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, from the reign of Solomon to the conclusion of the Babylonian exile. The decline of Judah is disappointing, but emphasis is given to the spiritual reformers who zealously seek to turn the people back to God. Little is said about the bad kings or of the failures of good kings; only goodness is stressed. Since 2 Chronicles takes a priestly perspective, the Northern Kingdom of Israel is rarely mentioned because of her false worship and refusal to acknowledge the Temple of Jerusalem. Second Chronicles concludes with the final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Foreshadowings: As with all references to kings and temples in the Old Testament, we see in them a reflection of the true King of Kings—Jesus Christ—and of the temple of the Holy Spirit—His people. Even the best of the kings of Israel had the faults of all sinful men and led the people imperfectly. But when the King of Kings comes to live and reign on the earth in the millennium, he will establish Himself on the throne of all the earth as the rightful heir of David. Only then will we have a perfect King who will reign in righteousness and holiness, something the best of Israel's kings could only dream of.

Similarly, the great temple built by Solomon was not designed to last forever. Just 150 years later, it was in need of repair from decay and defacing by future generations who turned back to idolatry (2 Kings 12). But the temple of the Holy Spirit—those who belong to Christ—will live forever. We who belong to Jesus are that temple, made not by hands but by the will of God (John 1:12-13). The Spirit who lives within us will never depart from us and will deliver us safely into the hands of God one day (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). No earthly temple contains that promise.

Practical Application: The reader of the Chronicles is invited to evaluate each generation from the past and discern why each was blessed for their obedience or punished for their wickedness. But we are also to compare the plight of these generations to our own, both corporately and individually. If we or our nation or

our church is experiencing hardships, it is to our benefit to compare our beliefs and how we act upon those beliefs with the experiences of the Israelites under the various kings. God hates sin and will not tolerate it. But if the Chronicles teach us anything, it is that God desires to forgive and heal those who will humbly pray and repent (1 John 1:9).

If you could have anything you wished from God, what would you ask for? Fabulous wealth? Perfect health for you and your loved ones? The power over life and death? Amazing to think about it, isn't it? But more amazing is that God made such an offer to Solomon and he chose none of these things. What he asked for was wisdom and knowledge to complete the task God had assigned to him and to do it well. The lesson for us is that God has given each of us a commission to fulfill and the greatest blessing we can seek from God is the ability to carry out His will for our lives. For that, we need the "wisdom from above" (James 3:17) to discern His will, as well as the understanding and intimate knowledge of Him in order to motivate us to Christlikeness in both deed and attitude (James 3:13).

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Question: "Book of Ezra"

Answer: Author: The Book of Ezra does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that the prophet Ezra wrote the Book of Ezra. It is interesting to note that once Ezra appears on the scene in chapter 7, the author of the Book of Ezra switches from writing in the third person to first person. This would also lend credibility to Ezra being the author.

Date of Writing: The Book of Ezra was likely written between 460 and 440 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Ezra is devoted to events occurring in the land of Israel at the time of the return from the Babylonian captivity and subsequent years, covering a period of approximately one century, beginning in 538 B.C. The emphasis in Ezra is on the rebuilding of the Temple. The book contains extensive genealogical records, principally for the purpose of establishing the claims to the priesthood on the part of the descendants of Aaron.

Key Verses: Ezra 3:11 "With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love to Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid."

Ezra 7:6, ""this Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given. The king had granted him everything he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him."

Brief Summary: The book may be divided as follows: Chapters 1-6"The First Return under Zerubbabel, and the Building of the Second Temple. Chapters 7-10"The Ministry of Ezra. Since well over half a century elapsed between chapters 6 and 7, the characters of the first part of the book had died by the time Ezra began his ministry in Jerusalem. Ezra is the one person who is prominent in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Both books end with prayers of confession (Ezra 9; Nehemiah 9) and a subsequent separation of the people from the sinful practices into which they had fallen. Some concept of the nature of the encouraging messages of Haggai and Zechariah, who are introduced in this narrative (Ezra 5:1), may be seen in the prophetic books that bear their names.

The Book of Ezra covers the return from captivity to rebuild the Temple up to the decree of Artaxerxes, the event covered at the beginning of the Book of Nehemiah. Haggai was the main prophet in the day of Ezra, and Zechariah was the prophet in the day of Nehemiah.

Foreshadowings: We see in the Book of Ezra a continuation of the biblical theme of the remnant. Whenever disaster or judgment falls, God always saves a tiny remnant for Himself" Noah and his family from the destruction of the flood; Lot's family from Sodom and Gomorrah; the 7000 prophets reserved in Israel despite the persecution of Ahab and Jezebel. When the Israelites were taken into captivity in Egypt, God delivered His remnant and took them to the Promised Land. Some fifty thousand people return to the land of Judea in Ezra 2:64-67, and yet, as they compare themselves with the numbers in Israel during its prosperous days under King David, their comment is, "We are left this day as a remnant." The remnant theme is carried into the New Testament where Paul tells us that "at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace" (Romans 11:5). Although most people of Jesus' day rejected Him, there remained a set of people whom God had reserved and preserved in his Son, and in the covenant of His grace. Throughout all generations since Christ, there is the remnant of the faithful whose feet are on the narrow road that leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14). This remnant will be preserved through the power of the Holy Spirit who has sealed them and who will deliver them safely at the last day (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 4:30).

Practical Application: The Book of Ezra is a chronicle of hope and restoration. For the Christian whose life is scarred by sin and rebellion against God, there is great hope that ours is a God of forgiveness, a God who will not turn His back on us when we seek Him in repentance and brokenness (1 John 1:9). The return of the Israelites to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple are repeated in the life of every Christian who returns from the captivity of sin and rebellion against God and finds in Him a loving welcome home. No matter how long we have been away, He is ready to forgive us and receive us back into His family. He is willing to show us how to rebuild our lives and resurrect our hearts, wherein is the temple of the Holy Spirit. As with the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, God superintends the work of renovating and rededicating our lives to His service.

The opposition of the adversaries of God to the rebuilding of the temple displays a pattern that is typical of that of the enemy of our souls. Satan uses those who would appear to be in sync with God's purposes to deceive us and attempt to thwart God's plans. Ezra 4:2 describes the deceptive speech of those who claim to worship Christ but whose real intent is to tear down, not to build up. We are to be on guard against such deceivers, respond to them as the Israelites did, and refuse to be fooled by their smooth words and false professions of faith.

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Answer: Author: The Book of Nehemiah does not specifically name its author, but both Jewish and Christian traditions recognize Ezra as the author. This is based on the fact that the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one.

Date of Writing: The Book of Nehemiah was likely written between 445 and 420 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Nehemiah, one of the history books of the Bible, continues the story of Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

Key Verses: Nehemiah 1:3, "They said to me, 'Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.'"

Nehemiah 1:11, "O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."

Nehemiah 6:15-16, "So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God."

Brief Summary: Nehemiah was a Hebrew in Persia when the word reached him that the Temple in Jerusalem was being reconstructed. He grew anxious knowing there was no wall to protect the city. Nehemiah invited God to use him to save the city. God answered his prayer by softening the heart of the Persian king, Artaxerxes, who gave not only his blessing, but also supplies to be used in the project. Nehemiah is given permission by the king to return to Jerusalem, where he is made governor.

In spite of opposition and accusations the wall was built and the enemies silenced. The people, inspired by Nehemiah, give tithes of much money, supplies and manpower to complete the wall in a remarkable 52 days, despite much opposition. This united effort is short-lived, however, because Jerusalem falls back into apostasy when Nehemiah leaves for a while. After 12 years he returned to find the walls strong but the people weak. He set about the task of teaching the people morality and he didn't mince words. "I argued with those people, put curses on them, hit some of them and pulled out their hair" (13:25). He reestablishes true worship through prayer and by encouraging the people to revival by reading and adhering to the Word of God.

Foreshadowings: Nehemiah was a man of prayer and he prayed passionately for his people (Nehemiah 1). His zealous intercession for God's people foreshadows our great Intercessor, Jesus Christ, who prayed fervently for His people in His high-priestly prayer in John 17. Both Nehemiah and Jesus had a burning love for God's people which they poured out in prayer to God, interceding for them before the throne.

Practical Application: Nehemiah led the Israelites into a respect and love for the text of Scripture. Nehemiah, because of his love for God and his desire to see God honored and glorified, led the Israelites towards the faith and obedience God had desired for them for so long. In the same way, Christians are to love and revere the truths of Scripture, commit them to memory, meditate on them day and night, and turn to them for the fulfillment of every spiritual need. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." If we expect to experience the spiritual revival of the Israelites (Nehemiah 8:1-8), we must begin with God's Word.

Each of us ought to have genuine compassion for others who have spiritual or physical hurts. To feel compassion, yet do nothing to help, is unfounded biblically. At times we may have to give up our own comfort in

order to minister properly to others. We must totally believe in a cause before we will give our time or money to it with the right heart. When we allow God to minister through us, even unbelievers will know it is God's work.

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Question: "Book of Esther"

Answer: Author: The Book of Esther does not specifically name its author. The most popular traditions are Mordecai (a major character in the Book of Esther), Ezra and Nehemiah (who would have been familiar with Persian customs).

Date of Writing: The Book of Esther was likely written between 460 and 350 B.C.

Purpose of Writing: The purpose of the Book of Esther is to display the providence of God, especially in regard to His chosen people, Israel. The Book of Esther records the institution of the Feast of Purim and the obligation of its perpetual observation. The Book of Esther was read at the Feast of Purim to commemorate the great deliverance of the Jewish nation brought about by God through Esther. Jews today still read Esther during Purim.

Key Verses: Esther 2:15 - Now when the time came for Esther to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested.

Esther 4:14 - For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to the royal position for such a time as this.

Esther 6:13 - Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has begun, is of Jewish origin, you cannot stand against him - you will surely come to ruin!

Esther 7:3 - If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life - this is my petition, and the life of my people - this is my request.

Brief Summary: The Book of Esther can be divided into three main sections. Chapters 1:1-2:18 " Esther replaces Vashti; 2:19-7:10 " Mordecai overcomes Haman; 8:1-10:3 " Israel survives Haman's attempt to destroy them. The noble Esther risked her own death as she realized what was at stake. She willingly did what could have been a deadly maneuver and took on the second-in-command of her husband's kingdom, Haman. She proved a wise and most worthy opponent, all the while remaining humble and respectful of the position of her husband-king.

Esther's story is much like the story of Joseph in Genesis 41. Both stories involve foreign monarchs who control the destiny of the Jews. Both accounts show the heroism of Israelite individuals who provide the means for the salvation of their people and nation. The hand of God is evident, in that what appears to be a bad situation is indeed very much under the control of the Almighty God, who ultimately has the good of the people at heart. At the center of this story is the ongoing division between the Jews and the Amalakites, which was recorded to have begun in the Book of Exodus. Haman's goal is the final effort recorded in the Old Testament period of the complete eradication of the Jews. His plans eventually end up with his own demise, and the elevation of his enemy Mordecai to his own position, as well as the salvation of the Jews.

Feasting is a major theme of this book: there are ten recorded banquets, and many of the events were planned, plotted, or exposed at these banquets. Although the name of God is never mentioned in this book, it is apparent that the Jews of Susa sought His intervention when they fasted and prayed for three days (Esther 4:16). In spite of the fact that the law allowing their destruction was written according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, rendering it unchangeable, the way was cleared for their prayers to be answered. Esther risked her life by going not once uninvited before the king but twice, (Esther 4:1-2; 8:3). She was not content with the destruction of Haman; she was intent on saving her people. The institution of the Feast of Purim is written and preserved for all to see and is still observed today. God's chosen people, without any direct mention of His name, were granted a stay of execution through the wisdom and humility of Esther.

Foreshadowings: In Esther, we are given a behind-the-scenes look at the ongoing struggle of Satan against the purposes of God and especially against His promised Messiah. The entrance of Christ into the human race was predicated upon the existence of the Jewish race. Just as Haman plotted against the Jews in order to destroy them, so has Satan set himself against Christ and God's people. Just as Haman is defeated on the gallows he

built for Mordecai, so does Christ use the very weapon that his enemy devised to destroy Him and His spiritual seed. For the cross, by which Satan planned to destroy the Messiah, was the very means through which Christ "having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:14-15). Just as Haman was hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai, so the devil was crushed by the cross he erected to destroy Christ.

Practical Application: The Book of Esther shows the choice we make between seeing the hand of God in our circumstances in life and seeing things as merely coincidence. God is the sovereign Ruler of the universe and we can be assured that His plans will not be moved by the actions of mere evil men. Although His name is not mentioned in the book, His providential care for his people, both individuals and the nation, is evident throughout. For instance, we cannot fail to see the Almighty exerting influence over King Xerxes's timely insomnia. Through the example of Mordecai and Esther, the silent love language our Father often uses to communicate directly to our spirits is shown in this book.

Esther proved to have a godly and teachable spirit that also showed great strength and willing obedience. Esther's humility was markedly different from those around her, and this caused her to be elevated into the position of queen. She shows us that remaining respectful and humble, even in difficult if not humanly impossible circumstances, often sets us up to be the vessel of untold blessing for both ourselves and others. We would do well to emulate her godly attitudes in all areas of life, but especially in trials. Not once is there a complaint or bad attitude exposed in the writing. Many times we read she won the "favor" of those around her. Such favor is what ultimately saved her people. We can be granted such favor as we accept even unfair persecution and follow Esther's example of maintaining a positive attitude, coupled with humility and the determination to lean on God. Who knows but that God put us in such a position, for just such a time as this?

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Question: "Book of Job"

Answer: Author: The Book of Job does not specifically name its author. The most likely candidates are Job, Elihu, Moses and Solomon.

Date of Writing: The date of the authorship of the Book of Job would be determined by the author of the Book of Job. If Moses was the author, the date would be around 1440 B.C. If Solomon was the author, the date would be around 950 B.C. Because we don't know the author, we can't know the date of writing.

Purpose of Writing: The Book of Job helps us to understand the following: Satan cannot bring financial and physical destruction upon us unless it is by God's permission. God has power over what Satan can and cannot do. It is beyond our human ability to understand the "why's" behind all the suffering in the world. The wicked will receive their just dues. We cannot always blame suffering and sin on our lifestyles. Suffering may sometimes be allowed in our lives to purify, test, teach or strengthen the soul. God remains enough, deserves and requests our love and praise in all circumstances of life.

Key Verses of the Book of Job: Job 1:1, "In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil."

Job 1:21, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

Job 38:1-2, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said, 'Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?'"

Job 42:5-6, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Brief Summary: The book of Job opens with a scene in heaven where Satan comes to accuse Job before God. He insists Job only serves God because God protects him and seeks God's permission to test Job's faith and loyalty. God grants His permission, only within certain boundaries. Why do the righteous suffer? This is the question raised after Job loses his family, his wealth, and his health. Job's three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, come to "comfort" him and to discuss his crushing series of tragedies. They insist his suffering is punishment for sin in his life. Job, though, remains devoted to God through all of this and contends that his life has not been one of sin. A fourth man, Elihu, tells Job he needs to humble himself and submit to God's use of trials to purify his life. Finally, Job questions God Himself and learns valuable lessons about the sovereignty of God and his need to totally trust in the Lord. Job is then restored to health, happiness and prosperity beyond his earlier state.

Foreshadowings: As Job was pondering the cause of his misery, three questions came to his mind, all of which are answered only in our Lord Jesus Christ. These questions occur in chapter 14. First, in verse 4, Job asks, "Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!?" Job's question comes from a heart that recognizes it cannot possibly please God or become justified in His sight. God is holy; we are not. Therefore, a great gulf exists between man and God, caused by sin. But the answer to Job's anguished question is found in Jesus

Christ. He has paid the penalty for our sin and has exchanged it for His righteousness, thereby making us acceptable in God's sight (Hebrews 10:14; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Job's second question, "But man dies and lies prostrate; Man expires, and where is he?" (vs. 10), is another question about eternity and life and death that is answered only in Christ. With Christ, the answer to 'where is he?' is eternal life in heaven. Without Christ, the answer is an eternity in "outer darkness" where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).

Job's third question, found in verse 14, is "If a man dies, will he live again?" Once again, the answer is found in Christ. We do indeed live again if we are in Him. "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55).

Practical Application: The Book of Job reminds us that there is a "cosmic conflict" going on behind the scenes that we usually know nothing about. Often we wonder why God allows something, and we question or doubt God's goodness, without seeing the full picture. The Book of Job teaches us to trust God under all circumstances. We must trust God, not only WHEN we do not understand, but BECAUSE we do not understand. The psalmist tells us, "As for God, His way is perfect" (Psalm 18:30). If God's ways are "perfect," then we can trust that whatever He does—and whatever He allows—is also perfect. This may not seem possible to us, but our minds are not God's mind. It is true that we can't expect to understand His mind perfectly, as He reminds us, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). Nevertheless, our responsibility to God is to obey Him, to trust Him and to submit to His will, whether we understand it or not.

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