

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH

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D. L. Moody once is said to have made the statement that early in his ministry he found that everyone to whom he spoke knew that they ought to be saved. They said: "yes, we have never accepted the Lord though we know we should. The Bible says this and we know it is true; we ought to do it." He would quote a verse from the Bible; that settled it; that's what the Bible said; it was a matter of whether they were willing to do what they knew was right. But he said that toward the end of his ministry he noticed a change, he noticed more and more that when he presented the Bible's teachings, people said: "Yes, but how do we know this is true? How do we know that this is the word of God?" There was a spreading doubt about the dependability of the Word of God, about the fact that what it says is true.

Various problems have contributed to this change of attitude throughout so much of our world, but no one of them has been more important than the effects of higher criticism. Three hundred years ago people believed the Bible was true or they believed it was false. Now the situation has changed. In the last 300 years there has sprung up a method of approach to the Bible which is superficially called "the Higher Criticism." There is no harm in using that for a name, though it is not a strictly accurate title. It is an approach, a study, a criticism.

There is nothing wrong with the phrase, "criticism of the Bible" and there is nothing wrong with the word "higher criticism." Higher criticism means the criticism that is not dealing simply with the minutia, to know what the text exactly is and what it means, but with such questions as: where did it come from? who wrote it? when was it written? and how dependable is it?

There is nothing wrong with higher criticism in itself, but higher criticism during the last 200 years has swung very strongly against belief in the Scriptures and brought forward an approach to the Scripture which was previously unknown. This approach has resulted in an idea that the books of the Old Testament were mostly written by many writers instead of by the ones whose names they bear, and that their parts were written at many different periods. For instance, they say that Gen. 1 might have been written at 600 or 500 B.C. and Gen. 2 perhaps 400 years earlier. They say that certain chapters, or verses, or even parts of verses were written in widely differing periods, and then were brought together later on by editors or redactors, into the volumes as we have them today. And this idea has come to be accepted by most scholars, in nearly every university in the world where anything is taught about the Bible. In nearly every theological seminary that is over 25 years old, this higher criticism is taught.

When I was asked to give some lectures at a student conference where there were students from many parts of the United States and Canada, I distributed a questionnaire to find out what they knew and what their backgrounds were. I asked: "Have you been bothered by questions about the higher criticism?" All of