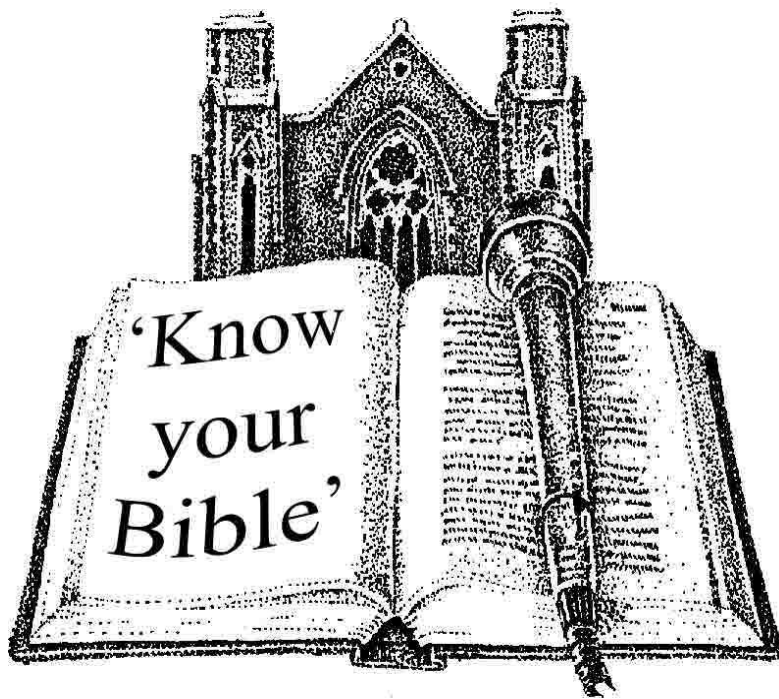


The Bible Story

- A survey of the Scriptures -

Study Notes by Stuart Olyott



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Stuart Olyott**

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THE BIBLE STORY. - A survey of the Scriptures -

The purpose of this series is:-

- To fill in gaps in Bible knowledge
- To show the order of Bible events.
- To demonstrate the unity of God's Word.

From the Creation to the going down into Egypt.

- The whole history of this period is in the book of Genesis. (beginning")
- Genesis is a foundation book.
- The rest of the Bible is meaningless unless you have read it.

"Genesis tells us of the beginning of everything, except God. The beginning of the universe, of life, of man, of the Sabbath, of covenants, of nomenclature, of marriage, of sin, of redemption, of death, of family life, of sacrifices, of nations, of government, of music, of literature, of art, of agriculture, of mechanics, of cities and of languages; indeed, of everything that we know. As to its limits, it is only the beginning there is here no finality..... it is the foundation on which the whole superstructure of Divine revelation rests". (W. Graham Scroggie).

THE PRIMEVAL PERIOD.

The Creation.

The Bible begins with a majestic account of the creation of the universe, of the earth, of life and of man. We see, at once, the existence and nature of the eternal God; and the original nature of man - rational; moral, social and spiritual. To him was given work the Sabbath, and marriage. GOD and MAN are the Bible's chief themes.

The Fall to the Tower of Babel.

Adam and Eve rebelled against God. Their descendants developed in sophistication, but deteriorated morally and spiritually. The depth of their wickedness caused the Flood. The height of their pride caused them to be scattered from Babel. God is seen to be against sin, and its Judge Yet at all times he preserves some who are loyal to Him.

But even at the time of the Fall the promise of a Redeemer is given. At first, through Shem, it is revealed that He will be Semitic. (9:26), and then that He will be a descendant of Abraham.

THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD.

Abraham

About the year 2000 BC, God called Abram from Ur of the Chaldeans, and then from Haran, leading him to Canaan. He promised to bless him; to be the God of his descendants, to make him a great nation; to give them the land Canaan, and to bless the whole world through his seed.

Throughout his life God renewed this promise many times (1:7, 13:5' 15:4, 17:8, 22:16). The rest of the Bible is the outworking of God's promise - the seed is Christ; the great nation those who, like Abraham, have faith in Him; and for them there is a 'better country' of which Canaan is an earthly picture.

Isaac & Jacob.

Out of Abraham's two sons, Isaac, not Ishmael, had the covenant confirmed to him. (26:24). Of Isaac's sons, Jacob, not Esau, received the promise. (28:13, 31:13, 32:28). This brings home the doctrine of election; God chooses who He will enter into covenant with.

Yet neither Isaac nor Jacob inherited Canaan, but were wandering nomads, In this way God emphasised that the fulfilment of His promise lay in the future. Isaac's "sacrifice" on Moriah, and Jacob's dream at Bethel and wrestling at Jabbok taught much about the coming Christ.

Joseph

Jacob (Isaac) had 12 sons. Joseph his favourite, was sold into slavery by his brothers, but through God's sovereignty became Grand Vizier of Egypt. He was able to save the family, from extinction by famine, by bringing them to Egypt where he had organised vast reserves of corn.

All Jacob's sons died in exile in Egypt. A new dynasty of Egyptian kings enslaved their descendants treating them cruelly, and imposing intolerable burdens on them.

God's people were still on the earth - but it seemed as if God had forgotten them and His promise.....

THE BIBLE STORY. - A survey of the Scriptures -

From the Exodus to the time of the judges.

- We saw that the first section of the Bible contains foundation truths, and PROMISES of the coming Redeemer
- This section continues the history of Israel and is full of PICTURES of Christ (*)

The Exodus*

God had not forgotten His people or His promise. Having miraculously preserved and prepared Moses to be a deliverer* of His People. He called him from a burning bush*, and sent him with his brother Aaron to demand from Pharaoh the release of His people. Pharaoh refused and God visited Egypt with plagues. The final plague was the death of the first-born, but the angel of death 'passed over' those houses where a lamb had been slain in the commanded way*. After this the Egyptians begged the Israelites to go.

Led by a pillar of cloud and fire*, God's people crossed the Red Sea by a well-known miracle*, and entered the Sinai desert. A cut-down tree* made bitter water sweet, and at other times water gushed from a rock*. Their food was manna* and quails. They were saved from defeat in an ambush by mountain-top intercession*, and after about three months arrived at Mount Sinai where they remained almost a year.

At Mount Sinai.

Here God renewed His covenant* with His people, and, with His own finger, wrote the Ten Commandments Israel was to be custodian for this moral law, which is for the whole world. It reveals God's standard of righteousness, thus showing us our sin and our need of Saviour. God also gave to Israel statutes and judgements to govern her national life.

In addition, at this time God ordered the Tabernacle* to be built, appointed a system of atoning sacrifices* by which sinners could approach Him. instituted a ritual and feasts* and established a priesthood* Combining all these was the annual Day of Atonement* - when the high priest took a scapegoat* which was sent outside the camp* bearing the people's sins. For the same reason he sacrificed another goat, and, sprinkling its blood*, entered within the veil*. These repeated sacrifices of animals could not take away people's sin. The passing priesthood was itself in need of atonement. A once-for-all sacrifice and an unchangeable and sinless priesthood was required!!*

In the wilderness

With God's presence in the very centre* the children of Israel set off for the promised Land. Dissatisfaction with God's dealings with them, and rebellion against Moses' authority, took place on the way. When the 12 spies brought back a dismal report about the difficulties in entering Canaan, unbelief took root. As punishment, God would not let that generation in, and the Children of Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years, until that generation died out. With Moses still leading them, the new generation encamped on the borders of Canaan, despite opposition (which nonetheless recognised that Christ would come from Israel). Here Moses died - but not before reminding the people of God's love in the past, and giving them clear instructions about their future settlement. He also promised them a Prophet and Lawgiver superior to himself*,

The invasion and settlement of Canaan

Joshua* succeeded Moses, and led them into the Promised Land, where the cities of Jericho and Ai soon fell. They then subdued the south and north in turn, before dividing the land up between the tribes, who were to settle down, and finally drive out the previous inhabitants. Seeing the dangers of apostasy, Joshua did not die before urging Israel to an uncompromising commitment to the Lord.

But God's Word was disobeyed, and many heathen wickednesses were practised by His people. Each time they sinned, God punished them by sending conquering invaders to oppress them. Each time they repented, He sent them a saviour* or judge to deliver them, to minister to them spiritually, and to rule over them. This pattern of things continued for 200 years, until the time of Samuel - who stands as a milestone between the end of the judges, and the beginning of the prophets* and kings*.

THE BIBLE STORY. - A survey of the Scriptures -

From Samuel to the beginning of the Exile.

Samuel.

Samuel was the greatest and final judge, and the most godly, but in his later years the people demanded a king. Israel now became a monarchy. But it was not without spiritual direction, the rise of the kings also sees the rise of the prophets.

The united kingdom.

The first king was Saul, who began well, but who was soon rejected by God because of his disobedience. David, after ruling for 7 years in Hebron, captured Jebus, made it the national capital, placed the Ark there, subdued enemies at home and abroad, and gave to the nation the full promised Land. Despite one awful sin, he was a true man of God, the writer of most of the Psalms (which -speak constantly of a greater King who shall sit on his throne, and be his son and yet his Lord), and assured by God that his descendants would succeed to his throne.

Solomon also began well and prayerfully. He brilliantly administered the land, organised the trade, and built the Temple. He had remarkable wisdom, and wrote the Song of Solomon and many of the Proverbs. But he lapsed into idolatry and lust, and overburdened the nation with his demands.

When his son said that he would increase the burden, 10 tribes rebelled to form an independent kingdom in the north. This became known as Israel, and lasted until 722 BC. The two loyal tribes in the south became known as Judah, and had only Davidic descendants as kings. Judah lasted until Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC, and so outlasted Israel by 150 years.

Israel - the northern kingdom.

Israel never had a righteous ruler, and from the start was led into paganism and idol worship. When Ahab married Jezebel, Baalism was introduced, and an attempt was made to systematically destroy faith in Jehovah. At this time Elijah ministered, and shortly after Elisha.

Israel reached the height of its power in the days of Jeroboam II But God's voice was not silent, and Amos and then Hosea confronted the people with their sins. But they would not listen. Little by little the shadow of Assyria spread over the land. At first Israel paid tribute, then rebelled, and was finally overcome. The Assyrians took most of the people into exile, and they never returned. Those who remained intermarried with immigrants the Assyrians sent, and their descendants were the Samaritans of New Testament times.

Judah - the southern kingdom

This kingdom had both ungodly and righteous kings in its history, but at all times there was more godliness here than in Israel, and godly people there, and from surrounding nations, trickled into Judah. There were several occasions when God miraculously delivered the nation from its enemies.

At the time that Israel was defeated, Hezekiah was on the throne. At this time the nation experienced a religious revival stimulated by the preaching of Isaiah and Micah, and was delivered from the Assyrians.

An appalling period of militant godlessness followed, but this was stopped when God raised up Zephaniah and Jeremiah to preach. A great reform took place under young King Josiah, in whose day the Temple was reopened, and the "book of the law" rediscovered.

But apostasy and Idolatry returned, and Jeremiah could only predict that God would judge the nation by means of a Babylonian invasion. Nahum's prophecy had proved true, for Assyria had been destroyed, and Babylon was now the paramount power, and soon Judah was paying tribute

In 601 BC Judah rebelled, and Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonian forces into Jerusalem. Many national leaders (including Ezekiel) were taken into exile. After a further rebellion Jerusalem was destroyed, and at this time Lamentations was written. Some of the people fled into Egypt, while a small remnant remained in the land. The vast majority were exiled into Babylon. Yet God assured them that He had not forgotten them, and that He would bring them out.

The importance of this section of the Bible

During this period you see the rise of the prophet - which excites one to look forward to the promised Prophet. The priests continue to minister in the temple, but sin also continues. This leads one to long for a Priest 'whose ministry will truly remove sin. All the kings were defective in some way, and one wonders if a perfect King who rules in righteousness will ever emerge.

Although the 10 tribes mostly vanish in exile, and Benjamin is absorbed into Judah, Judah alone keeps a strong individual identity. Within Judah the 'house and lineage of David' continues securely, God is working in history to ensure that His promise that the Messiah will be of Judah and descended from David, will definitely come true.

THE BIBLE STORY. - A survey of the Scriptures -

From the Exile to between the Testaments.

In this section we see God bringing Jewry and the world to the very fullness of the time" when He would send forth His Son.

The Exile in Babylon.

In Babylon, encouraged by a letter from Jeremiah, the Jews settled down. Instead of blending with their conquerors, they kept their own culture and identity, and had a good deal of freedom. Ezekiel ministered the Word of God to them, and they knew that God had not forsaken them.

Many spiritual benefits were theirs during the Exile. Idolatry disappeared from among them, they had a new understanding of the attributes of God; they longed for God's Messiah; and had a new interest in the Law.

Meanwhile the kingdom of Cyrus king of Persia grew, until he was ruler of Media, Lydia, Asia Minor, and soon Babylon itself (about 539 BC). This was the fulfilment of the prophecies of Isaiah. Cyrus gave permission to the Jews to return to their land, and to rebuild the Temple. However, many of the exiles decided not to return (and the book of Esther tells what happened to some of them), though very great numbers did go home.

The Return

The return took place in three stages. The first party set off in 538 BC, and was led by Zerubbabel, Jehoiachin's grandson, and Joshua the high priest. They began to rebuild the Temple, but were discouraged by opposition, and the work stopped for 13 years. But the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah caused the people to finish the work.

Over 70 years later Ezra was sent by Artaxerxes I to bring the people back to God's Law, and 13 years after that Nehemiah was sent by the same king with authority to rebuild the city, especially the walls.

The completed reconstruction also saw a time of spiritual renewal among the people, though within a few years Malachi had to correct widespread backsliding, as did Nehemiah on a later visit.

Generally speaking however, the returned Jews showed great interest in the Law, and this period witnesses the rise of the synagogue and the development of the 'oral tradition'.

The time between the Testaments

During the time of Babylonian rule, and right into the days of the Medo-Persian empire Daniel ministered God's Word in exile. He exactly predicted what would occur in the world between then and the coming of the Messiah. Four great empires would arise; and in the time of the fourth the Christ would come. He prophesied the rise of Alexander the great; the division of his empire after his death; the fact that Judea would be caught between the Ptolemies and Seleucids; and the cruelties of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-163 BC), who tried to forcibly impose Greek culture on the Jews.

The period Daniel predicted is important, for in it arise so many features which carry over into the New Testament. Alexander made the Greek language universal. The Ptolemies and Seleucids created large Greek-speaking Jewish colonies in North Africa & Asia Minor, and for them the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) was produced. Those who opposed Antiochus religiously were the forerunners of the Pharisees; and those who opposed him militantly were the forerunners of the Zealots.

Led by the Maccabees, the Jews rebelled against Greek rule, captured the Temple area, and mounted a lengthy war of independence in 128 BC, under John Hyrcanus, an independent Jewish state was formed. This lasted until 63 BC when Roman rule took over under Pompey

In 40 BC the Roman Senate appointed Herod ('By birth an Idumean, by profession a Jew, by necessity a Roman, by culture and by choice a Greek') to be 'King of the Jews'. He re-conquered his kingdom and executed the last of the Maccabean priest-rulers. Although unpopular, he began rebuilding the Temple, and was on the throne when our Lord Jesus Christ was born.

THE BIBLE STORY - A survey of the Scriptures -

We have now finished the Old Testament. Its 39 books covered a period of many thousands of years. We now come to the New Testament. Its 27 books cover only a period of 100 years. What the Old Testament was leading up to now comes to pass, and this is why the story is in greater detail.

The earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ (1)

The facts of our Lord's life are found in the four Gospels. The first three have a great deal in common, and are called 'synoptic'. John's Gospel was written later, and he includes a good deal of material that the others did not include.

Up to the age of thirty.

Having reminded us of Christ's eternal pre-existence, the narrative tells us of His birth at Bethlehem, His presentation at Jerusalem, His acclamation (much later) by the wise men, His escape from Herod, and His eventual arrival at Nazareth.

Apart from a couple of general comments, nothing is told us of the boyhood and youth of Jesus, apart from a remarkable event when He was 12. A visit to the Temple is the occasion for us to be forcibly reminded of His mission and identity, and His first recorded spoken words are - "How is it that you sought me? did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49).

John the Baptist

Before our Lord began His public ministry He was heralded by John the Baptist, who preached practical repentance, and the need to prepare for the Messiah's coming. His ministry was in itself a fulfilment of prophecy. His baptism of Jesus marked the beginning of the Lord's public ministry. Although John continued to preach for about a year after this, he was content to decrease as Christ increased. Eventually he was imprisoned by Herod Antipas, who later executed him.

The first year of ministry (obscurity).

Meanwhile Jesus had been tempted in the wilderness, met Andrew and Peter, and performed His first miracle at Cana of Galilee. He had then returned to Judea and purified the Temple in Jerusalem he had also explained the meaning of the New Birth to Nicodemus, and shortly after had given 'living water' to the 'Samaritan women, and healing to the nobleman's son. The next few months were spent in Judea again, but Jesus came into Galilee shortly after John the Baptist was imprisoned.

The second year of ministry (popularity)

After rejection at Nazareth, our Lord moved to Capernaum, from where He travelled throughout Galilee preaching. He called on people to repent and come under the reign of God, and explained what this meant in the "Sermon on the Mount".

Also at this time our Lord told many remarkable parables (Sower; Prodigal Son; Pharisee and Publican; Good Samaritan; Talents; Wheat and Tares), and performed many marvellous miracles (Leper; sick of the palsy; Gadarene demoniac; raising widow's son at Nain; Jairus' daughter; the daughter of the Syrophenician woman;). These miracles demonstrated His Deity, revealed His compassion, and proved His claims.

During this time our Lord chose twelve apostles, and about the time of the death of John the Baptist, His popularity reached its height. After feeding the 5000, the people determined to make Him king. But He had not come to be a king in any earthly sense. Shortly after, at Caesarea Philippi, His disciples were made to understand that although He was God's Christ, yet He had come to earth to suffer, to die, and to rise again.

THE BIBLE STORY. - A survey of the Scriptures -

The earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ (2)

The third year of ministry (adversity).

A week after the incident at Caesarea Philippi Christ's true identity, and the certainty of His sufferings, were re-emphasised at the Transfiguration. From then on, Jesus repeatedly predicted His death and resurrection, although His disciples could not understand. How this linked up with the fact that He was the Messiah. After a short visit to Galilee He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, Stressing the same things again and again.

On the way south He told numerous parables (Good Samaritan; friend at midnight; rich fool; prodigal Son; rich man and Lazarus), healed ten lepers and blessed the children. Also it was at this time that He sent out the Seventy. Several months in Judea followed, during which time he visited Jerusalem at least twice for the feasts of Tabernacles and Dedication. Many of His greatest claims were made at this period, and He also raised Lazarus from the dead at Bethany, a village He often visited. Meanwhile the Jewish authorities thought only in terms of arresting and killing Him.

Passing through Jericho, where he gave sight to Bartimaeus, and salvation to Zaccheus, He approached Jerusalem for the last time. Weeping over the city's Sin, and yet acclaimed by its crowds, Jesus rode on an ass into Jerusalem, in perfect fulfilment of prophecy.

The last week,

Christ's first act in Jerusalem was to cleanse the Temple for the Second time. He spent the next days in public teaching, retiring to Bethany at night. He answered questions put to Him by His enemies; condemned the formal religion of His day; asked questions Himself; commended the widow for her mite; predicted His glorification when some Greeks came to see Him; and gave teaching about the future - especially concerning the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem, and His eventual advent at the end of the world.

On the Thursday evening Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples, where He washed their feet, instituted the Lord's Supper, and gave them much profound teaching, especially concerning the Holy Spirit. After praying for them, He went to the garden of Gethsemane, where He prayed alone, with His disciples nearby. A little later He was arrested by those whom Judas had led to Him.

Six trials followed, and His admission of Deity was enough for the Jewish leaders to condemn Him for blasphemy. After seeking ways of both pleasing the Jews and sparing Jesus, Pontiffs Pilate, the Roman Governor, eventually gave into the Jews, and delivered Jesus to be crucified.

Our Lord endured this painful and shameful death without a word of selfish concern. Darkness covered the earth. When this ended Jesus delivered up His life, but not before His sayings from the cross had made the meaning of His death clear. His body was laid in a rock-hewn tomb, donated by Joseph of Arimathea.

The Resurrection and the Forty Days

But God raised Jesus from the dead! On the first day of the week the grave was found to be empty by the many who came to it. The grave clothes were undisturbed. Angels declared the Lord to be alive. Soon He was being seen, presenting Himself alive by many infallible proofs. The disciples were changed.

For forty days the Lord continued showing Himself to His disciples, and spent time teaching them, and opening their minds to understand the Scriptures. Then, after promising the Holy Spirit, and blessing them, He ascended visibly and bodily into heaven. Angels announced that this ascension would be exactly reversed at His advent.

The disciples then returned to Jerusalem, to await 'the promise of the Father'.

THE BIBLE STORY. - A survey of the Scriptures -

From the day of Pentecost to Paul's arrival in Europe

Before our Lord ascended He promised His disciples "You shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria; and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This promise was exactly fulfilled:-

Power

For 10 days after the Ascension the disciples prayed and waited. On the day of Pentecost they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and immediately had boldness to speak to the crowds about the Person and work of Christ. The Lord added 3000 to the church, and more every day.

Jerusalem.

This clear preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ caused opposition Peter and John were arrested, threatened, and released. This did not deter them, and served to drive the church to prayer. Nor did the hypocrisy of Ananias & Sapphira hold up the work, for God removed them. The apostles handed over the administration of relief for the needy to seven deacons, and let nothing distract them from the priority of prayer and preaching.

One of the deacons was Stephen, a man of unusual spirituality and boldness, whose preaching of Christ resulted in his martyrdom. Increased persecution broke out, which in fact continued for years, and caused the death of James and the temporary imprisonment of Peter. Its immediate effect was to scatter the believers. The Epistle of James (the Lord's half-brother) was written to these scattered disciples.

Judea and Samaria.

Wherever they went, the scattered believers preached the Word, and soon churches were established throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. It was Philip who first preached in Samaria, where great numbers turned to God. He also led a proselyte from Ethiopia to Christ, as he returned home.

The uttermost part of the earth.

At this time Saul of Tarsus, who led the persecution even into provincial cities, was converted on the road to Damascus - an event which was later to lead to the evangelisation of the Gentiles. Meanwhile Peter had been travelling in South Palestine, and had led the first Gentile to Christ. He was Cornelius, a Roman centurion. Peter's vision before hand, and the Spirit's signs afterwards, demonstrated God's complete acceptance of Gentile believers. Others who had been scattered by the persecution came to Antioch in Syria, and were bold enough to preach the Word to the Greeks. A great number believed. Barnabas was commissioned by the Jerusalem church to consolidate the work at Antioch, and he asked Paul, now at Tarsus, to join him. They taught the church for a year, and the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

The Apostle Paul

Chosen by the Holy Spirit, who revealed His will to the church at Antioch, Barnabas and Paul set out to evangelise the Gentiles. They were accompanied by Mark, who was not commissioned by the church, and who soon turned back. After going through Cyprus they came to the mainland, and preached the Word in Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Except for Cyprus, they returned the way they came, and superintended the appointment of elders in each church.

On their return to Antioch they were confronted by teachers from Jerusalem who maintained that Gentile believers could not be saved unless they were circumcised and submitted to Jewish rites. This prompted Paul to write the Epistle to the Galatians to the young churches just founded. Paul and Barnabas also went to Jerusalem, as representatives of the Antioch church, to discuss the affair with the apostles and elders there. They agreed on decrees to be delivered to the churches, showing the falsehood of the teachers, and appealing for practical love.

With these decrees Paul set out again for Asia Minor, this time with Silas. At Lystra Timothy joined them, and later Luke. Directed by the Holy Spirit, they eventually arrived at Troas. Here Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia appealing for help, and the group gathered that the Lord was calling them to go there. So they set sail for Europe.

THE BIBLE STORY. - A survey of the Scriptures -

From Paul's arrival in Europe to the end of the Bible.

Paul's travels - continued.

On arriving in Europe - Paul and his companions preached the Gospel, and founded churches in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Then Paul preached alone in educated, pagan, Athens, where a few believed. The next move was to Corinth where he stayed two years, and from where 1 & 2 Thessalonians were written. In this immoral city God raised up a large multiracial church through Paul's ministry.

When returning to Antioch, Paul stopped at Ephesus, to which he came back very quickly. Here he hired a public hall where he proclaimed and argued the Gospel for several hours a day, until the whole surrounding area heard the word. At this time he also wrote 1 Corinthians, and after visiting that troubled church returned to Ephesus to write 2 Corinthians. Meanwhile declining business caused the Ephesus idol-makers to stir up opposition, and after a riot Paul left. He passed through Greece to Corinth again, where he wrote to the Romans, the most clear and classic statement of the Gospel of God. Then he set out for Jerusalem with his companions, carrying a substantial gift for the poor there, from the Gentile churches, Troas and Miletus were visited on the way. Throughout the journey Paul received numerous warnings of dangers ahead.

Paul's arrest and 1st imprisonment.

In Jerusalem Paul was wrongly accused of bringing a Gentile into the Temple, & arrested during the riot which followed. Several trials followed, in Jerusalem and Caesarea. It was during this time (about 2 years) that Luke probably collected the material to write his Gospel and most of the Acts. At last Paul appealed to Caesar. His journey to Rome is told in some detail, including his shipwreck at Malta, and his first days in Rome, under house-arrest.

He spent his time usefully, declaring the Word to those who visited him, and writing important letters to the churches, including Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians. This ministry greatly edified them and us!! After two years, as he expected, Paul was released.

Afterwards

After his release, Paul travelled widely, though his exact movements are unknown. He certainly evangelised Crete for he left Titus to consolidate the work there, and wrote a letter to him. Ephesus may also have been visited. At least Timothy went there, and Paul wrote to him exact instructions about the work of the ministry in 1 Timothy.

Further travels included Asia Minor, Greece, and the Adriatic Coast, and possibly even Spain. Somewhere he was arrested, and taken to Rome where he was imprisoned. From here he wrote 2 Timothy, pleading for his colleague to be faithful in the difficulties which confronted him, and not to forsake the Gospel. He looked forward to his 'crown of righteousness', which he received when Nero executed him in AD 64.

Meanwhile other letters circulated in the churches, including the anonymous epistle to the Hebrews, Peter wrote 1 & 2 Peter to uphold believers in persecution, and to warn them of false teachers. Jude also put pen to paper to secure the commitment of his readers to "the faith which was once delivered to the saints".

1, 2 & 3 John written by the elderly apostle a little later have the same purpose, and also point out the differences between counterfeit faith and real. John lived on into the reign of the Emperor Domitian, when he may have written his Gospel, but certainly received the Revelation while a prisoner on the isle of Patmos. This last book of the Bible assures us of the ultimate triumph of Christ, the certainty of heaven, and the doom of Satan. It points us to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as our great and glorious hope.