This paper provides the critique of the book *Criminals of the Bible: Twenty-Five Case Studies of Biblical Crimes and Outlaws* by Mark Jones. This book is the representation of twenty-five biblical crimes and of the individuals, who were involved into these crimes as well as the outcomes of their actions and lessons learnt. It is essential to emphasize the fact that the Bible is filled with numerous examples of crimes, which are committed both by infamous and famous people.

As it has been stated above, in the scope of this book, twenty-five crimes are investigated by the author providing biblical contexts for each of them. For instance, the author discusses what type of the crime it was at the time of its commitment and what type of crime it would be now. While referring to the punishment, Jones has also presented two possible aspects – biblical context of the punishment and the typical punishment implied by the rules, norms, and regulations of the modern societies.

While referring to the fact that the plot of the book may be considered truer than fiction, it is possible to make a claim that this book is accurate, informative, entertaining, and thought-provoking. The core target audience for such literature may include the individuals, who are interested in current events, crime, history, and social issues as well as by pastors, college students, biblical seminarians and students, and Bible leaders.

While writing the critique of the book by Jones, additional attention should be paid to the fact that the Bible may be considered by some people as a shocking book. One of the main reasons for making such a statement is the
fact that there is a significant quantity of stories in the Bible, which may impress the reader. Moreover, there is a set of complex and integrated characters. All the stories in the book are broken down into the easy-to-understand formats. In the scope of each particular section, the core emphasis is put on different scenarios. The following outline is followed within the book: reference for the crime from the scriptural point of view; principle character / character’s short biography; the social, legal, and political context and definition of the crime for that timeframe; representation of the same crime from the perspective of social, legal, and political approaches; outlining the set of the lessons, which may be learnt by the reader from the particular crime.

After reading this book, it is possible to make a claim that its writing style is to-the-point and easy to understand. The author has given an explanation of the legal jargon of laymen and, in such a manner, made an attempt to teach the reader about some aspects of the biblical history.

In the scope of this book, it is possible to follow the stories about the chosen individuals and the crimes they committed in a way, paying attention to more details about each particular case and situation.

Despite the fact that the book *Criminals of the Bible: Twenty-Five Case Studies of Biblical Crimes and Outlaws* was properly written and researched, it lacks discretion for the readers, who are under the age of 17. Taking into consideration the fact that Jones neither glorified committed crimes, nor gave their detailed description, the comparison of these crimes to the modern day life is not ‘light’ in terms of reading. It is possible to make an assumption that this book would be a good guide and aid for the students, who are pursuing degree in criminal justice or law and for the young adults, who have the desire to deeper understand such accounts.
While reading this book, there arise some questions, for instance, how it could be that Moses – an individual who has brought down the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, committed homicide crimes concealing them. As it has been pointed out by the author of the book, Moses may be considered as an evident example of Biblical heroes who could commit wrongdoings.

The book may be referred to as the investigation of the most significant events and actions. The author has included such infamous negative heroes as Jezebel, Cain, and the highwaymen, who have committed robbery. In addition, Mark Jones pays attention to David and Moses – the icons of the Old Testament. Moreover, he mentions the cases of Jesus Christ and John the Baptist. This book tells about the situations when these people have been falsely accused, were superseded by God’s law, or have broken an unjust law.

The author’s research in the area of Biblical scholarship and his expertise as the professor of criminal justice at East Carolina University contribute to his exposition.

The previous books of Mark Jones were dedicated to the investigation and analysis of the topics of community corrections and the history of the U.S. criminal justice pioneers.

It is essential to put an emphasis on the fact that each of the cases depicted by Jones is made in almost the same format (as it has been discussed in the beginning of the book review). Each of the cases starts with the quote from the Scripture. These quotes range from several lines to two pages; in addition, they are followed by the background information about the principal characters.
King Ahab has been chastised by Queen Jezebel for terrorizing his subject; it is possible to support this claim with the quote: “Is this how you act as King over Israel?” Afterwards, Queen Jezebel forces two men to testify that God and the King were disavowed by the landowner named Naboth. As a result, Naboth was stoned and Ahab got the option of seizing his land. The author of the book has delved into the background of Jezebel’s reputation among the representatives of Christians - such figures like Lady Macbeth.

The section, which is referred to as “the crime”, is mainly dedicated to the interpretation of the texts from the perspective of actual or alleged wrongdoings, often referring to Mosaic Law and defining criminal terms. In the scope of the “modern view” section, the wrongdoing is taken by the author in terms of its existence in the present day society. For instance, in the chapter dedicated to the analysis of Jezebel’s crime, the author refers to the scandal with Monica Lewinsky and O.J. Simpson’s trial; the thesis is supported with the quotes of Sissela Bok.

Each case ends with the section of ‘lessons’, which presents the effects of the reading for the modern Christians. In the majority of cases, the most essential experience and lesson cited by Mark Jones is God’s forgiveness: “There is no unforgivable sin”. At the same time, it is important to point out that in the lion share of the cases, the author foregoes preaching and substitutes it with the common story and sensible examples for supporting his points. For instance, the 9th and 10th Commandments, the danger of “tending to satisfy the needs of our own ego,” and the threat of unchecked political power are included into the lessons taken from Jezebel and Ahab’s story. In addition, there are some insights into the factor of “responsibility acceptance” among the judges, who are responsible for sentencing guidelines today.
To conclude, it is essential to put an emphasis on the fact that the author had an intension to represent the idea that we can take lessons from everyday life; that is why Mark Jones represented the Biblical characters as the people who are living in the nowadays societies. The core emphasis has been put on the fact that everyone is under the risk of making errors.