

The Old Testament

Genesis.

Genesis, meaning beginning, covers the time from the Creation (i.e., the beginning of history) to the Israelite sojourn in Egypt, the book falls naturally into two main sections: Chapters 1-11 deal primarily with primeval history; Chapters 12-50 treat the history of the Fathers of Israel (or the Patriarchs). The first section speaks of the creation of the world, including man, man's life in Paradise (a symbol of being in God's presence), and his tragic disobedience of God's commandment (the Original Sin) and Fall. It also speaks of the spread of sin in the world and its first destruction in the Flood. The latter section tells the stories of Abraham (Ch. 12-25), of Isaac and his twin sons Esau and Jacob (Ch. 26-36), and of Jacob's family, the chief member of which, in Genesis, was Joseph (Ch. 37-50).

Exodus.

This book speaks of the deliverance of the People of Israel from bondage in Egypt and the making of a Covenant between God and them at Mt. Sinai. It falls into two major sections: 1) Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage, including the rise of Moses as leader of the people, the Ten Plagues, etc., and the march to Sinai, including the destruction of Pharaoh's armies in the Red Sea (Ch. 1-18) and 2) Israel's sojourn at Sinai, where the Covenant was made and laws governing life and worship were promulgated (Ten Commandments, Ark of the Covenant, Tabernacle, etc. Ch. 19-40). At the center of these events stood Moses, who was called to be the agent of God in delivering Israel from slavery, to be the interpreter of God's redemptive work and to be the mediator of the Covenant.

Leviticus.

The book of Leviticus (the title refers to the Levitical priests set apart to minister at the Sanctuary) is mostly a book of worship and falls into six parts: 1) laws dealing with sacrifices (Ch. 1-7); 2) consecration of priests to their office (Ch. 8-10); 3) laws setting forth the distinction between clean and unclean (Ch. 11-15); 4) the ceremony for the annual Day of Atonement (Ch. 16); 5) laws to govern Israel's life as a holy people (the Holiness Code Ch. 17-26); and 6) an appendix on religious vows (Ch. 27).

Through the various rituals and laws, there breathes the conviction that the holy God tabernacles in the midst of His people during their historical pilgrimage. The nearness of God not only accentuates the people's sense of sin, but prompts them to turn to Him in sacrificial services of worship. For God has provided the means of atonement and forgiveness whereby the community is restored to wholeness and is reconciled to Him.

Numbers.

The title Numbers refers to the census or numbering of the people of Israel at the beginning of this book, but could be better entitled In the Wilderness. The book can be divided into three parts: 1) Preparations for departure from Sinai (Ch. 1-10:10); 2) the journey to Kadesh, from which point an unsuccessful attack upon southern Canaan was made (Ch. 10:11-21:13); and 3) the journey from

Kadesh via the Transjordan for the purpose of approaching Canaan from the East (Ch. 21:14-36).

Here we see the Forty-year Sojourn in the Wilderness, in which the people, existing only precariously, are constantly murmuring. They are pictured as faithless, rebellious, and blind to God's signs. Yet, God was marvelously guiding, sustaining, and disciplining His people so that they might know their utter dependence upon Him and thus be prepared for their historical pilgrimage.

Deuteronomy.

The basic theme of Deuteronomy which means Second Law, is the renewal of the Covenant. At the end of the book of Numbers, Israel is encamped in the Plains of Moab, preparing for an attack upon Canaan from the East. Deuteronomy is essentially Moses' farewell address to the people in which he rehearses the mighty acts of the Lord, solemnly warns of the temptations of the new ways of Canaan, and pleads for loyalty to and love of God as the condition for life in the Promised Land. A distinctive teaching of Deuteronomy is that the worship of the Lord is to be centralized in one place, so that the paganism of the local shrines may be eliminated.

This book can be divided into four parts: 1) God's care for Israel from Sinai to Moab (Ch. 1-4); 2) The Covenant Proof of God's love (Ch. 5-11); 3) Moses' explanation of the Law (Ch. 12-26); and 4) Moses' last words and death (Ch. 27-34).

Joshua.

The book of Joshua is the story of the Conquest of the Promised Land. The story opens with the passage of the Jordan River and the sack of Jericho (Ch. 1-6); it then tells how the Hebrew armies moved from the Jordan Valley up into the highlands to conquer Ai (Ch. 7-8) and, through a humorous deception, to become unwilling allies of the Gibeonites (Ch. 9). This led to a great battle with the chieftains of five other Canaanite cities and the conquest of the South (Ch. 10). A final engagement in the North resulted in the complete destruction of Canaanite power in Palestine (Ch. 11). Following a brief summary of Joshua's triumphs (Ch. 12), the book describes the division of the land among the several tribes (Ch. 13-23) and how Israel entered into a Covenant to serve forever the God Whose might had been so awesomely demonstrated (Ch. 24).

Judges.

Despite the initial conquest of Palestine, the process of subjugation continued and, in fact, some parts of the country were never conquered. Heroes (Judges) rose up amongst the people in times of crisis, and this book is primarily an account of their exploits.

The book opens with an account of the conquest of Canaan which is roughly parallel to that in the book of Joshua (Ch. 1-2:5); then follows the main body of the book, which, after a moralizing introduction (Ch. 2:6-3:6), relates the adventures of the individual Judges: Othniel (Ch. 3:7-11), Ehud (Ch. 3:12-30), Shamgar (Ch. 3:31), Deborah (Ch. 4-5), Gideon (Ch. 6-8) and his infamous son, Abimelech (Ch. 9), two minor Judges (Ch. 10:1-5); Jephthah (Ch. 10:6-12:7), three more minor Judges (Ch. 12:8-15) and Samson (Ch. 13-16). The book concludes with an appendix containing tales about the migration of the Tribe of Dan (Ch. 17-18) and the sins of the Benjaminites (Ch. 19-21). In all

this, one clear lesson stands out: Loyalty to God is the first requisite for national success and disloyalty a guarantee of disaster.

Ruth.

The book of Ruth speaks of the marriage of Ruth (a Moabitess a foreigner) to a Hebrew man and how, on his death, she chose to return to Judah with her mother-in-law, Naomi, to share the fortunes of her husband's people, rather than remain in the security of her native land (Ch. 1). There, her loyalty and kindness won her the love of Boaz (Ch. 2-4:12), and, through her marriage to him, she became the great-grandmother of David the King (Ch. 4:13-22).

First and Second Samuel.

The two books of the Samuel (1st and 2nd Kings in the Orthodox Bible) are concerned primarily with the history of Israel during the times of the Prophet Samuel, King Saul and King David. Originally one unified work, Samuel was early divided into two parts (1st and 2nd Samuel).

The books can be divided as follows: 1) The last Judges, Eli and Samuel, and the Philistine oppression (I Sam. 1-7); 2) Samuel and Saul, the institution of the Monarchy, and Saul's rejection (1 Sam. 8-15); 3) Saul and David; David befriended at first by Saul, but later persecuted (I Sam. 16-31); 4) David, King over Judah after the death of Saul (2 Sam. 1-4); 5) David, King over all Israel and nearby conquered nations (2 Sam. 5-20); and 6) Appendices (2 Sam. 21-24).

The theme of this work is the institution of the Israelite Monarchy and its perpetuity in the dynasty of David, from which one day will be born the Messiah. The last days of Eli are described because they introduce Samuel. Samuel is described because he institutes the Monarchy in Israel. Saul is described because he demonstrates for all time what the Israelite King must not be. David is described because like him and from him will come the desire of the everlasting hills the Messiah.

First and Second Kings.

Like the two books of Samuel, 1st and 2nd Kings (in the Orthodox Bibles, 3rd and 4th Kings) were originally one. First Kings begins with the enthronement of Solomon and the death of David (Ch. 1-2) and recounts the history of Solomon's reign (Ch. 3-11). It then continues with the history of the Kings of the Divided Monarchy (Southern Kingdom of Judah, with its capital at Jerusalem, and the Northern Kingdom of Israel, with its capital at Samaria) through the reigns of Ahab of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah (Ch. 12-22). Here also we encounter the dramatic story of Elijah the Prophet (1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2).

Second Kings continues the story of the Hebrew Monarchies. Chapters 1-17 describe the period from the reigns of Ahaziah of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judea until the Fall of Samaria and the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria in 721 B.C. Included here are the stories of the Prophet Elisha, heir to Elijah. Chapters 18-25 continue the history of the Kingdom of Judah from the Fall of Samaria until the Fall of the Kingdom and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., with the subsequent Deportation to Babylon.

The purpose of the two books of Kings is to show the causes of the Fall of the Kingdom. The catastrophes of 721 (Fall of Samaria) and 587 (Fall of Jerusalem) are seen as a just punishment for the failure of the majority of the Kings of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms to practice monotheism and observe the unity of the Sanctuary in Jerusalem as demanded by the Law. Israel, not God, had been unfaithful to the Sinai Covenant. If Israel is to resume her God-given mission, she must repent and leave the future to God's unswerving faithfulness and to His steadfast love.

First and Second Chronicles.

First and Second Chronicles (1st and 2nd Paralipomenen in the Orthodox Bibles) were originally one book in the Hebrew Bible and can be seen as part of a larger history including the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. These books are a theological history of the dynasty of David and of the Temple until the Fall of Jerusalem. The purpose of these books were to focus attention on Israel's hope the dynasty of David, and on Israel's glory the Temple of the True God on earth, in Jerusalem.

These books can be divided into four basic parts: 1) (1 Chr. 1-9) a summary of Israel's history from Adam to David, presented by a series of genealogies; 2) (1 Chr. 10-29) David as a great Monarch and the Founder of the Temple and its ritual; 3) (2 Chr. 1-9) King Solomon and the building of the Temple; and 4) (2 Chr. 10-36) the history of the Davidic Kings and their association with the Temple.

Ezra and Nehemiah.

These two books form part of a larger history which includes 1st and 2nd Chronicles (mentioned above). The theme of these books are the religious and political reorganization of Judah after the Return from the Babylonian Exile in the time of the Persian Empire (Kings Cyrus, Darius I, Ataxerxes I and Ataxerxes II). Attention is focused on the importance of the Temple and religious reforms for the preservation of the Jewish State.

The books can be divided into four parts: 1) The return of the first exiles in 537 B.C., followed by the rebuilding of the altar in 536 and the Temple in 516 (Ez. 1-6); 2) the return of a second group of exiles in 458, led by Ezra the Scribe, and the marriage reforms introduced by him (Ez. 7-10); 3) the return of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in 445 (Neh. 1-7); and 4) the religious reforms and the renewal of the Covenant instituted by Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh. 8-13).

Esther.

The book of Esther is concerned primarily with the story of Esther, the Jewish wife and Queen of the Persian King Ahasuerus. The story portrays the foiling of a plot by Esther and her adoptive guardian, Mordecai, hatched by the evil Haman against the Jews. This account, which shows God's love and care for His people, is greatly venerated by the Jews as the basis for their Feast of Purim.

This book can be divided into four parts: 1) (Ch. 1-2) the setting of the scene in the Court of the King; 2) (Ch. 3-7) the development of the plot and its overthrow by Esther and Mordecai, resulting in the hanging of Haman and his sons; 3) (Ch. 8-10) the destruction of the enemies of the Jews and the institution of the Feast of Purim; and 4) (Ch. 11-16) further additions to the story. [We note here that Chapters 11-16 are not found in the Hebrew Bible, as well as most English Bibles, but form a part of

the Orthodox Bible (LXX). In other Bibles, this section constitutes part of the so-called Apocrypha or Deutero-canonical books.].

Job.

The book of Job is concerned with the problem of suffering in the world. It does not attempt to explain the mystery of suffering or to justify the ways of God with men, but rather aims to probe the depths of faith in spite of suffering. It is the story of a righteous man, Job, who loses everything in the material and physical sense, but who maintains his faith in God despite his personal sufferings. The Church sees here a parallel between Job and Christ.

The book can be divided into eight parts: 1) Prologue (Ch. 1-2); 2) 1st Cycle of Speeches (Ch. 3-14); 3) 2nd Cycle of Speeches (Ch. 15-21); 4) 3rd Cycle of Speeches (Ch. 22-28); 5) Job's final summary of his case (Ch. 29-31); 6) Elihu's speeches (Ch. 32-37); 7) God's speeches (Ch. 38-42:6); and 8) an Epilogue (Ch. 42:7-20). [We note that the last three verses are found only in the Orthodox Bibles (LXX).]

Psalms.

The book of Psalms contains the hymns of Israel. This book, called The Psalter, holds a central place in the worship of the Orthodox Church and the Psalms are customarily ascribed to David and Solomon. The book of Psalms is divided into Five Books (in imitation of the Pentateuch the first five books of the Bible): Book I (Ps. 1-41); Book II (Ps. 42-72); Book III (Ps. 73-89); Book IV (Ps. 90-106); and Book V (Ps. 107-150). [Orthodox Bibles also include Psalm 151 a Song of David after he fought with Goliath.]

The Psalms may be classified as follows: Hymns (acts of praise suitable for any occasion); Laments (in which an individual seeks deliverance from an illness or a false accusation, or the nation asks for help in times of distress); Songs of Trust (in which an individual expresses his confidence in God's readiness to help); Thanksgivings (in which an individual expresses his gratitude for deliverance); Sacred History (in which the nation recounts the story of God's dealings with it); Royal Psalms (for use on such occasions as a coronation or royal wedding); Wisdom Psalms (which are meditations on life and the ways of God); and Liturgies (Psalms composed for special cultic or historical occasions).

In the Orthodox Church, the LXX version of the Psalms are generally used and these are numbered differently in Orthodox Bibles; in most cases the LXX numbering of the Psalms is one less than the customary numbering (Cf. Table in Chapter 3 of this Book). In addition, for liturgical use, the Psalter is divided into twenty parts called kathismas (from *kathizo*, meaning to sit, since it is permitted to sit during these readings).

Proverbs.

The book of Proverbs is a collection of moral and religious instruction to the youth of Israel. It can be divided into four main parts and five appendices: 1) (Ch. 1-9:18) Ten discourses of admonition and warning, two poems personifying Wisdom (1:20-33; 8:1-36), Wisdom vs. Folly (9:1-6, 13-18), and various shorter admonitions and poems; 2) (Ch. 10-22:16) 1st Collection of Sayings of Solomon; 3) (Ch. 22:17-24:22) The Sayings of the Wise, with the 1st Appendix added (Ch. 24:23-34), also entitled

Sayings of the Wise; 4) (Ch. 25-29) 2nd Collection of Sayings of Solomon; 2nd Appendix (Ch. 30:1-14), entitled The Words of Agur; 3rd Appendix (Ch. 30:15-33) a collection of numerical proverbs; Appendix 4 (Ch. 31:1-9), entitled The Words of Lemuel, King of Massa; and Appendix 5 (Ch. 31:10-31) praise of the ideal wife.

Ecclesiastes (or The Preacher).

This book begins, The Words of the Preacher, the son of David, King in Jerusalem (Eccl. 1:1), and its theme is the vanity of all things, Vanity of vanities....All is vanity! (Eccl. 1:2). The author explores man's happiness and can see no lasting, certain, secure happiness in this earthly existence. This questioning will point men to the everlasting happiness in the world to come.

The Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon).

This book is a collection of poems of human love and courtship, but beneath its secular appearance, lies some great religious truths. In the prophetic books, the Lord God was often seen as the husband of His people (e.g., Hosea 2:16-19) and in later Christian tradition, this book was interpreted as an allegory of the love of Christ for His bride, the Church (e.g., Rev. 21:2, 9).

Isaiah.

The Prophet Isaiah proclaimed his message to Judah and Jerusalem between 742 and 687 B.C., when the Northern Kingdom was conquered by Assyria and Judah lived uneasily in its shadow. Isaiah attacks social injustice which shows Israel's weak adherence to God's laws. He exhorts the people to place their confidence in the Almighty (Omnipotent) God and to lead private and public lives which demonstrate this.

In Chapters 40-66, this theme is extended further and the author demonstrates the significance of historical events in God's plan, which extends from Creation to Redemption and beyond. In this section we find the beautiful Suffering Servant oracles, referring to the Messiah our Lord Jesus Christ.

The book of the Prophet Isaiah has always been held in highest esteem by the Orthodox Church, and is quoted and used above all other prophetic books of the Old Testament in her liturgical life. This is especially evident during the Great Lent when it is read every day at the service of the Sixth Hour.

Jeremiah.

This book contains the words of Jeremiah the Prophet which he dictated to his aide, Baruch. His ministry began in 627 B.C. and ended some time after 580, probably in Egypt. The Prophet is much concerned with rewards and punishments, the recompense for good and evil, faithfulness and disobedience. He criticized Judah for its worship of gods other than the Lord and proclaimed that God's Covenant people must return to Him. The judgment must come, but the ominous future (later, the unhappy present) would be replaced by a new and more enduring relationship with God.

The book can be divided into five parts: 1) (Ch. 1-25) sermons against Judah; 2) (Ch. 26-35) narrative passages, interspersed with sermons; 3) (Ch. 36-45) biographical narratives about Jeremiah, probably

by Baruch; 4) (Ch. 46-51) oracles against the foreign nations; and 5) (Ch. 52) a historical appendix. The Orthodox book of Jeremiah differs significantly in many places from that of the Hebrew Bible.

The Lamentations of Jeremiah.

This book, ascribed to the Prophet Jeremiah, is a small book of laments over Jerusalem after its destruction by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. The dominant ideas of the Prophet are sentiments of sorrow, amendment and conversion. The punishment which was from God has not been in vain, but has been a healing medicine. The book is divided into five chapters, the first four of which are acrostic poems (a verse for each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet each beginning with that letter) and the fifth, although not an acrostic, consists, again, of twenty-two verses.

Ezekiel.

This book is the work of Ezekiel the Priest, whose ministry extended from 593 to 563 B.C., when he was in Babylon with the Exiles. As Prophet to the Exiles, he assured his listeners of the abiding presence of God among them, constantly emphasizing the Lord's role in the events of the day, so that Israel and the nations will know that I am the Lord. The integrity of the individual and his personal responsibility to God is stressed and hope of restoration to homeland and temple by a just and holy God is brought to the helpless and hopeless people.

The book can be divided into three parts: 1) (Ch. 1-24) Oracles of warning; 2) (Ch. 25-32) Oracles against the foreign nations; and 3) (Ch. 33-48) Oracles of hope. The famous reading concerning the dry bones which is read at Holy Saturday Matins comes from this Prophet (Ch. 37).

Daniel.

The Prophet Daniel lived in Babylon in the time of King Nebuchadnezzar. The book itself consists of six stories (Ch. 1-6), which illustrate how faithful Jews, loyally practicing their religion, were enabled, by God's help, to triumph over their enemies (e.g., the Three Youths in the flaming furnace Ch. 3), and four visions (Ch. 7-12) interpreting current history and predicting the ultimate triumph of the saints in the final consummation. In addition, the Orthodox Bible (LXX) contains two more chapters (13-14) concerning the stories of Susanna, a righteous Virgin, and the Prophet Daniel, the false god Bel, and the Dragon. The LXX Daniel also contains an additional 68 verses inserted after 3:23, The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men in the furnace, which is sung at the Liturgy of St. Basil on Holy Saturday.

Hosea.

This book is part of the Book of the Twelve, also known as The Minor Prophets. Hosea preached in the time of the Northern Kingdom (750-722 B.C.). He can be characterized as the Prophet of Divine Love, since he preaches much of God's love for His people and His anger at His beloved's faithlessness. The book can be divided into two parts: 1) (Ch. 1-3) The Allegory of the Marriage; and 2) (Ch. 4-14) Sermons based on the Allegory.

Joel.

This book was written by a Prophet, Joel, the son of Pethuel, who lived in Judah during the Persian period, probably from 400-350 B.C. He views a locust plague which ravished the country as God's punishment on His people and called them to repentance (Ch. 1-2:27) and using this catastrophe as a dire warning, went on to depict the coming of the Day of the Lord and its final judgment and blessings (Ch. 2:28-3:21), which constitutes the second major division of this book.

Amos.

The Prophet Amos preached in the period from about 760-750 B.C. A shepherd from the Judean village of Tekoa, he was called by God to preach at the Northern shrine of Bethel. He denounced Israel, as well as her neighbors, for reliance on military might, for grave social injustices, foul immorality and shallow, meaningless piety. The book is divided into three parts: 1) (Ch. 1-2) oracles against Israel's neighbors; 2) (Ch. 3-6) indictment of Israel herself for sin and injustice; and 3) (Ch. 7-9) visions of Israel's coming doom.

Obadiah.

The prophecy of Obadiah, who prophesied sometime after the Fall of Jerusalem, consists of an oracle against Edom, one of Israel's neighbors. This book is the shortest book of the Old Testament and consists of three parts: 1) an indictment of Edom for hostile actions against Israel in her time of peril (vs. 1-14); an announcement of the Lord's recompense upon the nations for their shameful behavior (vs. 15-18); and 3) a proclamation of the return of the Exiles to the Promised Land, their dominion over Edom and the Lord's universal sovereignty (vs. 19-21).

Jonah.

The prophecy of Jonah and his three days in the belly of a great fish comprise one of the most-remembered of the books of the Prophets indeed, our Lord uses this image concerning his own three days and nights in the tomb (Matt. 12:38-41; Luke 11:29-32). The Prophet calls Israel to repentance and reminds her of her mission to preach to all the nations the wideness of God's mercy and His forgiveness. The book conveniently divides into two parts: 1) (Ch. 1-2) Jonah's first call and disobedience, culminating in his sojourn in the belly of the fish; and 2) (Ch. 3-4) his second call to preach to Nineveh.

Micah.

The Prophet Micah preached in Judah at the same time as the Prophet Isaiah (742-687 B.C.). Like the Prophet Amos, he spoke out against the oppression of the poor by the rich as a crime crying out to Heaven for vengeance. Despite prophesying the Fall of Jerusalem, he looks beyond to the time of divine forgiveness and hope when the expected Messiah would come in person and rule not only Judah but all the nations of the world. The book is divided into three parts: 1) Judgment of Israel and Judah (Ch. 1-3); 2) Israel in the Messianic Age (Ch. 4-5); and 3) Accusations and Judgments (Ch. 6-7). His prophecy concerning Bethlehem (Micah 5:2-4) is read on the Feast of the Nativity of Christ.

Nahum.

The Prophet Nahum prophesied between 626-612 B.C. and concerns himself with an oracle against Nineveh and the destruction of Assyria. It is a triumphant song asserting boldly that the Lord is the avenger of cruelty and immorality.

Habakkuk.

This Prophet, who lived at the time of the height of Babylonian power, wrote probably between 608-598 B.C. He confronts the disturbing problem of why a just God is silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he (Hab. 1:13), for which he receives the answer that is eternally valid: God is still Lord and in His own way and at the proper time He will deal with the wicked; but the righteous shall live by his faith (Hab. 2:4). The book is divided into three parts: 1) (Ch. 1-2:5) a dialogue between the Prophet and God; 2) (Ch. 2:6-20) five woes against a wicked nation; and 3) (Ch. 3) a lengthy poem obviously intended for liturgical use.

Zephaniah.

The Prophet Zephaniah's ministry dates to the reign of King Josiah (640-609 B.C.), and this prophecy can be divided into three sections: 1) (Ch. 1) proclamation of doom on Judah in the form of the destructive Day of the Lord, which is near and hastening fast; 2) (Ch. 2) divine judgment is extended to other nations; and 3) (Ch. 3) comfort and consolation are promised to those who wait patiently for the Lord and serve Him with one accord.

Haggai.

The Prophet Haggai preached in Jerusalem from the 6th to 9th months of 520 B.C. In five addresses, he exhorted Zerubbabel the Governor and Joshua the High Priest to assume official leadership in the rebuilding of the Temple and urged the priests to purify the cultic worship. The Prophet saw these steps also as necessary preparations for the Messianic Age. Upon the completion of these projects, the wonderful era foreseen by the earlier Prophets, would come; for God would bless His people with fruitfulness and prosperity, overthrow the Gentiles, and establish Zerubbabel as the Messianic King on the throne of David.

Zechariah.

The prophecies of Zechariah (found in Chapters 1-8) date from 520-518 B.C. and share with Haggai the zeal for a rebuilt Temple, a purified community, and the coming of the Messianic Age. The second part (Chapters 9-14) were probably written later in the Greek period (4th and 3rd Centuries B.C.) by disciples of Zechariah, for instead of peace and rebuilding, it speaks of universal warfare and the siege of Jerusalem. In this second part we encounter the Messianic Prince of Peace and the Good Shepherd smitten for His flock. Chapter 9:9 forms part of the Old Testament readings for the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday): Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt, the foal of an ass.

Malachi.

The Prophet Malachi (meaning My Messenger) lived in the period from 500 to 450 B.C. One central theme dominates this Prophet's thought: faithfulness to the Lord's Covenant and its teachings. The book is divided into two parts: 1) (Ch. 1-2:16) the sins of the people and the priests; and 2) (Ch. 2:17-3:24) the coming of God to judge, to punish and to reward. This prophecy is used in the New Testament as part of the prophecies concerning John the Baptist, Behold, I send My messenger to prepare the way before Me... (Mal. 3:1).

Excerpt taken from "These Truths We Hold - The Holy Orthodox Church: Her Life and Teachings". Compiled and Edited by A Monk of St. Tikhon's Monastery. Copyright 1986 by the St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, South Canaan, Pennsylvania 18459.