

HERMENEUTICS

**Keys for
Interpreting the Scriptures**

Dr. Paul G. Caram

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FOREWORD

The Author of our soul has created us with a capacity to communicate with one another in many various ways. Therefore, it would be strange indeed if He had given us a Book about Himself that we could not understand. *The Sacred Scriptures* are in fact God's communications to man, and the things He divulged were intended to be understood by every honest believer.

Since the Lord loves His children dearly and longs to bring them into intimate fellowship with Himself, He certainly would convey the revelation of His will in words and illustrations that are plain and evident. The Heavenly Father did not try to confuse His people when He gave us His written Word! He meant exactly what He said, and the life He breathed into the Scriptures express clearly and *precisely* what He wanted man to know about His nature, and all the other issues that pertain to life and godliness (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

Although the Word of God contains innumerable gems of truth, some are more obvious than others. Many of these beautiful treasures lie upon the surface while others are buried more deeply, waiting still to be recognized, sought for, and apprehended by worthy and diligent seekers.

For many years I have desired to create a book on Bible hermeneutics, which is “the science of interpreting the Scriptures.” In this study, I have purposely avoided the use of technical words and terms which generally are appreciated only by theologians. Instead, I have attempted to adopt the methods of the Master Teacher of the Universe whose style was supernaturally uncomplicated.

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught with the greatest simplicity, framing His messages from a range of only six hundred vocabulary words in the Gospels, and none of His words are hard to understand. Bypassing the intellect, Jesus spoke directly *to the heart*. It is our prayer that this study will supply valuable keys to open up the Scriptures, not only to the student of theology but to the lay person as well. May the Holy Spirit guide us now into all truth.

Paul G. Caram, Ph.D.

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Table of Contents

Foreword

I. Introduction	Page 7
II. Personal Rules for the Interpreter Himself	Page 9
III. Principles for Interpreting the Scriptures	Page 19
IV. Keys for Opening Up the Old Testament	Page 49
V. Keys for Opening Up the New Testament	Page 187
VI. Other Closing Comments	Page 233

I. INTRODUCTION TO HERMENEUTICS

The Science of Interpretation

Hermeneutics is *the science of interpretation*. It is a search to find the meaning of an author's words and phrases and then, by the grace of God, to explain it to others. With communication there is often a gap between the sender and the receiver of a message. Hermeneutics seeks to bridge this gap. In the Bible, the Sender is God and His writers; the receiver is mankind. One problem we face in Biblical interpretation is that God used over forty different authors from all walks of life over a period of 2000 years, using three different languages. However, there are *numerous* other factors that can affect our interpretation of the sacred Scriptures. Below are just a few examples:

- Culture, dress, manners, and customs that are different from our own.
 - Differing translations of the Scriptures (obsolete words, poor pronouns, verbs, and tenses).
 - Whether a Bible writer's thoughts were intended to be literal, figurative, or both.
 - The ability to recognize the difference between the *interpretation* and *application* of Scripture.
 - Differentiating between natural and spiritual meanings of Scripture.
 - The context in which something was said. Taken out of context, anything can become error.
 - Knowing which Bible principle to apply to our situation; (there are many to choose from).
 - Distinguishing unto whom a particular message was written (to the Jews, Gentiles, or both).
 - Calendar differences in Bible times — of months, days, and years.
 - Understanding climate, seasons, and agriculture to explain terms such as “former and latter rain.”
 - Knowing Eastern expressions like— “gird up the loins of your mind” or “a deceitful bow”.
 - Dispensations / Covenants – Does something apply to the time of the Law or the Age of Grace?
 - Whether a promise is to natural Israel or to the Church, or both.
 - History / Chronology. It is important to know *when* Bible men lived and key events took place.
 - Circumstances in which a Bible book is written (e. g. Isaiah - during the Assyrian invasions).
 - A realization that everything cannot be taken at face value. Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes when he was old, backslidden and depressed. Ecclesiastes shows us the fruit of a backslidden preacher.
 - Parables, allegories, types, figures, shadows and patterns that enrich our interpretation.
 - Geography — cities, places, Israel's journey, Paul's travels; these make the narrative more vivid.
 - Numbers — every number in Scripture has a divine meaning and has significance.
 - Colors — every color also has a spiritual meaning.
 - Names — every name and place has an important spiritual truth.
 - Spiritual terms such as propitiation, atonement, and grace need clarification and explanation.
 - Jewish feasts, offerings, the tabernacle, and priestly garments all have present day applications.
 - Types — every person in Scripture is a type of people we see in the Church today. For example, Paul represents stability, but Absalom is a flatterer and usurper. Peter is impulsive but loyal.
- All the prophets are types of Christ and reveal some aspect of Christ.

In this textbook the above subjects and others will be considered as we create a set of standards and offer other useful guidelines to help us interpret and apply the Word of God skillfully to our everyday lives and circumstances.

II. PERSONAL RULES FOR THE INTERPRETER

1.) The Greatest Need – A Heart Fully Committed to God

Before we confront the obstacle of interpreting the Scriptures, we need to face the biggest giant of all—the need for a pure heart. *Understanding* is in fact an issue of the heart more than the mind. Most difficulties over interpretation are not from the lack of information but because of issues in the heart that are not dedicated to God such as pride, motives that are not right, and moral impurity. These are the real culprits that distort man's understanding. Therefore, I would like to be very bold to say that our greatest foe is not ignorance, but a heart that is not fully surrendered to God. I have learned in my forty years as a student and teacher that the most critical issue at hand is not the *hearing* of truth but the *love* for it. This is perfectly illustrated in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. It is clear from these passages that deception overtakes people not because truth is unavailable, but because “men loved darkness rather than light.” They did not receive a love for the truth.

Judas the apostle sat at the feet of the greatest Teacher of all time, yet his heart was never changed. The sayings of Jesus never *sank down into his ears* (Lk. 9:44). Instead he plotted the Savior's death. Most of the scribes and doctors of the Law, with all of their study of the original Hebrew and Greek, could not recognize the Living Word Himself when He stood in their presence (Jn. 5:39,40).

2.) Not Extensive Study of Greek, but Grace

Although studying the original Greek and Hebrew texts can enrich our understanding, this is not the most important key for finding the correct interpretations. Even the greatest Hebrew and Greek scholars of our day cannot see eye to eye; they have major differences among themselves. The theologians of Jesus' time had the original Greek and Hebrew texts at their disposal, and so did unconverted Paul, who is said to have memorized both versions by heart and could quote them verbatim. Yet until God sovereignly shines His light into the soul, no one can see or understand (2 Cor. 4:6; 3:14-16). Not only is this true of our new birth experience, it is true of any additional light we receive after new birth. We are totally dependent upon God for illumination. Either God gives us grace to perceive or He does not. Either He opens our eyes or He does not (Prov. 20:12).

3.) The Need for Progressive Light

Our light must increase. We have an outstanding example of progressive light in Isaiah's personal life. After pronouncing six woes upon Israel for their sins (Isa. 5:8, 5:11, 5:18, 5:20, 5:21, 5:22), a seventh woe fell upon Isaiah himself as he cried, “Woe is *me* ... because I am a man of unclean lips” (Isa. 6:5). When Isaiah saw the Lord, the Source of all Light (1 Jn.1:5), he saw *himself*. Isaiah was horrified to discover some dark regions still existing in his own heart. Psalm 36:9 explains, “In thy light shall we see light.” In God's light we can plainly see our real needs. As the chaos and clutter is cleared away from our own personal lives we are then able to bring enlightenment to others. Psychology is *human light*, but it requires *divine light* to locate the root of our problems in order to be healed. When God increases the light in our hearts, it is not to depress us. It is actually to encourage and make us realize that God is intervening in this freshly uncovered area of need, *if we permit Him*. Often before we can “feel good about ourselves” we have to be convinced of the wretchedness of our state, and this can be very unpleasant (cf. Rev. 3:17,18, Prov. 21:2).

4.) Truth is Revealed to Honest Hearts Only

Jesus spoke in parables. The interpretation was deliberately disguised so that only those with an honest heart could find the meaning. “Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables” (Mk. 4:11). The mysteries of God are hidden from those who are wise and prudent *in their own eyes*, but are revealed unto babes (Mt.11:25, Lk.10:21), unto those with a dependent, teachable spirit. (cf. Psalm 131:1,2). If the Son of God does not choose to give light, no one can see or understand God (Mt.11:27). People and indeed *nations* who continually reject God are cursed with blindness (Rom.1:18-32; Isa. 66:4).

God purposely hides truth so that only *a worthy seeker* can discover the hidden treasures of His Word (Prov. 25:2). Regardless of how long a man may search, he will never find the true interpretation of the Scriptures unless God sovereignly imparts His grace. Paul warned Timothy to beware of unconsecrated men who go through life “ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7). Many tedious years of study does not guarantee that a person will find the truth. It depends on *inspiration*, and that comes by grace. A young man named Elihu had to reprove the three older friends of Job for not providing a right answer for Job. Elihu thought, “Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. [Old] men are not always wise, neither do the aged [always] understand judgment” (Job 32:7-9).

5.) The Warning: Imbalanced Truth Becomes Error

It is only by grace that we are able to *balance* the truths that we know. Paul describes this as “Rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). It is an art, even a divine skill, to know how to correctly analyze and balance every subject in Scripture. Whenever a truth is overemphasized, exaggerated, or “one-sided,” it becomes error. Something may be true, but when it is carried too far it becomes false. Upholding only half the truth is equivalent to a lie. We should never major on *some* spiritual truths while neglecting others. Our safety is in majoring on *everything* God has to say, not just our favorite topics. When teachers focus only on *select* areas of truth, the tendency is to minimize or even exclude the others. Evading, neglecting, or rejecting any part of the Word of God is to reject part of God, for Jesus Christ Himself is entitled “The Word of God” (Jn.1:1,14, Rev.19:13).

“Whosoever therefore shall [relax] one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:19a). There is a severe eternal demotion for breaking one of the “*least*” commandments and teaching men so. Can you imagine, then, the judgment for “handling the word of God deceitfully” (2 Cor. 4:2) or bending God's law to make it say something else. In doing so, a teacher is marring the image of Christ and he is producing something false in the character of his listeners and deflecting them perhaps even from eternal life.

6.) The Need to Receive the Key of Knowledge – A Sovereign Impartation

“Woe unto you, lawyers, for ye have taken away the key of knowledge...” (Lk.11:52). The key of knowledge is one of “the keys of the kingdom” (Mt.16:19). The key of knowledge unlocks the meanings of the Scriptures, and God can place this key in our hands (Lk. 24:45). The religious leaders were the interpreters of the law, yet these shrewd lawyers used *many subtle technicalities* to get around *overwhelming evidence* in matters pertaining to the law. Jesus rebuked them for their hypocrisy, saying they were “straining [out] a gnat, and swallowing a camel” (Mt. 23:24).

“Straining *out* a gnat” comes from a Pharisaic tradition, for the Pharisees filtered their drinking water through a straining cloth to avoid swallowing an “unclean” insect. These lawyers, who were so meticulous to avoid swallowing a tiny insect, then “*gulped down a camel.*” The metaphor is quite clear. While majoring on trivial issues, they totally disregarded matters of far greater significance. Thus, they were hypocrites and blind guides who had taken away “the key of knowledge.”

There are certain keys of knowledge that unlock Scripture, and that is what this book is all about. We are looking for important keys, germ thoughts, divine principles and foundational truths that open up other vast areas of truth in the Scriptures. Yet the greatest key of all, as we have said from the beginning, is a heart that is resolved to do the whole of God's will. “If any man [willeth to] do His will, he shall know the doctrine.” This is a divine promise we can stand on (cf. John 7:17). Actually, it is as simple as this—a pure heart understands! When the motives of our heart are holy, God will reward us with discernment, and we will have heavenly perspective on all of today's important issues. (See also John 5:30, Ezekiel 44:23, Malachi 3:18, and Daniel 12:10b.)

In John 5:44, the Master Teacher indicted the clergy when He cried: “How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?” What was blocking the inflow of faith and the spirit of understanding? Certainly it was *not* a lack of study. “They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (Jn.12:43)! This is the reason these theologians could not recognize the One who is written on every page of Scripture (cf. Lk. 24:27).

7.) Envy and Jealousy Are Major Hindrances to Right Interpretation

Envy and jealousy are major problems of the heart that cloud a man's judgment. Envy and jealousy *blinded* the theologians so that they could not accept their Messiah or understand His teachings. Even Pontius Pilate clearly understood that it was *envy* that prompted the chief priests to deliver Jesus to him to be crucified (Mt. 27:18, Mk.15:10). Because of envy and jealousy, they hated Him without a cause (Jn.15:22-25).

Envy is “to dislike and even wish ill against others because they possess something superior or have some advantage.” Rachel *envied* her sister because Leah had children, while she herself was barren (Gen. 30:1). *Jealousy* is the demand to be number one, opposing all rivals. When David became competition to King Saul, the king tried to kill him. “Jealousy is as cruel as the grave” (Song 8:6). In Exodus 34:14, God Himself is described as Jealous, yet He has every right to demand to be Number One because He is the owner of the universe. But when *man* tries to be number one and draws men to himself instead of to God, he is cursed with a perverted spirit of jealousy. Envy and jealousy have one thing in common: both revolve around the sin of *comparing* oneself with others. What is the cure for envy and jealousy? Let us stop comparing ourselves with one another and competing with one another and striving to be *number one* (2 Cor.10:12, Jn. 21:21, Lk. 22:24).

If we boast that our church is the fastest growing church in the region, we are comparing and we are competing. Let us cease from pride, self-exaltation and striving to be number one (1 Kg.1:5). Let us make God number one and “esteem others better than ourselves” (Phil. 2:3). Then we will be happy and blessed, and we will never be vexed with the spirit of jealousy. Where there is love and unity— “God commands the blessing, even life forevermore.” (See Psalm 133, Acts 2:1,2).

These are “heart issues” that affect our interpretation of the Scriptures! We are talking about the most important hermeneutical principle of all here—having right motives in the heart. Why did most of the theologians refuse the Living Word of God as He taught among them, and why could they not accept His interpretation of the Scriptures? *It was envy!* “He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mt. 7:28,29). The Scribes recognized that He had authority and favor from God that they did not have. Thus, they envied Jesus. And how did He receive this authority and approbation? — “He always did those things which pleased the Father” (Jn. 8:29). His whole aspiration in life was this: “I have come to do thy will O God” (Heb.10:7). This is the key to having revelation! Jesus was a rival and a threat to them. They were afraid they would lose their positions of authority (Jn.11:47,48). Therefore, it was envy and jealousy that obscured their interpretation of the Messiah, and their envy and jealousy is what nailed Jesus to the cross.

Many years ago there were twelve missionaries in an African village who were praying fervently for a visitation from God. One day, God visited them, and suddenly a thousand people surrounded the compound. God began to move by His Spirit and perform miracles. The sad part of the story which is all too common, is this: Two of the ladies who prayed the most fervently for revival were the first to oppose it. What was the problem? It was envy and jealousy. Perhaps God was using people they did not like or deem worthy. Whatever problems they may have had in their lives, you can see how these unresolved “heart problems” *distorted* and *opposed* what God was doing and saying.

8.) Hardness of Heart – Another Blockage to Right Interpretation

The generation that came out of Egypt never entered the land of promise because of hardness of heart and unbelief. Israel could not understand what God was doing in their lives in the wilderness; thus, they complained bitterly against Him (Heb. 3:8-11), but this is directly related to a hardened heart. Even the brothers of Jesus did not believe in Him, and neither did the inhabitants of Nazareth where He was brought up (Jn. 7:3-5, Mk. 6:1-6). A hardened heart brings terrible *insensitivity*. It dulls ones ability to understand and perceive what God is attempting to do for us. Therefore, if we are going to understand the Scriptures, if we are going to receive true guidance from the Scriptures, we must have a soft heart, a circumcised heart. Hardness of heart, unbelief, and spiritual dullness all work together. These form an evil trinity.

Divorce and unforgiveness also result from a hardened heart – “I cannot and will not forgive you.” A hardened heart *shuts people out* of one's life. When the human heart is wounded and hardens itself, it can no longer think and deal objectively. If we suffer an injury, it is so important to come to the throne of grace to “find grace to help in time of need.” Otherwise the heart becomes hard and unresponsive (Hebrews 4:16 versus 12:15). Anyone who is serious about knowing God and accurately interpreting His Word must have a tender heart. “Faith works by love” (Gal. 5:6). Faith and understanding cannot operate in a hard and stony heart. Israel repeatedly hardened their hearts in the wilderness so that God Himself deprived them of understanding (cf. Deut. 29:2-4). Hardened hearts *never prosper* or find favor with God (Job 9:4, Heb. 3:8, 3:15, Psa. 95:8, Mk. 3:5).

This road to a heart of flesh (a heart free of all hardness and conflict) is a very long road. This is the path of the just that grows brighter and brighter (Prov. 4:18). To be spiritual, we need a continuous meeting with God on all the issues in our lives. When Isaiah saw the Lord, he saw himself. Then he could see all of life's situations more clearly (Psa. 36:9). Discernment increases as our heart is searched with God's light. “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see [as God sees]” (Mt. 5:8).

9.) Be Uncomplicated, Just Like the Master Teacher

A teacher is *an explainer* and must teach in simple words. Jesus, the most profound teacher of all time, used great simplicity of speech. The mark of a great teacher is *simplicity*. He takes what is complex and makes it easy for his students to understand. A teacher who understands his subject can summarize vast amounts of information and capsule it in a few simple words. Simplicity is often *the opposite approach* of many of our modern theological seminaries that use complicated words and terms that only an elite group can appreciate. But what is the goal of an interpreter? It is to make his topic clear and plain, so palatable in fact that very ordinary people can lay hold of it and put it to use. Let us learn an important lesson from the greatest Teacher of all time. His style was supernaturally uncomplicated. Christ taught from a range of six hundred vocabulary words in the Gospels and none of His words are hard to understand. Let us avoid the trap of intellectualism and speak directly *to the heart*. Intellectualism is the mentality of the scribes and lawyers, but it is a spirit that opposes Christ and clouds the Scriptures.

10.) Be “Not As the Scribes”

“For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mt. 7:28). The scribes were well versed in all the differing schools of thought and all the debatable issues of the day. The rabbinical schools in Jerusalem taught their young teachers to be debaters. The debating spirit is seen in newly converted Paul, who was trained in Jerusalem (Acts 9:29). However, the Master Teacher was never a debater, nor did He ever set forth all the differing views. He never said, “This is the allegorical view, this is the literal view, and this is the historical view.” Christ never offered his listeners a variety of opinions from which to choose. He taught as one having authority. Timothy was *assured* of the things he had learned from Paul. The Apostle Paul never imparted a spirit of hesitancy or indecision. Paul taught Timothy in a positive manner. (See 2 Timothy 3:14). It is not necessary to carefully examine and delve into all the conflicting views of theology. Let us ask God to show us the right view and focus on that.

While we are on this thought of “opposing views,” it is appropriate here to mention the study of false religions. Actually, it is not Scriptural to spend a lot of time studying something that is false. Jeremiah 10:2 warns, “Learn not the way of the heathen.” A number of years ago some missionaries were sent to Japan. The missions board told them to thoroughly study the religions of Japan in order to counteract them, but this resulted in several of the missionaries losing their faith. It is not good to fill our minds with the teachings of demons. Instead, we should concentrate on those things that are true and then we will recognize the false. Bank tellers are trained to know the real bills in order to discern the false. This applies to our Christian faith as well. Just know the truth and then you will quickly identify the counterfeit. The Holy Spirit never instructs us to learn the ways of darkness. Do not waste your time acquainting yourself with all the wrong views.

11.) Choose the Right Teachers

Often a mediocre ball team rises to the top when they are given *a superior coach*. Who we have as our teachers makes all the difference. Next to being consecrated to God, the most important key to understanding the Scriptures is selecting the right teachers. If a young man has a wise heart, he will gravitate to those who have wisdom. If he has no heart for wisdom, he will admire and follow teachers who have no substance and a shallow message. This is the way to determine a wise heart.

Acts 4:23 is a very interesting passage of Scripture. “And being let go, they went to their own company.” The fact is, everyone is attracted “to his own company,” or his own kind, and settles in with them. Our character is known by the friends we have and the people we rely on for guidance and counsel. Association is very revealing. When there are questionable new doctrines going around, one of the best ways to determine whether it is of God is by simply observing the kind of people who follow it. If the doctrine is wrong, those who are simple run after it (Rom.16:18).

In Genesis, when a man died, he was “gathered to his people” (Genesis 25:8; 25:17; 35:29; 49:29; 49:33). The expression “gathered to his people” implies more than just being buried with one's ancestors in the same burial ground. After death, our soul is gathered to those who are of the same spiritual family. For example, the prophets (after death) were gathered into one special place even though they were not related by family ties. In heaven, people dwell on differing spiritual plateaus. Everyone goes to his own spiritual “tribe.” Instructors who break one of the least commandments and teach men so are termed “the least [important] in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:19). In eternity, the teachers who have altered God's Word will dwell together on an inferior plateau. They are all of the same tribe—the least important in the kingdom of heaven (cf. Eze. 44:10-14).

“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise” (Prov.13:20). To be a wise person it is imperative to discern who is walking with God. Open your spirit to the *right* spiritual counselors and you will absorb their mentality. The same rule applies to the books we read. We will have the same spirit as the author. Be selective as to what seeds you allow to be sown in your heart. A mixture of good and bad seeds that are sown in our hearts will turn into a harvest of confusion and contradiction (See Leviticus 19:19).

Right Teachers – A Tremendous Advantage to Learning

Acts 8:28-31 - One day a man from Ethiopia was sitting in his chariot reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked him, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The Ethiopian replied, “How can I except some man should guide me?” Then he invited Philip to join him in his chariot, and Philip began to expound *Christ* from those passages in Isaiah (Acts 8:35).

This account in the book of Acts is a divine lesson on *the importance of teachers*. “How can I understand except some man should guide me?” It is not Scriptural to think that we can learn everything on our own without the help of others. When unconverted Paul met Christ on the Damascus road, he asked, “What do you want me to do?” Jesus replied, “Go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6, cf. 22:10). When Paul went into the city, God used a man named Ananias to tell him the other things he needed to know. Thus, God uses human agencies to speak to us. There are many things people will never understand unless they are instructed by human instruments who are sent from God. God has set teachers in His Church to help others understand (1 Cor.12:28). Having competent teachers is a tremendous *shortcut* to learning the ways of God. Teachers help us to learn *far more* and *much faster*.

The majority of Christ's three-and-a-half year ministry revolved around *teaching*. He was giving the hearers a new mind and shaping a people for eternity. Right words set men free (Jn. 8:32). It is the truth that sets men free, not sympathy, sincerity, humanism, or intellectualism. May we never forget the power of an idea or concept—it produces a life-style and it takes people somewhere. What we teach is going to place people's feet on a good path, or a wrong one (see James 3:1-2).

12.) Have the Fear of the Lord – This is the Beginning of Wisdom and Knowledge

“[In order] to know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding ... to give subtlety to the simple, and to the young man knowledge and discretion ... to understand a proverb and the interpretation; the words of the wise and their dark sayings. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge ...” (Prov.1:2-7). “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ...” (Prov. 9:10).

The fear of the Lord is *an anointing*. In fact, it is one of the seven spirits of the Lord mentioned in Isaiah 11:2. “The fear of the Lord is clean” (Psa.19:9). “Clean” literally means *cleansing*. “The fear of the Lord is *cleansing*.” This word is found in Leviticus 16:30 and Ezekiel 36:33. The anointing of holy fear *cleanses* and keeps us clean, and it also brings “quick understanding” (Isa.11:3). Joseph, the son of Jacob, possessed the fear of God. He fled temptation and was *kept clean* (Gen. 39:11-13; 42:18). The fear of the Lord keeps believers from going astray (Jer. 32:40). This divine fear is also the beginning of wisdom. In order “to understand a proverb and the words of the wise and their dark sayings, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” But “none of the wicked shall understand” (Dan.12:10b), for sin brings a stupor over men's minds.

13.) Seek an Intimate Relationship – The Secret to Receiving Revelation

Understanding the mysteries of God is a spiritual issue; it does not depend on a brilliant mind. It is an issue of *relationship* — of loving God dearly and living a holy life. *Illumination* is a gift of grace to the devout. Psalm 97:11 declares: “Light is sown for the righteous.” Light is literally *planted* in the heart of the righteous, and it is strewn all along his pathway. As Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, many precious, eternal truths were planted in her heart which would “never be taken away from her” (Lk.10:38-42). Let us learn from Mary to “wait upon the Lord” (Isa. 40:31, Psa. 27:14).

John was “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He was the one who leaned upon Jesus, and out of this deep affection for the Lord came the greatest revelation of all—The Book of Revelation. Amazingly, John was considered “ignorant and unlearned” by the rabbis in Jerusalem (Acts 4:13). John had never earned a degree at the rabbinical school ... but he had been with Jesus.

14.) Heart Preparation – More Important Than a Cultivated Intellect

The Jews reckoned Ezra to be “the second Moses”. In the Jewish writings, Ezra is placed next to Moses for his superior knowledge of the Law. Ezra compiled much of I-II Chronicles. He organized the genealogies, selected the inspired Psalms, and arranged the canon of the Old Testament. Ezra was a scribe, a priest, an intercessor, and a teacher; but above all, he was a man of *heart relationship* with God. Observe what God says of Ezra, one of history's greatest teachers:

“ ... *Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments*” (Ezra 7:10). First of all Ezra prepared his *heart*, not his head. He prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to *obey* it and then to *teach* it. Even more important than the cultivation of the intellect, Ezra first prepared *his heart*. This means he sought God to understand the Law. Then he practiced and taught it. Ezra was a man of *relationship*. Understanding is obtained by waiting reverentially in God's presence. A relationship of sweet fellowship with God and an obedient life are vital keys to receiving revelation.

15.) Know the Author of the Scriptures / Understand His Character

The best way to understand any book is to know the author himself. This is especially true of God's Book, the Bible. More than forty writers were overshadowed and inspired by the same Author—the Holy Spirit; it is the Holy Spirit *alone* who can make us understand the true interpretation. Therefore, we must know the Author of the Bible and we must know His *unchanging character* and nature. Then our doctrines and convictions will become vividly clear.

God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. He does not change. With the Lord there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning (Heb.13:8, Mal. 3:6, Jas.1:17). God did not become more merciful in the New Testament Age than He was in the Old Testament times. From everlasting to everlasting He is God, and He does not change. The eternal God has not learned any new lessons from history, nor has He become wiser. He already knows the end from the beginning.

Recently a Bible teacher asserted, “After your new birth experience there is absolutely nothing that can separate you from the love of God. No matter what you do, absolutely nothing can sever you from your relationship with God.” But this is an exaggeration of a legitimate truth, for when we consider *all* of Scripture (not just some verses), this cannot be substantiated. Consider Lucifer, the most magnificent creature of all time, who stood next to the Deity. Today he is the archenemy of the Lord. Not only has he lost God's favor, he is doomed to eternal judgment. When God's holy nation became vile, God had to destroy His own city, sanctuary, and most of the people of Israel (2 Chron. 36:11-21; Jer.18:9-11). Judas was a major apostle. He could preach and perform the same miracles as the eleven apostles, but today he is not in heaven (Mt.10:1-4, 7:21-23).

The love of God cannot be fathomed, but neither can His anger. If we believe in God's love, we have to believe in His anger as well. “Behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God” (Rom.11:22). As we come to understand *God's immutable and unchanging character*, all of our teachings become so very clear. Remember, God's character has not changed since Lucifer's fall. It is our obligation to emphasize *all* of God's revelation. To preach only *part* of the truth is to be a false witness for God. Therefore, our safety depends on having *the whole picture*. A teacher's conclusions and convictions should never be based on several passages of Scripture. If a concept is true, it will be supported *in many other places* in Scripture and it will not contradict other verses. When properly interpreted, a truth should flow from Genesis to Revelation.

16.) Experience the Truth / Pay for the Truth

Ezekiel and John were both commanded to “eat the book” before they prophesied (Ezek. 3:1-4, Rev.10:9-11). There is a great difference between *hearing* the Word and *assimilating* it. For some, the Word only reaches their ears. This was true in the life of Judas. His heart was never changed. He listened to the Master Teacher, but the words only registered in his mind. *Eating* the Word is quite different (cf. Jer.15:16). It is to thoroughly imbibe the Word and get it into every cell of our being. The Word is sweet to our taste when we hear it, but bitter in our belly as it is assimilated and absorbed. Then it becomes part of us. There is a price to pay if we are going to *own* the truth. “Buy the truth and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23). The truths of Scripture are like beautiful pearls. We hold them and even preach them, yet we do not own them until we have *paid* for them. Paying for our message with *many costly experiences* gives us authority, and then we are not at the mercy of theories.

Today, many of our Theological seminaries are turning out graduates whose heads are filled with information, but whose hearts are void of faith. They know all about politics, social programs, philosophy, other religions, theories, psychology, and humanism, but possess little spiritual life. Let us turn from the lifeless intellectual approach *unto* the realities of the Spirit-filled life of faith.

In our introductory pages, we have focused on the interpreter himself and his spiritual condition. This preparation was necessary before we focus on the actual mechanics of interpretation. In the conclusion of this section, we would like to capsule the foregoing into five main headings:

- Live a life of Obedience. Understanding is a gift of God. It is given to those who live right. “Light is sown for the righteous” (Psa. 97:11). A person with a pure heart is granted the ability to perceive (Jn. 7:17). Let us walk with Him Who is the Light, be filled with the Light, and love the Light. Then our soul surely will see with clarity (cf. Psalm 36:9).
- Come to know the Author of the Scriptures – the Lord Himself. When we know the heart of an author we will understand his book. Revelation flows from a relationship of love. John leaned on Jesus and received the revelation of the betrayer, Judas (Jn.13:21-27), and the Book of Revelation.
- Receive the Key of Knowledge. To those who are consecrated to God He imparts “the key of knowledge” that opens up the Scriptures. This is a gift; it is one of the keys of the kingdom. The impartation of this gift is a divine and sovereign act of God. “*Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures*” (Lu. 24:45, cf. 1 Kg. 3:9-12).
- Walk with the Godly. Discern the right teachers. Open your spirit to the right mentors. Teachers are a tremendous *shortcut* into the ways of understanding (Acts 8:30-31, 1 Cor.12:28). We learn far more when we sit before teachers sent of God. Do not open your spirit to everyone or there will be a *mixture* of seeds sown in your heart and you will have confusion.
- Diligence of study. God does not bless laziness or ignorance. We are commanded to take heed to ourselves and to the doctrine (1 Tim. 4:16, 2 Tim. 2:15, 3:16-17, Prov. 2:1-5). God honors diligence of study and research. Therefore, we must *apply our hearts* unto wisdom. Although Solomon was endowed with the spirit of wisdom, he still had to study (Ecc.12:9-12). Yet we must be led of God as to which resources to use.

Preparing the Personal Life of the Interpreter

SUMMARY

- * The greatest hermeneutical law for having the correct interpretation is a heart dedicated to God.
- * Understanding is an issue of the heart more than of the mind.
- * Ezra first prepared his heart to understand, then his mind, and he walked in obedience (Ez.7:10).
- * Problems in the heart *distort* man's understanding of God, His ways, and His Word (Mk. 3:5).
- * The theologians of Jesus' time would not accept the Messiah because their hearts were so hard.
- * It was the envy and jealousy of the spiritual leaders that nailed Jesus to the cross (Mt. 27:18).
- * Wrong motives distort a man's judgment from understanding spiritual matters (Jn. 5:44).
- * A heart that is surrendered to God reaps understanding and discernment (Mal. 3:18, Prov. 9:10).
- * Loving the Light, walking in the Light, being searched with the Light is the key to illumination.
- * Anyone who is willing to do God's will shall *know* the doctrine (Jn. 7:17). This is God's promise.
- * An intimate relationship with the Author of the Book is the key to understanding His Book.
- * Those who love the Author of the Book will plainly understand His Word. (e. g. John).
- * John had no theological degree but he leaned on Jesus—and he wrote the Book of Revelation.
- * God does not grant the truth to everyone. He conceals His mysteries (Mk. 4:11, Mt.11:25).
- * Israel was deprived of understanding because of hardened hearts (Deut. 29:2-4, Heb. 3:7-15).
- * The Lord reveals His secrets to *humble* and *worthy* seekers only (Prov. 2:1-5, 25:1, Jas. 4:6).
- * Unless a man finds favor with God, endless study will be to no avail (2 Tim. 3:7).
- * Avoid studying the ways of darkness in order to counteract or refute them. Major on the Light.
- * An intense study of Hebrew and Greek is not the greatest key to understanding the truth.
- * The scribes and Pharisees had the original languages but did not recognize Jesus (Jn. 5:39,40).
- * Even today's scholars of Hebrew and Greek are not able to agree among themselves.
- * Without God's sovereign *grace* and anointing, His truth remains veiled (Prov. 20:12, 1 Pet. 5:5).
- * Until God says to our soul “Let there be light,” the darkness continues (2 Cor. 4:6, 3:14-16).
- * God gives “the key of knowledge” to consecrated men (Lk. 24:45). This is a sovereign act.
- * Even when God grants the ability to understand, we still have to study diligently (Ecc.12:9-12).
- * Many things cannot be understood without the aid of teachers (Acts 8:30,31, 1 Cor.12:28).
- * Harkening to Godly teachers is *a tremendous shortcut* to understanding the Word of God.
- * We cannot open our spirit to every teacher. Discern the Godly and open your spirit to them.
- * The books we study are important, for we receive the same spirit as the author. Be selective.
- * Honesty is important. There are some who handle the Word of God deceitfully (2 Cor. 4:2).
- * By relaxing any of God's commandments and teaching men so, a man loses his reward (Mt. 5:19).
- * Ask God for *the perfect balance* on each subject—rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).
- * Teaching only *part* of the truth is equivalent to lying. Paul taught everything (Acts 20:20,27).
- * Our safety is in knowing and understanding and emphasizing *the whole truth*.

III. PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING THE SCRIPTURES

Rule One

Accept the Literal Meaning of the Scriptures

God fully intended that His Book be clearly understood by all honest believers. Our Creator has enabled mankind to communicate with one another in many varied ways. Therefore, it would be strange indeed if He had given us a book about Himself that we could not understand. A God who loves His people and longs to bring them into intimate fellowship with Himself would surely convey the revelation of His will in words that are plain and evident. Our Heavenly Father is not trying to fool us! God meant just what He said, and the life He breathed into the Scriptures communicates clearly and *exactly* what He wanted man to know. (See 2 Timothy 3:16,17).

God's Word should not be seen as a parable or an allegory, although the Scriptures do contain *some* parables and allegories. The Bible as a whole is very literal and not symbolic. Heaven is a real place and so is hell; they are not figurative. When God restored the earth in six days in Genesis chapter one, He did so in six literal days, each one having a "morning and evening" (cf. Ex. 20:11). In Revelation chapter twenty, the reference to the coming Millennial Age is clearly stated six times. It says "a thousand years" and it says so *six times*. We should accept this to mean in a very literal sense, that there will be one thousand years of peace when Christ returns to earth again.

We Understand by Faith

"*Through faith we understand*" (Heb.11:3). A believing heart understands the story of creation, but a hardened heart challenges the simple, literal record God gave us in Genesis. Psalm 33:6,9: "*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.*" God spoke and it happened! It is just that simple. A believing heart accepts this, and God requires us to have faith as a little child. "The world by wisdom knew not God," and that is because the natural mind is an enemy of God (1 Cor.1:21; Rom. 8:7; 2 Cor.10:5). The natural mind also refuses the account of Noah's flood and Jonah's survival in the whale's belly for three days and nights. Yet Christ substantiates all three of these accounts, and they are all very literal:

1. The Creation – Matthew 19:4-5
2. Noah and the Flood – Matthew 24:37-39
3. Jonah and the Whale – Matthew 12:39-41

In my forty years of musing over spiritual matters, I have found that the most common reason for error and strange conclusions is *pride* (Obad.1:3) or some other serious problem in the heart. When a man is overtaken with moral impurity and remains unrepentant, he loses faith and common sense. Other spirits gain a stronghold in his life and his doctrines turn bizarre. For example, he might believe that heaven is not a literal place but an ethereal realm, or that Christ's coming is only figurative, or that the Millennial Age is already here. Until a man is willing to "turn from his iniquity, he cannot understand truth" (Dan. 9:8, 9:13b). You can labor with endless explanations and reasonings with such people, but they have been smitten with spiritual blindness (Deut. 28:28). Unless a person has a real meeting with God and there is genuine repentance, the foggy and confused mind continues. This is the reason we should limit the use of apologetics, although that certainly has its place.

“Literal” Does Not Exclude Spiritual Meanings

When we look at God's Word we should take the simplest and most literal form of interpretation. The Garden of Eden for example was a real geographical place somewhere in the Middle east. The tree of life was a literal tree in the midst of this garden. Both were literal and tangible, yet they also represent something spiritual and eternal.

Some have claimed that the Book of Job is merely a parable, but Job was a real person. This is made very clear in the New Testament when the Apostle James distinguishes Job as a man of patience (Jas. 5:11). God Himself honors Job as one of the three most righteous men in the Old Testament (Ezek.14:14,20). Actually, the Bible itself is its own best interpreter.

One Gem But Many Facets

Now when we say the Scriptures are “literal,” this does not mean that it has no *spiritual* meanings. And this does not mean that it has no *applications*. The Scriptures, though literal, are saturated with numerous hidden meanings as well. We could say, then, that there is *one* literal interpretation of a passage, but *many* applications. A truth is like a beautiful gem. It has many sparkling facets. The same truth can be viewed from many different sides. This is what makes God's Word so rich.

Overemphasis of the “Letter” of the Word

The theologians of Jesus' time carried the “literal meaning” too far. They could only see a physical temple, physical sacrifices, and a physical inheritance. Israel could not look beyond the tangible; they were unable to perceive the spiritual implications. This is what Paul meant when he said “the letter killeth” (2 Cor. 3:6). To the religious leaders, circumcision was a ritual; but circumcision pointed to something much greater – a cutting away of evil from the heart by the Sword of the Word.

The Jews also failed to see the true significance of the temple. They admired the beautiful, tangible temple in Jerusalem but missed the message it symbolized. *We ourselves* are called to be a habitation of God, with His Spirit living within us (1 Cor. 6:19). God seeks to find rest in our individual tabernacles. What kind of resting place are we preparing for Him in our personal lives? Are we making ourselves beautiful for Him? Does He feel at home in us? (cf. Acts 7:48-50; Isa. 66:1,2).

Human nature is inclined to overemphasize symbols or figures but then minimize their *meanings*. Nevertheless *tangible object lessons* are necessary because they help us appreciate the message they depict. For example, Israel's journey from Egypt to Zion was a literal, physical journey, yet this journey portrays the walk of the Christian. It is a divine road map for each believer. Every trial and landmark and stop along the way contains a message for us. “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: *and they are written for our admonition*” (1 Cor.10:11; See v1-15).

In conclusion, let us establish again our first rule of interpretation. We should take the most simple and literal meaning of the Scriptures, yet with the realization that there are hidden meanings locked up within the literal presentation. This prepares us for the second rule of interpretation. In our next rule of interpretation, we will consider the principle of “first the natural, and then the spiritual.” (cf. 1 Cor.15:46). For a moment however, let us first review Rule One.

Rule One—Interpret the Scriptures Literally

SUMMARY

- Take the simplest and most literal form of interpretation.
- The Bible, as a whole, is not a parable or an allegory. It is not “symbolic.”
- God intended every honest believer to understand His Word; He did not try to fool us.
- The six days of creation are literal, twenty-four hour days.
- In creation, God spoke and it happened. He expects us to receive the creation account by faith.
- Hardened hearts have no faith; thus, they revert to intellectualism.
- Heaven and hell are literal places. The Garden of Eden and the tree of life were literal as well.
- Christ is literally and physically coming to earth, and His thousand-year reign is literal.
- *Bizarre conclusions* are the result of issues not right in the heart—pride, bad motives, immorality.
- Endless “explanations” will not help the unrepentant. Hardened hearts cannot understand.
- “Literal” does not exclude the possibility of spiritual meanings and applications.
- Generally, there is *one* literal interpretation, but *many* applications of a passage.
- A truth is like a beautiful gem—it has many facets and can be viewed from many sides.
- It is error to *only* take a literal view, and allow *no* spiritual meanings.
- Israel worshipped the emblems and symbols, but were blinded to their meanings.
- In reference to this, Paul says, “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6).
- The Holy Spirit gives life and meaning to the emblems, symbols, and tangible object lessons.
- It is typical of fallen human nature to make much of a symbol and totally miss what it represents.
- Israel worshipped the Bible but could not recognize its Author when He came (Jn. 5:39,40).
- In conclusion, we should *first* interpret Scripture in its most literal sense.
- After viewing the Scriptures literally, then we may look for the deeper meanings.
- Still, we do not discard the literal meaning, *but build upon it*.
- This brings us to Rule Two—“First that which is natural, and then that which is spiritual.”

Rule Two

Understand the Natural to Understand the Spiritual

“... *that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.*” 1 Corinthians 15:46

Earthly Things Are Emblems of the Heavenly

This next law of interpretation is very important because everything in the natural world reveals a spiritual truth. Jesus said, “If I have told you *earthly things* and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of *heavenly things*” (Jn. 3:12). The teachings of Jesus were all rooted in the seeable, touchable, natural realm. His parables always related to the earthly realm, but they had a heavenly meaning: the sower, the wheat and tares, the lost coin. Earthly things are emblematic of the eternal. Therefore, one has to understand the natural truths before he can hope to see the divine lesson. *Everything* that God created has, in fact, a divine truth, a divine message.

If our eyes could be opened to see the heavenly realm, there would be nothing there that we have not already seen in one form or another here upon earth. In heaven there are beautiful mountains and rivers, green pastures, houses, buildings, and libraries. Of course, in heaven all of these are much more magnificent than those on earth. Heaven is filled with beautiful music. Those who have seen heaven will verify that the finest music here upon earth is utter discord and “noise” compared to the music in heaven. Abraham saw a city whose builder and maker is God. That city is New Jerusalem in heaven, but Jerusalem on earth is symbolic of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The Creator is Known and Understood by His Creation

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, *being understood by the things that are made*, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Rom.1:20). The character of our Creator is known by the things that He has made. Invisible things are understood by the things that are visible. This tangible world is only a shadow of the eternal.

“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).

Consider the character of the Creator through His creation. He made the universe, put all of the celestial bodies into orbit and He calls them all by name (Psa.147:4). Not only is He a God of precision and order, He is a God of infinite power and understanding. Astronomers estimate that the universe spans millions of light years, and they know that this is just the beginning. If the closest star to earth burned out, it would take four years before we knew it.

We see His glory in the heavens. But the horrors of hell are also seen from beneath as the earth spews out its rivers of molten fire. This should implore us to live our lives with eternity in view! “The way of life [leads upward] to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath” (Prov.15:24).

Hell is Understood by Underground Caverns, Molten Rock and Fire

Hell is a very real place in the lower regions of the earth (Eze. 32:18), and there are many entrances into hell from the crust of the earth. In hell, certain places are far worse than others. Some of its prisoners are near the surface of the earth but others are much further down. Some people are continually tormented, while others are tormented off and on, but hell is never pleasant. Some poor souls wander about lost in the dark caverns of hell. What a terrible thing to be literally a “lost” soul.

One prominent man of the twentieth century was seen sitting in hell all alone in a formidable gloom of darkness. In life he was a great orator who championed the cause against Nazism during World War II, yet he had no regard for God. Today the soul of this great statesman who loved prestige and lived for the attention of people, sits in total solitude, engulfed in despair in one of the dark caverns of hell. Often those who are highly esteemed of men are viewed very differently by God (Lk.16:15). It may be of interest to note that this man was of the Conservative party. It does not matter whether one is a liberal or conservative; *anyone* who takes lightly the Son of God who was slain for our sins *deprives himself* of everlasting life (see Acts 13:46, Luke 13:23,24).

Everything God Made Contains a Divine Truth

“And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much ...” (1 Kgs. 4:29). “And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes” (1 Kgs. 4:32,33).

There is a divine lesson in *everything* God has created. With the spirit of wisdom that rested upon Solomon, he was able to see spiritual truths in plants, animals, minerals, trees, fish, seasons, nature, and much more. The human body, as depicted by Paul, represents the body of Christ with each member having a special function. There are mysteries all around us that reveal the ways of God and life itself. We have barely scratched the surface of all that God has to show us. God redeemed us for an eternal purpose—to unfold the riches of His grace unto us for all eternity (Eph. 2:7). His knowledge is more vast than the universe. Is it not humbling to realize how small we are? (Psa. 8:3,4).

God is infinite. His power holds no limits. He is big enough to measure the heavens with the span of His hand (Isa. 40:12), then transform Himself into a tiny embryo and enter the womb of Mary. If we feel we have a firm grasp of the knowledge of God, it would serve us well to remember the words of the Lord to Job when He demanded, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (Job 38:4). How absurd it is for a mortal man to challenge the wisdom of God, the One who inhabits eternity, the One who never had a beginning but has always existed!

God created the clean and unclean animals (Gen. 7:2,8). He did so to teach His people the laws of holiness. He created day and night, light and darkness, to teach us the difference between good and evil, and to distinguish the children of God from the children of the Wicked One (Jn. 3:19-21). God created the seasons to teach us that there are different phases in our lives—times of barrenness and times of fruitfulness, times of great hardship and times of great blessing. Absolutely everything that God created contains a valuable, life-giving message. May the Lord open our eyes.

The New Testament Gives Spiritual Meaning to the Natural Object Lessons of the Old Testament

There must be an understanding of Old Testament object lessons before we can understand their spiritual counterparts in the New Testament. The Old Testament is filled with natural illustrations, but the New Testament breathes life and spiritual meaning into them. Below are a few examples:

OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
First Adam - father of all who are born	Last Adam - father of all who are born again
Natural birth - inheriting Adam's old nature . . .	Spiritual birth - receiving Christ's new nature
Natural circumcision - of the flesh	Spiritual circumcision - cutting away evil in heart
Physical journey - from Egypt to Zion	Spiritual journey - from worldliness to holiness
Physical inheritance - Land of Canaan	Spiritual inheritance - a relationship, a call, a people
Physical enemies - Hittites, Jebusites, etc.	Spiritual enemies - pride, hardness, evil spirits, etc.
Physical weapons - swords, arrows	Spiritual weapons - faith, truth, gifts of the Spirit
Physical children - sons and daughters	Spiritual children - people God gives us to shepherd
Earthly tabernacle made with hands	Spiritual temple - making room in the heart for God
Physical priesthood - only Levites	Spiritual priesthood - all may approach God
Physical sacrifices - animals, rituals.	Spiritual sacrifices - praise, obedience, thanksgiving
Literal feasts in Israel	Spiritual feasts - experienced in our personal lives
Natural Israel - the Jewish nation	Spiritual Israel (Church) - believers in every nation
Earthly Jerusalem - in Palestine	New Jerusalem - on the new earth
Earthly Mt. Zion in Jerusalem	Mt. Zion in New Jerusalem
Law on tablets of stone.	Law written on the tables of the heart
Physical death - temporary separation	Spiritual death - the second death, eternal separation
Isaac and Ishmael	Those of faith vs. those of the natural religious mind
Sarah and Hagar	Those of freedom vs. those of religious bondage

Unconverted Paul had memorized both the Greek and Hebrew versions of the entire Old Testament, and he could quote them verbatim from memory. Yet there was a veil covering his heart and mind, and he did not understand the spiritual meanings of all these types, shadows, and figures. He understood the letter of the Word, but not the meanings. When he met Christ, scales fell from his eyes and then he could begin to see the spiritual implications. Paul then became the supreme interpreter of the New Testament, but all of this came out of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is the Ground of the New Testament

Virtually everything in the New Testament comes from the Old Testament. When Paul told his spiritual son Timothy that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” the New Testament was not yet written. He was making reference to the Old Testament. It was the Old Testament Scriptures that were able to make him “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Jesus opened the Old Testament Scriptures unto his disciples, and showed them that He was written on every page of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (See Luke 24:27; 24:44,45, John 5:39). Therefore, unless we have a firm grasp of the Old Testament, we will never understand or interpret the New Testament Scriptures properly.

Rule Three

The “First Mention” Principle

The Law of First Mention means the interpretation of any verse is aided by examining the first time its subject appears in Scripture. The Law of First Mention sets a precedence. It serves as a foundation and a basis upon which all further revelation on that subject is built.

First Mention of Marriage

Jesus invoked the Law of First Mention to settle the divorce question ... “*in the beginning it was not so.*” The Master Teacher went back to the beginning to the first couple in the Garden of Eden. It is important to accurately locate the first mention of a topic. The first time our Creator speaks about an issue, it is a *seed* that contains all the other roots, branches and fruit of that subject, and all succeeding verses more clearly define what is in that seed. Therefore, the first mention of something is a guide to discovering the full truth as it progressively unfolds. It is the first link in a long chain of revelation, as Dr. Kevin Conner would say.

First Mention of Love for Others

Virtually every major truth in Scripture has its origin in Genesis. Genesis is a book of beginnings. The law of love was not instituted when Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount, nor was it commanded when Moses gave the Law 1500 years earlier. It was an inborn moral law from the beginning. “This is the message that ye have heard *from the beginning*, that we should love one another. *Not as Cain...*” (1 Jn. 3:11,12). This instinctive sense of moral and social responsibility for one's fellow man goes all the way back to the first family. In actuality, the entire body of Scripture can be summed up in just two things: loving God and loving people (Mt. 22:36-40). We will develop this a little later.

First Mention of Reproducing Like-Kind

Let us now consider another law of Genesis that never changes—the law of reproducing “like kind.” Everything reproduces its own kind. (See Genesis 1:11-12, 1:21, 1:24-25). A horse reproduces a horse, a cow reproduces a cow, an oak tree reproduces an oak tree, a black person reproduces a black person, and a white person reproduces a white person. Likewise, sinful man reproduces children that have a sinful nature. Although the first mention of this irrevocable law is found in Genesis, the ramifications are profoundly up to date. We reproduce what we *are* (not what we want to be) in our natural children and in our spiritual children. A lax Christian produces lax Christians, and a minister with limited spiritual vision produces a congregation with limited spiritual vision.

Every seed contains the image of what it shall be. This is true in both the natural world and the spiritual world as well. A child is a seed containing all that he will be. “Even a child is known by his ways, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right” (Prov. 20:11). As he grows older he only becomes stronger and more defined in what he is, unless some outside force changes his course or bent. This is why it is so important to invite Jesus Christ into the heart when one is young and tender. Just like an oak tree, the older we grow, the harder it is to change our form (cf. Eccl.12:1).

First Mention of Satan

In Genesis 3:1 we have the first mention of the Serpent's involvement with man. Satan, symbolized by the serpent, has tremendous wisdom but it is a corrupted brilliance which he uses for evil. From the very beginning, he was determined to seduce man and swindle his inheritance. He is the thief who has come to steal, kill, and destroy. Matthew 4:3 calls him the “tempter”. John 8:44 says there is no truth in him, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Having been hurled out of his position in heaven for leading an insurrection, he is now driven with retaliation and jealousy.

Satan's History Goes Back Much Further Than Genesis

Normally we would expect the first mention of a subject to be in Genesis, and in Genesis we have the record of Satan's first encounter with man. However, Isaiah and Ezekiel go back much further than the account in Genesis. Isaiah and Ezekiel show us how, when, and why Lucifer became Satan, and this was long before man was created. As we have already stated, it is important to *accurately locate* the first mention of a topic. Both Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:12-15 go back to Satan's origin, insurrection, and demotion, long before the foundation of the earth.

First Mention of Sin in Man

Sin began in the Garden when the Tempter persuaded Eve to violate God's command not to eat of the forbidden fruit. Satan came to Eve when she was alone and away from her husband. The dialogue here is entirely between the serpent and the woman. This was actually an attack against marriage. Satan seduced Eve into making a major decision in the absence of her husband without consulting him. Eve was deceived, Adam was not (1 Tim. 2:13,14, 2 Cor.11:3). When Adam finally came on the scene, he understood immediately that Eve had been duped by the serpent's venomous rationalizations. She had eaten of the forbidden fruit and was facing the consequences of “in the day that ye eat thereof, ye shall surely die.” Adam now faced a very difficult decision. He loved God, but he also loved Eve and did not want to lose her; therefore, he identified himself with her and also partook of the forbidden fruit. Herein is the root sin of Adam—he preferred human love above God's love. This is the greatest *weakness* in Adam's descendants; and herein is our struggle:

- “They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:43).
- “He that loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37).
- “He that loves son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37).
- “Whosoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed” (Luke 9:26).
- “Ye ... receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only” (John 5:44).
- “When affliction or persecution arises *for the word's sake*, immediately they are *offended*” (Mark 4:17).

Mankind in general is more afraid of losing the favor of people than losing the favor of God, and of offending people than offending God. People are more afraid of what their family, friends, and peers think of them than of what God thinks of them. *Fear* is the number one reason people do not go to heaven. Revelation 21:8 lists the characteristics of those who miss heaven, and it starts off with “the fearful and the unbelieving.” Many people refuse to be identified with Christ because they are afraid of reproach or persecution from family or friends, or intimidation from others. Many believers are willing to forsake God's love and marry an unbeliever in order to have human love. The fruit of this is always the same—confusion, sorrow, and regret. It all started in our father Adam.

First Mention of Sin in the Universe

Man is not the greatest sinner, and neither did sin begin with man. Sin began in heaven, long before the world was created. The origin of man's sin is recorded in Genesis chapter three, but the origin of sin *in the universe* is found in Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:12-15. It is important to understand what constitutes sin and how it all began in the beginning—in the very beginning. The rebellion that started in heaven was brought down to earth.

Lucifer's Rebellion and Insurrection

Lucifer was an archangel who stood next to the Deity. His beauty was dazzling, and his wisdom and gifts were unexcelled. Lucifer was a fabulous musician who undoubtedly directed the choirs of heaven. Then this magnificent creature was overtaken with pride and unthankfulness. He did not appreciate all of the lavish blessings the Father had bestowed upon him. Instead, all he wanted was more, even God's very throne. He thought he had outgrown the Creator and could run the universe better than God. Oh, the deception that pride brings (Obad.1:3)! Rather than direct worship to God, he wanted all worship directed to himself. He planted discord among the inhabitants of heaven and successfully persuaded one-third of the angels to turn from God to follow him. If we get technical here, we could say that this is the first mention of the sowing of discord, and it destroyed a major section of the congregation in heaven. We can see why the Lord includes the sowing of discord among the seven things that He hates (Prov. 6:16-19). Also, we see the power of the tongue to do good or evil. Thus, the Lord of glory had been betrayed by his closest friend and highest creature.

Self-Will / Ambition – The Beginning of Sin

Below are the five “I will's” of Satan. (See Isaiah 14:12-14.)

- “I will ascend into heaven.”
- “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.”
- “I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the North” (ref. to Mt Zion).
- “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.”
- “I will be like the Most High.”

* Constantly there was an insatiable lust for something higher (the ambition to be Number One).

The Issue of the Universe – God's Will or My Own Will

Self-will is the root of all sin; it places my will above God's. Self-will means “I run my own life, not God.” Self-will dethrones God and places *myself* upon the throne. Self-will also means “I can run my life better than God can” and “I am wiser than God.” Sin began in the universe when Satan exalted his will above the Creator's; and this self-will was energized by pride and unthankfulness. The law of first mention makes it very clear that sin had its beginning with self-will; therefore, *obedience* is the supreme issue of the universe. Are we going to do our own will or God's will? When the Son of God came down from heaven to conquer sin for man, He counteracted the sin of self-will, crying, “I have come to do thy will, O God” (cf. Heb.10:5-7). When Jesus, the only Perfect Man, agonized in Gethsemane, again He affirmed, “Not my will but thine be done” (Lk. 22:42).

Jealousy, Hatred, Revenge – The Evils that Motivate Satan

Jealousy is the demand to be number one. Yet, the Creator alone deserves this privilege. He makes this clear in Exodus 34:14: “For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” Ever since Satan attempted to usurp God's position and divert all worship and attention to himself, he has been tormented with and driven by jealousy. There is a divine lesson we can all learn from this: when our only desire is to make God number one, we will never be troubled with jealousy. The spirit of jealousy only comes upon people who are striving to make themselves number one. Jealousy is a curse that vexes an uncrucified ego.

In the technical sense, Lucifer's rebellion is *the first mention* of ambition, self-will, jealousy, and insurrection (Isa. 14:12-14). It is also *the first mention* of the two seeds: the good and the evil, the submissive and the rebellious, and the followers of God and the followers of the Devil.

Satan does not want anyone to have the blessings he forfeited. Thus, he has a special hatred for man. Man was made to have dominion over the earth, and Satan covets that dominion. He was also made in God's image, and Satan hates anyone who is conformed to His image. Man is loved and blessed by God, and Satan hates that as well, especially since Satan lost God's love and blessing. Man was also created to be tested, and those who pass the tests that Satan failed will replace both Satan and the other fallen inhabitants of heaven. Therefore, Satan has tremendous hatred for anyone who is going to judge and replace him (1 Cor. 6:3). This is the reason the Tempter wants to deceive and induce man into disobedience so that man may be judged and lose all his blessings, even as he himself was judged. Most of all, everything Satan does is to hurt God and to strike back at Him.

There are three major things that Satan hates today:

1. Israel - because this is where Christ returns and takes the world rulership, which Satan covets.
2. Christians - because these are the overcomers who will displace him, and replace him.
3. All nations who are Christian and supportive of Israel.

The Sin that Started in Heaven Was Injected into Man

When the serpent slithered gracefully up to Eve in the Garden, he had come with a carefully thought-out agenda in mind. He had come to steal, kill, and destroy. Satan had plotted to take away their dominion and bring them under judgment; he wanted to control man. The Evil One had no intention of coming to Adam. He was going to seduce Eve the weaker vessel, and drive a wedge between Eve and her husband. He waited until her husband was away, and then he began to entice her in the areas where she was vulnerable. First, he introduced *doubt* to this unsuspecting woman. “Did God really say, do not eat of the tree?” Having cast doubt in her mind, he now induces her to hold a *dialogue* with him, which is another tactic to draw her into the net. He is turning all her attention to the forbidden fruit as he flatly tells her, “Ye shall not surely die”. “There are no consequences for doing this,” he assures her. Then he continued his rationalizations: “You only know part of the story. God did not tell you everything. By taking this fruit your eyes will be opened, and then you will be as gods.” Since Satan wanted to be God, he suggested the same to Eve. Getting Eve's eyes and mind and emotions focused on the forbidden fruit, and continuing to fascinate her curiosity and appetite for a new and exciting experience, he seduced and overpowered her.

As Eve listened to the serpent, she was receiving his spirit and nature. Eve was accepting the venom that oozed from the serpent's tongue, and became infected with the same rebellious nature. Satan had succeeded in getting Eve to cross the boundary line of God's command. Adam, not wanting to lose the one who was made of his own substance, identified himself with her and also partook of the forbidden fruit. Adam's weakness was choosing human love above God's love. All of these seeds of iniquity have been passed on to us from our first parents and must be guarded against.

Because it is of utmost importance to understand what is at the bottom of our struggle against evil, we have taken some extra time on the “first mention” of sin and of Satan because this subject permeates the entire canon of Scripture. In this textbook we will be concentrating on the more critical themes of Scripture, and therefore of life itself.

Other First Mentions

There are *hundreds* of other “first mentions” in Scripture. Our study here is far from being exhaustive. These limited examples are only to help us become aware of the principle of first mention and its importance. Once again, we want to emphasize that the first mention of something is crucial. It is a foundation upon which all further revelation on that subject is built. It is a seed, containing all the roots, branches and fruit of a matter. Other passages more fully develop the original subject. A few other “first mentions” include various numbers, types, places, names, people, and events.

Several Examples of Numbers

The first mention of the number *six* is in Genesis 1:26-31. Man was created on the sixth day. Thus, six is the number of *man*, and consistently this number means *man* throughout all of Scripture. In the book of Revelation the number six reaches its culmination in the Antichrist, whose number is 666. Three sixes depict the *fullness* of man and the flesh. The Antichrist will possess everything that appeals to fallen man in all three areas: in body, in soul, and in spirit.

The first mention of the number 120 is found in Genesis 6:3,13, when God warned 120 years beforehand that “the end of all flesh” was coming with a worldwide flood. Without wavering, the number 120 signifies “the end of all flesh” throughout the whole canon of Scripture. During the dedication of Solomon's temple, as 120 trumpeters sounded in perfect unison, the glory of God descended and no man was able to stand up to minister because of that glory (2 Chron. 5:12-14). On the Day of Pentecost there were 120 people waiting in humble unity for the Holy Spirit. This number showed that the flesh was ending and the Spirit was coming to take over. In both of these incidents there was unity associated with a death to the flesh. Disunity results when pride reigns.

The first mention of the number 13 is in Genesis 14:4: “in the thirteenth year they rebelled.” The number 13 means rebellion. There were 13 tribes, and one was a rebel. There were 13 apostles, because Judas was a rebel and he had to be replaced. Sometimes a number can have several meanings. In some cases, 13 can mean the opposite; it can mean *atonement*. This is true in the study of types as well. For example *blood* can represent life in one case, and death in another.

Numerology is a whole subject by itself, and there are complete textbooks written on the meaning of numbers. There are hidden mysteries in numbers, but their *first mention* is the most significant.

There are many hundreds of “first mentions” in Scripture. Find the first mention of a thing and then follow it all the way through to the Book of Revelation. Most beginnings are in Genesis.

Beginnings in Genesis:

Endings in Revelation:

(The end is revealed in the beginning.)

Beginning of heaven and earth	End of heaven and earth; a new one created
A bride for the first Adam.	A bride for the Last Adam
Man was created to be tested	Man has one final test at the end
Beginning of sin	End of sin
The tree of life is lost.	The tree of life is restored
Satan is used to test man	Satan again is used to test man
Serpent's judgment <i>announced</i>	Serpent's judgment <i>executed</i>
Curse is instituted	No more curse
The two seeds - Cain and Abel	Those who follow Christ or Antichrist
Wicked Cain slays righteous Abel	Antichrist's seed slays Christ's seed
Worldwide judgment - The Flood.	Worldwide judgment - Great Tribulation
Terrible iniquity on earth.	Same treachery as in Noah's days
Enoch - translated before flood	Manchild - translated before Tribulation
Noah's family preserved in flood.	Church preserved in Tribulation
Earth purged by judgment	Earth again is purged by judgment
Rise of Babylon by Nimrod	Rise of Babylon by Antichrist
Worldwide rebellion at Babel.	Repeat of worldwide rebellion
Jerusalem on earth.	New Jerusalem on the new earth
Jerusalem's priest / king	New Jerusalem's Priest / King
Abraham the Victorious	Abraham's innumerable victorious seed
Joseph the Overcomer	Overcomers ruling nations as Joseph
12 Tribes - inheritances promised	12 Tribes enter gates into the City

SUMMARY OF THE LAW OF FIRST MENTION

- The first mention of a subject is a basis upon which all further revelation on that subject is built.
- The first mention of a subject is a seed. All future seeds of that subject are in that original seed.
- The first mention of a subject is the first link of a long chain of revelation on that subject.
- It is important to accurately locate the first mention of a subject.
- The original sin of man is first mentioned in Genesis chapter three.
- The original sin of the universe is not mentioned in Genesis, but in Isaiah and Ezekiel.
- The original sin of the universe was brought down to man.
- We should understand the tactics of the Evil One as seen in Eden, and learn wisdom from these.
- Understand what constituted the original sin of heaven to understand what was injected into man.
- The *seeds* of jealousy, self-will, sowing of discord, insurrection, the power of the tongue, the two lines of good and evil (the followers of God and the followers of the Devil) are first mentioned in Isaiah.
- Jesus used the first mention law to settle the question of divorce...“in the beginning it was not so.”
- The law of loving our brother is first mentioned in Genesis 4 with Cain and Abel. Yet, it is not clearly defined as starting with the first family until the 62nd book of the Bible, in First John 3:11,12.

Rule Four

Stay in Context

Context by definition means “knit or woven together.” Just as a fabric has many threads woven together to make one garment, every word and sentence of a discourse is woven together to make one central theme. To take something “out of context” is to pull out a single thread and detach it from all the others. To isolate a word, sentence, or thought from its context is like severing a limb from the body; when a member is cut off, that member is useless and dies.

In literature, the exact meaning of a word or passage is dependent upon the other surrounding words, sentences and paragraphs that are connected to it. Therefore, to find the correct interpretation of any Bible verse, we must stay in its context. Bible context involves four major areas:

1. Staying in the context of the whole canon of Scripture
2. Staying in the context of a testament, Old or New
3. Staying in the context of a book of the Bible
4. Staying in the context of a particular portion of Scripture

1.) Staying in the Context of the Whole Canon of Scripture

Each portion of Scripture is connected to every other part of the Scriptures. They are all one unit. Therefore, in order to understand a particular verse, we need to understand the whole of Scripture. And in order to understand the whole of Scripture, we must understand all of its particular parts. Each part of Scripture illuminates other parts of Scripture. Thus, Scripture interprets Scripture. The best interpreter of a Scripture is in fact the Scriptures themselves. The context of any particular verse is the whole Bible. No single verse (or verses) should be isolated from its relationship to the entire canon of Scripture. To a large extent, the Bible by itself is self-explanatory.

As the Apostle Paul wrote the Scriptures, he was quoting other Scriptures from the Old Testament. Ten percent, in fact, of the entire New Testament is a solid quote from the Old Testament. Therefore, since the Holy Spirit used Scripture to write Scripture, He also uses the Scriptures to interpret Scripture. This is suggested by Paul who “compared spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:13). Paul *wrote* Scripture with Scripture, and he *interpreted* Scripture with the help of other Scripture. Jesus substantiated and expounded upon numerous Old Testament persons, places, and events:

The creation (Mt.19:4-5)	David and the shewbread at Nob (Mt.12:3-4)
The first marriage (Mt.19:5-7)	David as a writer (Lk. 20:41-44)
The blood of Abel (Lk.11:51)	Solomon / the Queen of Sheba (Mt.12:42)
Noah and the flood (Mt. 24:37-39)	Solomon as king (Mt. 6:29)
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mt. 22:31,32)	Elijah, the famine, the widow of Zarephath,
Lot, his wife, Sodom's fall (Lk.17:28,29,32)	Cleansing of Naaman the leper (Lk. 4:25-27)
The burning bush (Lk. 20:37)	Daniel the prophet (Mt. 24;15)
Jonah, the fish, Nineveh (Mt.12:39-41, 16:4)	Sodom and Gomorrah (Mt.10:15)
The manna in the wilderness (Jn. 6:31, 32, 49)	The sabbath (Mk. 2:24-28)
The serpent in the wilderness (Jn. 3:14)	The murder of Zacharias (Mt. 23:35)
Isaiah's prediction of His rejection (Mt.15:7-9)	The law for leprosy (Mt. 8:4)

Scripture Refers to Scripture

The Book of Acts has more than 40 quotations from the Old Testament. *James* mentions Rahab the harlot, the offering of Isaac, the patience of Job, the suffering prophets, and Elijah's fervent prayers. Also he makes reference to the ten commandments, but especially the second great commandment. He enumerates the seven pillars of wisdom found in Proverbs 9:1, and uses the early and latter rain of Joel and Zechariah to illustrate the patience of the heavenly Husbandman. *The Book of Jude* sites Israel's failure in the wilderness, the state of the fallen angels, the unrepentant attitude of Cain, the greed of Balaam, the insurrection of Korah, and Enoch's prophetic ministry. *John's epistles* are always going back "to the beginning." And the *Book of Revelation* has nearly 400 references and allusions to thoughts, persons, and events of the Old Testament. In all, the New Testament refers to the Old Testament about 1,000 times, either by direct quotation or reference.

Scripture Explains Other Scripture

- Lucifer's rebellion is first recorded in Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:12-17, but neither mentions *the percentage of angels* who followed him in the uprising. We have to go ahead to the book of Revelation 12:3-9 to find out that it was 1/3 of the angels who joined Lucifer. Although these angels have lost their positions in heaven, many of them still have a certain access to heaven.
- The only way we know that King Saul reigned 40 years is by a sermon preached by Paul in Acts 13:21. In the Old Testament, it does not mention how many years Saul reigned. We can see that Scripture is interdependent upon other Scripture to find the complete and correct message.
- Paul gives further illumination to the fall of man in the garden of Eden. Paul explains, "Eve was deceived, not Adam" (1 Tim. 2:14). Paul fortifies the same thought in 2 Corinthians 11:3 saying, "the serpent beguiled Eve though his subtilty." Adam partook of the forbidden fruit with full knowledge that he was being disobedient, whereas Eve had been seduced.
- On the issue of divorce, Jesus interpreted the true meaning of Deuteronomy 24:1,2, saying, "In the beginning it was not so." (See Matthew 19:3-8.) While the theologians of his day used the Scriptures to justify divorce, Jesus used the Scriptures to make it void. One's interpretation of Scripture depends upon what is in the heart. Christ went back to the beginning and said divorce was never in God's plan and He told them that the root of divorce is "hardness of heart."
- Daniel the prophet understood by the writings of Jeremiah that the captivity of Jerusalem would be seventy years (Dan. 9:2, Jer. 25:11,12). In this case, one major prophet is studying the writings of another major prophet to understand the times in which he was living.
- When Abraham was about to offer Isaac, he had faith that God was able to raise him from the dead. This is not clearly stated in the Genesis 22 account, but Paul brings this out in Hebrews 11:17-19. Scripture explains Scripture and breathes new life and illumination into them.
- The Psalms reveal hidden details of Israel's journey from Egypt to the land of promise. For example, Psalm 105:37 says that when He brought them forth ... "there was not one feeble person among their tribes." Exodus never mentions the miracle of divine health among the people.

- Psalm 105:17-19 adds more insight to the Genesis account of Joseph. This great man who was destined to save nations was first sold as a slave into Egypt. Then he was falsely accused of a crime and cast into prison. Psalm 105:18 makes reference to his time in prison, saying [*his soul*] was laid in iron. But in the original Hebrew the syntax or arrangement of words is the opposite. Instead of saying “his soul was put in iron,” *iron was put in his soul*. Thus, the Psalms show the silent intricate preparations of God in the heart of Joseph the deliverer, a revelation which was veiled in Genesis.
- When his brethren came to Egypt in search of food many years later, Joseph was not recognized during their first visit. When they returned *the second time* Joseph made himself known to them. Although Genesis casually records the incident, it is Stephen who zooms in upon it in Acts 7:13. Christ also was unrecognized by his Jewish brethren when He came to Israel the first time, but when He comes *the second time* they will know Him, and He will save them. Joseph is a profound type of Jesus Christ. It requires the whole canon of Scripture to understand Christ and His many aspects.
- During David's years of fleeing from Saul, young David became a reproach in the nation. Even his father and mother misunderstood the situation and underestimated their youngest son and his potential. David wrote in Psalm 25:10, “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.” Once again, the Psalms supply information that is not given in the narratives of numerous portions of Scripture. David's years of fleeing from Saul are recorded in I Samuel 18–31.
- If we only read the Genesis account of the flood, we would have the impression that there were only eight believers in the world at that time. However, the Epistles of Peter give us another picture. There were other genuine believers who knew the flood was coming and believed Noah's message but they did not fully prepare themselves. Peter describes them as being “*sometimes disobedient*.” These people were not wicked like the others mentioned in Genesis 6:5. Many centuries later Christ preached to the spirits of these lax believers who died in the flood, when He was three days and three nights in the bowels of the earth. (See 1 Peter 3:18-20.)

Review: Here are a few guidelines for interpretation:

Scripture is interdependent upon other Scripture to have the correct and complete interpretation.

Scripture interprets Scripture. The Bible is its own best interpreter.

Scripture will never contradict Scripture. All Scripture is all written by the same Author.

Scripture isolated from other Scripture can become erroneous.

Scripture verses that seem obscure will make sense in the light of the other verses.

Scripture must be interpreted in the light of *all* other Scripture.

Scripture is like a great puzzle with many pieces. We need all the pieces to have the whole picture.

Scripture must be kept in its context; it is interwoven with all the other Scriptures.

We have briefly mentioned the need for staying in the context of the whole body of Scripture. Now we would like to narrow this down a little more to the necessity of staying in the context of the Old Testament or the New Testament. Although all Scripture is applicable to our lives (2 Tim. 3:16,17), it is important to consider whether it has a natural or spiritual application. This is determined by whether a section of Scripture is found in the Old Testament or the New Testament.

2.) Staying in the Context of a Testament, Old or New

All Scripture is inspired by God — not *some* Scripture and not *most* Scripture but *all* Scripture, and this includes the entire Old and New Testaments! *All Scripture* is “profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16,17). Every passage of Scripture is necessary for our perfecting, whether it comes from the Old Testament or the New Testament.

Here we face the challenge of knowing how to interpret and apply the Old Testament to our lives when we are living in New Testament times. Paul said, “We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully” (1 Tim.1:8). Virtually everything in the Old Testament has a *spiritual meaning* for us today. If we interpret the Old Testament in that light, we will have the proper meaning.

In the Old Testament:

In the New Testament:

They offered sacrifices	We offer spiritual sacrifices.
They were circumcised in the flesh	We are circumcised in our hearts.
They had a physical land of inheritance.	We have a spiritual inheritance.
They observed seven feasts	We experience the feasts in our personal lives.
They went to Jerusalem to observe feasts	We do not go to any geographical place.
They ascended Mount Zion	We ascend Mount Zion spiritually.
They kept the sabbath day	We enter a life of rest: our own agendas ceasing.
They fought against flesh and blood	We fight against intangible forces of evil.
Their weapons were natural	We have spiritual weapons.
They entered a holy of holies made with hands. . .	We enter a holy of holies made without hands.
They had the blood of animals	We have the blood of Christ.
They had the law written on stone	We have the law written on our hearts.
They had a temple where God might dwell	We are the temple where God dwells.
They had natural priestly garments	We have spiritual garments.

The list could go on almost without end. Nearly every physical tangible object lesson or symbol in the Old Testament has a spiritual fulfillment in the life of a New Testament believer. This principle is a major law of interpretation.

As a New Testament believer, we cannot act like we are living in the Old Testament. We should not go to Jerusalem to observe Jewish feast days like they did in the time of the Old Testament. And we should not try to live under both covenants as the Galatians were trying to do. To attempt to be married to both covenants simultaneously is spiritual adultery, as Paul explains in Romans 7:1-4.

The Old Testament restricted an Israelite from eating pork, and imposed numerous other dietary laws upon them. Today, a New Testament believer is allowed to eat all foods, although it is better not to consume large amounts of pork and such things. An Old Testament believer had to separate himself and not mingle with non-Jews, or marry non-Jews. Today, a believer can associate with others, yet he is to keep himself unspotted from the world, and only marry a fellow-believer.

The Old Testament Law – Only Revealed What Was Wrong

In the Old Testament they had the Law which only showed them what was right and wrong, but it offered them no power to obey it. The Law was good and holy but it was also *a curse* in that it gave the people no power to change. This would be like holding up a No Smoking sign to a smoker. The sign is a good law but it does not help him stop smoking. It only aggravates his craving for nicotine and it makes him a transgressor when he violates it. In this sense “the law worketh wrath” (Rom. 4:15). The fact that a New Testament believer is “not under the law, but under grace” means we are not under a powerless set of rules but under grace that gives us the ability to choose right.

The New Testament of Grace – Gives the Ability to Obey

“The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (Jn.1:17). Our Lord Jesus Christ won the struggle against sin as a man, and now He offers us *grace* to obey His commands. Grace means “divine enablement.” It is a substance God pours into us to strengthen us when we are under pressure or when we are tempted (Heb. 4:16, 2 Tim.2:1). In Christ's teaching, He made it clear that the standards of the New Testament were much higher than those of the Old Testament. Under the Law, murder was punishable, but in the New Testament we are not even to have hatred or excessive anger, which is the root of murder. The same attitude of heart applies to adultery (Mt. 5:21,22, 5:27-30). Grace goes beyond an act to a disposition of heart.

The Old Testament is Governed by the Higher Standards of the New Testament

Therefore we could say that all symbolism in the Old Testament has a spiritual meaning for us today, and every other issue in the Old Testament is governed by the higher standards of the New Testament. In the Old Testament they were permitted to have several wives, though it was never blessed. Also, divorce was permitted (for hardness of heart). Neither of these were in the original purposes of God in Genesis and neither were blessed by Him, though He allowed it during the inferior Old Testament. Today polygamy and divorce are replaced by a higher law. Therefore, in order to have the correct interpretation of a subject, we have to consider the context. All Scripture of the Old Testament is governed by the higher standards of the New Covenant, and this too is a very important rule of interpretation.

3. Staying in the Context of a Book of the Bible

Not only must a verse be kept in the context of the whole canon of Scripture, and in the context of the Old or New Testament, but also a verse must stay within the context of a book of the Bible. Each book of the Bible has its own purpose, message, and style. Let us consider the unique message of Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes was written by a backslidden preacher. It is actually a sermon and personal testimony given by Solomon near the end of his life (1 Kings 11:1-40). The tone is negative, and his philosophy is very pessimistic. The preacher seems to be trying to find himself. Therefore, we should read the book of Ecclesiastes with this in mind, for in this context we will understand what he is saying, because some of his conclusions about life are quite wrong.

Context of Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes is inspired Scripture. God is showing us the heart of a backslidden preacher who had lost the joy of his salvation. Everything that Solomon preached against in Proverbs, he violated in his personal life. As a result, Solomon lost the presence and glory of his Beloved and was overtaken with depression and disillusionment. In his old age he was reaping a gloomy harvest of many years of disobedience. Certainly some of his conclusions about life would be dismal in his miserable spiritual condition. Therefore, we have to read the book of Ecclesiastes in this context. To fully understand Ecclesiastes, it is necessary to study the background and life of Solomon.

Context of the Book of Job

The Book of Job can be perplexing unless we understand a few simple rules for its interpretation. Before the onset of his trial, God declared Job to be the most righteous man in his generation; but God wanted to delve deeper into his heart and make him even more righteous. It was God indeed who authorized Satan to bring upon Job the oncoming test. During his intense trial there were inappropriate words that came out of Job's mouth as he found fault with God, but no fault with himself. This is what God wanted to change in his life. Later, when he saw his error, he was quick to repent. Thus, God was chastening a very good man to make him even more righteous and holy. God wanted to teach Job and all of humanity that it is *never* right to charge God with irresponsibility. His three closest friends misjudged him and assumed that the cause of his trial was some terrible secret sin in his life, whereas God had declared him the greatest man of his time. Thus, God reprimanded them as well. In the end, God rewarded Job with a double portion of His blessing. By reading the book of Job with these simple rules in mind we can, by grace, grasp the theme.

Context of the Four Gospels

Matthew, Mark, and Luke contain 83 of the same accounts, but each writer records them a little different. (Twenty-four of these accounts are found also in John.) Two main things should be considered when comparing the dissimilarities between the Gospels. 1.) The personalities of the Gospel writers were different. 2.) The audiences to whom they were writing were diverse.

- Matthew, an accountant, *was writing to the Jewish world.*
- Mark, an interpreter in Latin for Peter, *was writing to the Roman world.*
- Luke, a physician and scholar, *was writing to the Greek world.*
- John is not written to any particular culture but is a universal Gospel.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are inherently different, though they all present the same Gospel; and they are all inspired by the same Spirit. All three writers directed their messages to different audiences who had different needs. Each writer selectively recorded that teaching of Christ which would apply to his respective readers, while other teachings were purposely omitted.

For example, concerning Christ's teaching on marriage: Mark, who was writing to the Roman world, mentions women not divorcing their husbands (Mk.10:12), but Matthew did not include this in his Gospel to the Jews since Jewish law did not permit a woman to divorce her husband anyway. Matthew alone records the "exception clause" for putting away an engaged spouse because of fornication, *not adultery.*

In Jewish society, an engagement was highly esteemed (almost as highly as a marriage itself) and the two were called husband and wife during engagement. If infidelity occurred during the year-long engagement, Christ allowed for the “putting away” of an *engaged* spouse (See Mt.1:18-20). Fornication, *not adultery*, was grounds for putting away an engaged spouse. Mark and Luke do not include this in their Gospels because this Jewish custom did not apply to their Gentile audiences, and neither does it apply to us. Note the differences between Mt.19:3-12, Mk.10:1-12, Lu.16:17,18.

Matthew's Gospel is geared to the Jewish world, and Mark's to the Roman world. (John does not mention it at all.) We cannot impose a Jewish custom that was written to a Jewish society upon other cultures. Thus, there are instances where we must stay within the context of a book of the Bible to have the correct interpretation. It is important to know *whom* an author is addressing. We should ask—Is the author writing to the Jews, to the Gentiles, or to everyone? We can see, therefore, that background and *customs* are important for having the correct interpretation of Scripture.

4.) Staying in the Context of a Particular Portion of Scripture

Although many *applications* can be drawn from the sacred Scriptures, generally there is only one interpretation. To have the correct interpretation, we cannot take a verse out of its setting. Otherwise a reader could manipulate a verse to say anything he desires it to say. For example:

- In 1 Corinthians 10:23 Paul said: “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.” This was said in the context of eating certain kinds of food in 10:23-33. Paul is not saying that anything and everything is lawful for him. To pull this out of context is to say that a person can be free to exercise any vice he wishes. The same reasoning is found in Romans 14:1-23.
- Romans 14:14 states - “I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.” In this context, Paul is again limiting his message to the subject of foods and observance of sabbaths and holy days. He is not giving license to sexual permissiveness or any other forms of lawlessness.
- 1 Corinthians 14:34,35 commands; “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted for them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

Isolating this passage from the rest of the chapter, one could deduce the strangest conclusions about a woman's role in church. Paul had already said to these same Corinthians: When you are assembled together, “*everyone of you* hath a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation” (14:26). Whether male or female, *everyone* is allowed to be vocal in the church. Paul is not teaching that women must be speechless in God's house. We must rightly divide the word of truth on this subject.

Today in this same area of Greece the women sit on one side of the church and the men sit on the other side, just as they did in Paul's time. Paul was simply telling the ladies to stop yelling across the aisle to their husbands when they had a question. This action was very disruptive to the service. He said, “It is a shame for women to speak in the church like that; if you have questions, wait and ask your husbands at home.” This is the spirit in which Paul was speaking. We can see from this example that a doctrine cannot be formed by just *several* verses. *All* Scripture must be considered.

The Need for Study / The Need for Good Teachers

Before we go on, let us consider the importance of study. Jesus never had a course in hermeneutics, and whatever Paul learned in the Rabbinical school of his day, he had to unlearn. But they had several big advantages that we do not have. They had the language of the Bible, and they knew the geography, climate, customs, and culture of Bible times, and *much more* with which we are not familiar.

Paul understood the meaning of legal terms such as “adoption” and “earnest” that we cannot appreciate without research. Marriage customs, like those we mentioned in Matthew's Gospel, are radically different from those of our society. Without a knowledge and background of these things, our interpretation of various Scriptures would be incorrect.

Are you aware that “Asia” in Scripture is not referring to the continent but only a *province* in Turkey? When Acts 19:10 says “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus,” it does not mean that all of China and India were evangelized. “Asia” is the region in modern Turkey where John sent his messages to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation.

Did you know that “dove's dung” in 2 Kings 6:25 is a plant? Are you acquainted with terms such as “propitiation” or “atonement” or “a deceitful bow” that is mentioned in Psalm 78:57? And what does Peter mean when he commands us to “gird up the loins of our mind” (1 Pet.1:13)?

Do we really comprehend what Paul is conveying when he entitles Christ as *the firstborn*:

“The *firstborn* of every creature”

“The *firstborn* from the dead”

“The *firstborn* among many brethren”

Are we really grasping the full implications of the right of the firstborn?

This requires research and divine application.

Many words and phrases are glossed over as we read the Scriptures. As we read through the Word of God we should ask ourselves: “Do I really know what this word means?” or “Am I really understanding what this verse is saying?” I would like to encourage you to write down (in a separate notebook) words you do not understand and then search out their meanings. Use several Bible versions as you study, such as the New King James Version or the American Standard Version (1901). Ask God to direct you to the right teachers, and to the right resources of study.

Practice meditating upon the verse or verses that God is quickening to you. Rather than trying to memorize Scripture, practice meditating upon *quickened* Scripture. When the Holy Spirit illumines a passage, this is the time to underline it and muse upon it and absorb it. Be married to the Word of God. Be wedded to every page. Ask God to cause you to *experience* the life of Abraham, David, and others. Of course, all of these men portray an aspect of Christ.

One way to become more intimately acquainted with Scripture is by giving it away. Teach the Word. To teach it you are forced to study and master your subject. Teaching will help you retain and enlarge your message. Personal motivation for study comes from the responsibility of having to teach others. Every believer should be a teacher of the Scriptures in one capacity or another.

Rule Five

Natural Israel Symbolizes the Church

Abraham has two seeds – a natural seed and a spiritual seed. God promised Abraham that his seed would be as *the sand of the sea* and *the stars of heaven* for multitude (Gen. 22:17). His earthly seed are his Jewish descendants; his heavenly seed is the Church, which is made up of *all* who are of faith.

1. Abraham's Natural seed – Israelite nation – “As the sand of the sea” (Old Testament)
2. Abraham's Spiritual seed – The Church – “As the stars of heaven” (New Testament)

Natural Israel

God singled out Abraham to start a new nation which would be separated entirely unto Him. This holy nation was to be a bright and shining light to the other nations of the world. Thus, it was unto the Jewish nation that God entrusted the knowledge of His ways—the Scriptures. First He gave them the Law of Moses, the tabernacle, the offerings and the sacrifices by which men could approach a holy God. In the centuries that followed, other great prophets and teachers and scribes gave unto Israel additional statutes to live by. Unto Israel was given *all of the sacred Scriptures* (Rom. 3:2; 9:4). But this knowledge and light was not to be kept to themselves. Abraham's nation was chosen to bring the truth of God to the whole world. Finally, Abraham's greatest Seed came, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Redemption Came From Israel

“*Salvation is of the Jews*” (Jn. 4:22). Redemption started in Israel. It was in Jerusalem that Christ was slain for the sins of the world. He rose from the dead in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit was first poured out in Jerusalem. Then the Gospel fire that started in Jerusalem spread to all the nations of the world, starting with Israel's apostles. All the Scriptures and all the Light we have *has come from Israel*.

The Church – Spiritual Israel

The Church is also a separate holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9-10). Just as the Jews are a distinguished people among the nations, the Church is also a people who are “called out” from among all the other people of the world. She is composed of true believers in every nation, tribe, and language (Rev. 5:9,10). The Church is Abraham's spiritual seed — all those who are of faith. The Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). When Paul says we are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” he is saying that our faith is based upon *all the Scriptures* which Israel's prophets and apostles have given to us. Therefore, all the roots of the Church grew out of natural Israel (see Romans 11:16-26).

All Promises to Abraham's Natural Seed Have a Spiritual Meaning to His Spiritual Seed

Virtually everything that is promised to natural Israel has a spiritual promise to the Church. This is another critical law of interpretation. Everything that is promised to Abraham's natural seed is carried over to Abraham's spiritual seed. One major example of this is the promise of Israel's restoration. Natural Israel will be restored when Christ comes again, but this promise carries over to the Church. The Church will also be restored. In fact, it will exceed anything the Church had at Pentecost. In Galatians 6:16, Paul entitles the Church, “The Israel of God.”

Rule Six

All Scripture Is Based Upon the Two Great Commandments

The Master Teacher of the Universe summed up the whole of Scripture into two simple capsules. He said to love God with the whole heart and our neighbor as ourself is the summation of all the Law and the Prophets. (See Matthew 22:36-40). In other words, all of Scripture revolves around heart attitudes toward God and people. *Relationships!* Let us try to interpret all Scripture in that light. This, too, is one of the most critical principles of interpretation.

In writing a textbook on Hermeneutics, we are searching for the heart of the Author's message. What *really* does God want to impress upon us from the revelation He has given? The Apostle John discovered the ultimate secret to learning the mysteries of God, and that was by leaning on the bosom of Christ. Revelation grows out of our love relationship with God and a total dependence upon Him.

Everything that is taught in the Law of Moses and by all the Prophets points to one main thing—a heart of flesh, a soft heart toward God and people. Matthew 7:12 zooms in even further on the subject. “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is [the teaching of] the law and the prophets.” How we act toward people is a reflection of how we act toward God. “Inasmuch as ye have done this unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Mt. 25:40). How can we love God whom we have not seen, if we cannot love our brother whom we do see (cf. 1 John 4:20). Our treatment of our fellow man is the golden rule by which all shall be judged. This is called “the royal law” (Jas. 2:8). Therefore, he who shows no mercy will receive no mercy (Jas. 2:13). Remember, all the teachings of Jesus and His apostles came from the Law and the Prophets. All 31,102 Bible verses are based on Matthew 22:36-40.

In one form or another—all Scripture revolves around relationships.

The Law of Moses and the Prophets: (Our relationship with God and people)

- God created man for love and fellowship; He bestowed every good thing upon man, seeking love.
- God created man to be tested - to see if man loved God, or if he loved something else more.
- When God gave laws to man, it was love—to keep him from hurting himself and others.
None of His commandments are grievous (1 Jn. 5:3), but are in defence of our happiness.
- Every law, symbol, offering, and type were to help us find our way to God and His favor.
- The slaying of Abel by Cain shows the importance of guarding our heart against hatred of others.
- Lucifer's fall teaches us how *pride and disobedience* destroy our love for God and others.
- The Proverbs show us the way to wisdom, how to relate to people, and how to win God's blessing.
- Abraham, Job, and others were tested to purify their faith and enrich their relationship with God.
- Noah's flood came because of the way man treated man. Violence and terrorism filled the earth.
- Every moral lesson found in the Prophets reveals how sin destroys relationships with others and obscures our understanding of God (see Dan.12:10). “None of the wicked shall understand.”
- Jeremiah told us to “glory” in just one thing — knowing and understanding God (Jer. 9:23-24).
There are two main things we take with us when we die (both centering around relationships):
1.) What we have allowed God to plant in our hearts. 2.) The good things we plant in others.
- Man chooses “the praise of God” or “the praise of man” — the fear of God or the fear of man.
Everyone will choose Christ or the Antichrist, light or darkness, wisdom or folly, heaven or hell.

Rule Seven

The Time Element — Know Where We Are in Time

Chronology is important. It is essential to know where we are in time, and what is coming next. On the next few pages, I would like to give a large, panoramic view of the history of the universe; then the 7000 years of man upon earth; and then break up the time periods of the Bible.

Concerning Time — Time Is Passing Away

There is a familiar expression in Scripture that is found perhaps 600 times; and because it is mentioned that many times, I think we should pause and take a closer look at it. The familiar phrase I am referring to is “it shall come to pass” or “it came to pass.” Perhaps we could best describe this by picturing ourselves walking on a road and seeing an object at a far distance. As we continue walking, the object gets closer and larger. Finally we reach that object, and then we actually pass it. *It has come, and it has passed.* Now we are looking back at the object and as time goes on, it totally disappears from our sight. This is the way life is, and this is a major message of the Scriptures. This life will soon be past, and vanish. The question is – Where will we be in eternity?

Heaven and Earth Shall Pass Away

It is a clear teaching of Scripture that this present creation is going to pass away.

- Mt. 24:35 “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”
- 2 Pet. 3:13 “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth...”
- Rev. 20:11 “...from Whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them”
- Rev. 21:1 “ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and earth were passed away...”
- Isa. 65:17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth...the former shall not be remembered...”
- Isa. 66:22 “For as the new heavens and earth which I will make shall remain, so shall your seed remain”
- 1 Jn 2:17 “the world passes away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abides forever”

“Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Pet. 3:14). How important it is to live a holy life, since this present earth is going to pass away (with all the unrepentant), and will never be remembered. “But he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 Jn. 2:17b). When the unredeemed die, their spirits go into the lonely caverns of the earth, into hell, and finally into the lake of fire. At the end of time, this earth and heaven pass away together with all the unconverted inhabitants of hell. This is what it means to be lost. This is the second death—to be eternally separated from God and forgotten (Rev. 20:14-15). Friend, please lay hold of eternal life. Cling to Christ, the One who paid our debt, and then live right.

Five Titles for the Unredeemed: (Eph. 2:2; 1 Thess. 5:5-7; Mt. 13:38; Eph. 2:3; Lu. 16:8)

- *Children of Disobedience* - people who mock God and His laws, or take them lightly, hating wisdom
 - *Children of Darkness* - people who love darkness rather than light, who love lies rather than the truth
 - *Children of the Devil* - people who listen to the Wicked One, and *become* like him
 - *Children of Wrath* - people who suffer eternal judgment because they follow the Doomed One
 - *Children of this World* - people who **remain** on earth after death [in the lower parts of the earth, in hell]
- These are the ones who love the world and the things in the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

But the righteous do not stay here. They go to heaven, and to the new earth.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE

(Please use this overview with the chart on the next page)

- God is infinite; He has always existed and never had a beginning. “From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psa. 90:2). He “inhabits eternity” (Isa. 57:15). We cannot fathom His greatness.
- Long before the creation, the Son of God (who always existed in the bosom of the Father) came forth from the Father. Jesus said, “I proceeded forth and came from God.” In Proverbs 8:22-30, Christ is personified as “wisdom”. Wisdom (Christ) was “brought forth” from God (John 1:1).
- The Father and Son together created all the angels, including Lucifer (read Colossians 1:16-18). Christ is the Co-creator of all things. He created all the principalities and powers, dominions, and angelic hosts. All things were made by Him and for Him, and He is before all things. God created all things by Jesus Christ, by THE WORD OF GOD (Eph. 3:9, Jn.1:3). Jesus is that Word.
- Lucifer then led an insurrection in heaven (Isa.14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-15) and *became* Satan. He convinced 1/3 of heaven to side with him against God. (1/3 is suggested by Rev.12:4). Thus, 1/3 of the inhabitants of heaven were hurled out of their positions. God gave them no repentance because of the light they had. Satan's constant accusation against God ever since is that “God has no love.”
- After the uprising, the Father and Son determined to create a beautiful earth in which they could thoroughly manifest their love and wisdom. They wanted creatures who loved God out of their own free choice. The original earth was created long before man, and it was perfect. It is believed that there was an intelligent civilization here, perhaps similar to man, but not man. Satan infected earth's original inhabitants and this brought judgment. Today's demons are the disembodied spirits of the earth's first dwellers. The earth became a dead planet, dark, cold, and lifeless for an inconceivable period of time. Genesis 1:2a tells us “the earth *became* without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” Between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2b is a huge gap of time.
- In Genesis 1:2b, the Spirit of God moved again, saying “Let there be light” after the earth lay desolate for a long undisclosed period of time. The seven days mentioned in Genesis chapter one are actually not a creation but a *restoration* of the earth. It is a restoration of something already here. On the sixth day man was created. This was man's beginning, nearly 6000 years ago.
- The seven days in Genesis chapter one are prophetic of the seven thousand years allotted to man. One day with the Lord is as a thousand years (Psa. 90;4, 2 Pet. 3:8). Man has been upon earth for nearly six days (or six thousand years). We are about to enter the seventh day, the Millennium. After the Millennium, there will be a new earth. Let's be sure that we are there, and not left here.

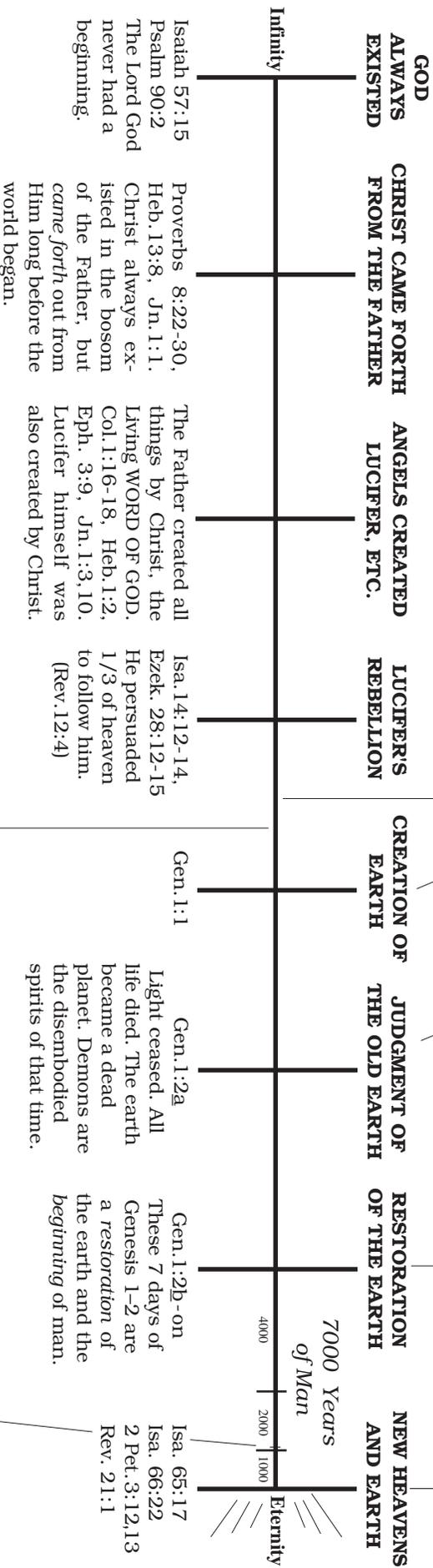
Remember three things: (*Concerning why we are here on earth and the choices we have to make*)

- 1.) We were created to replace the fallen inhabitants of heaven. (See I Corinthians 6:3)
Thus, we were born to be tested, as seen in our first parents, Adam and Eve (see Job 7:17,18).
- 2.) During our brief time on earth we are being forged into that final person we will be for all eternity. Life is filled with choices that will conform us either into God's image or the image of self-will. God has a void in His heart; He looks for love and for those whose nature is compatible to His.
- 3.) We are living at the end of the sixth day. The seventh day is about to come—the Millennium. Therefore, we should understand the times and prepare ourselves for the pressures just ahead.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE

PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE

After Lucifer's rebellion, the Father and Son determined to create a beautiful earth in which they could thoroughly manifest their love and wisdom. But earth's first inhabitants became corrupt. The first civilization on earth [not man] was infected by Satan, and thus were judged. Demons are believed to be the disembodied spirits of the first civilization.



Satan *again* brought his rebellion to earth, this time to Eve and to all of humanity

Satan is hurled into the eternal lake of fire (Rev. 20:10)

7000 Years of Man

This is where we are today

God in his foreknowledge knew that man would fail as well. Therefore, it was decided beforehand (even before God created the earth) that the Son would come to earth as a man and die for the sins of the world. He was "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8, 17:8, Acts 2:23, Eph. 1:4, 1 Pet. 1:19, 20). The redeemed (those who accepted God's gracious gift of pardon, and who overcame where Satan failed) would confiscate the positions that the Devil and his followers forfeited. (cf. 1 Cor. 6:3).

AN OVERVIEW OF THE 7000 YEARS OF MAN

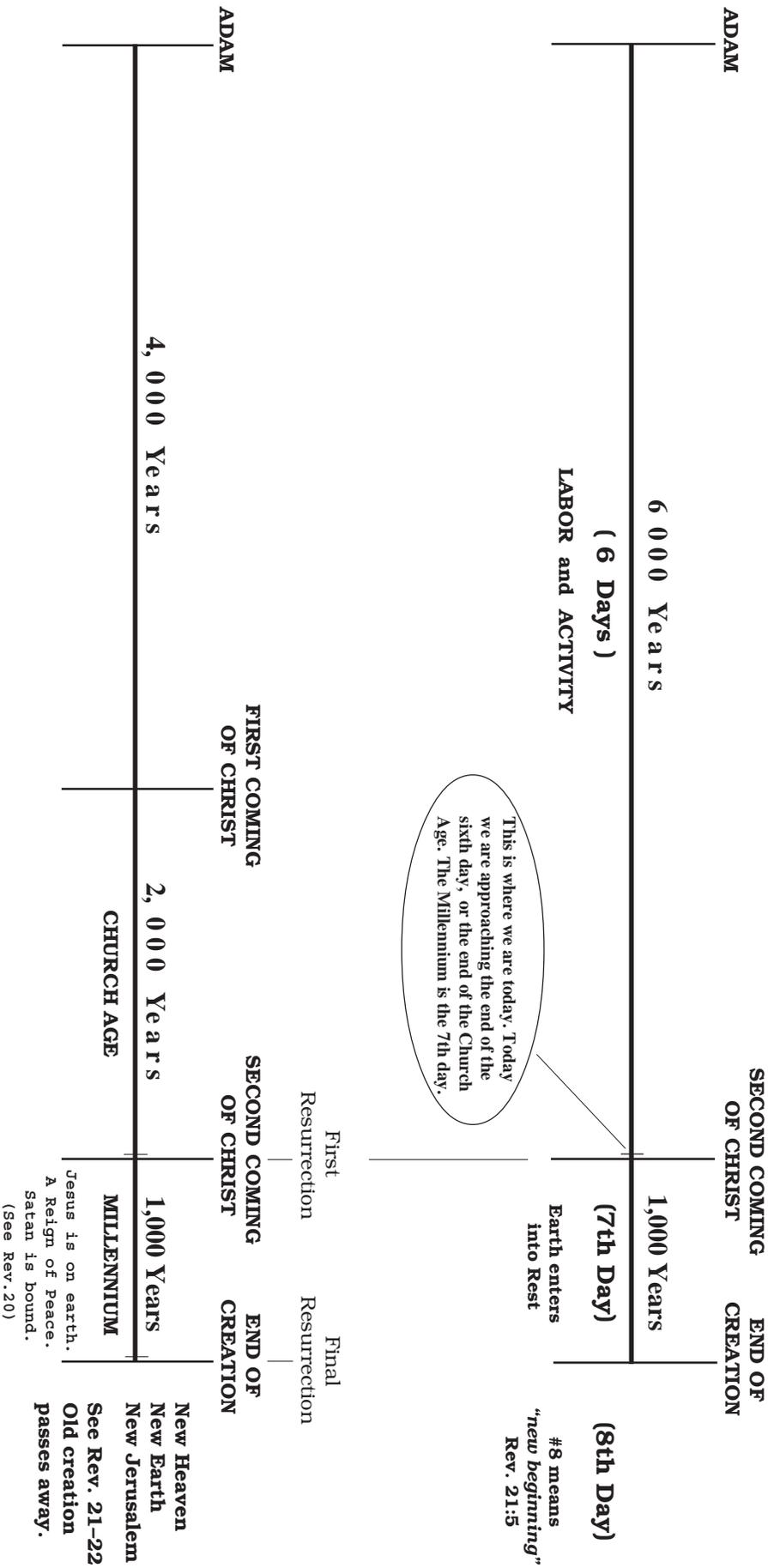
(Use this overview with the chart on page 45)

Please take time to muse over this chart (p.45)

- In God's eyes, “a thousand years are as one day” (2 Peter 3:8, Psalm 90:4). To a God who never had a beginning, a thousand years passes by as rapidly as a single day. A day, representing one thousand years, however, is highly significant in the Scriptures.
- Using a day to represent a thousand years, the seven days of Genesis chapter one are in fact prophetic of the 7,000 years of man. In a very real sense, these seven days in the first chapter of Genesis portray man's 7,000 year history. See the chart on the next page for vivid clarification.
- There were six days of creation (or restoration of the earth). Six days of labor and activity. But on the seventh day God rested from all His works. Seven speaks of rest.
- There have been nearly 6000 years (or six days) of toil, sweat and sorrow for man. But when Christ comes again, the *sixth* day ends, and the *seventh* begins. This is the Millennium. The earth will enter into rest for a thousand years, the seventh day. There will be a reign of peace upon earth for one thousand years and there will be no more wars. The Prince of Peace will be here upon earth. The Lord of the Sabbath will be here, and the earth will enter into rest.
- Rest also speaks of marriage. See the Book of Ruth (Ru. 3:1). Christ and His Church will be united in marriage during the Millennium. They will rule together on the earth. Christ is representative of the Bridegroom. He is our Head and the Church represents His Bride. Thus, during the seventh day or Millennium, the Bride and Groom enter into rest. Christ's Bride will be ready for Him at His Second Coming (Rev.19:7,8). God's timetable will *not* be upset. Christ's first coming was exactly on schedule (Gal. 4:4), and His Second coming will also be precisely on time.
- At the end of the sixth day (or end of the Church Age), Satan will be bound for a thousand years. (Read Revelation 20:1-15. These verses are very important.) The Sabbath / Millennium will be glorious. There will be no more wars or violence for a thousand years. Even the killer instinct in animals will change, for the lion shall lie down by the lamb. But at the end of the seventh day, Satan is let out of his prison for a short time to test the nations.
- At the end of the seventh day (Millennium), Satan once again is let out of his prison. God needs the Tempter / Deceiver one more time to test all those who are born during the Millennium. Since nothing unclean can enter the new earth, all the inhabitants of the earth must once again be tested. Amazingly, most of the human race, after all the warnings, will listen to the Father of Lies and follow him into eternal judgment (Rev. 20:7-10). This proves that the most important lesson we have learned from history is that we have learned nothing at all from history. Right to the end of time, man still loves darkness rather than light, except for a minority who are wise. On the *eighth day* God creates a new heaven and earth. Eight represents new beginnings. This present creation will pass away.
- Notice also that there are two major resurrections. The first resurrection is at the time of Christ's Second coming. Only *qualified* saints are resurrected here to reign as kings and priests. These are the “blessed and holy” (Rev. 20:5,6). At the end of the Millennium, everyone else (good and evil) is resurrected (Rev. 20:11-15). None of the wicked are resurrected until the end of the Millennium. Then everyone will be resurrected and have his body, either for eternal bliss or eternal torment.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE 7000 YEARS OF MAN

A Day With the Lord is as a Thousand Years



This is where we are today. Today we are approaching the end of the sixth day, or the end of the Church Age. The Millennium is the 7th day.

First Resurrection - This is at the Second Coming of Christ. Only qualified saints participate in this.
 Final Resurrection - This is at the end of the Millennium. Both good and evil are resurrected at this time.
 The Two Great Tests:
 1. At the very end of the Church Age, Satan appears in a man, the Antichrist, to test the nations.
 2. At the very end of the Millennium, Satan will test all those who are born during the Millennial age.

From Adam to Christ is 4000 years.
 From Christ's first coming to His second coming is the Church age, 2000 years. The Church age starts at His first coming and ends at His second coming. The Millennium begins at Christ's second coming.

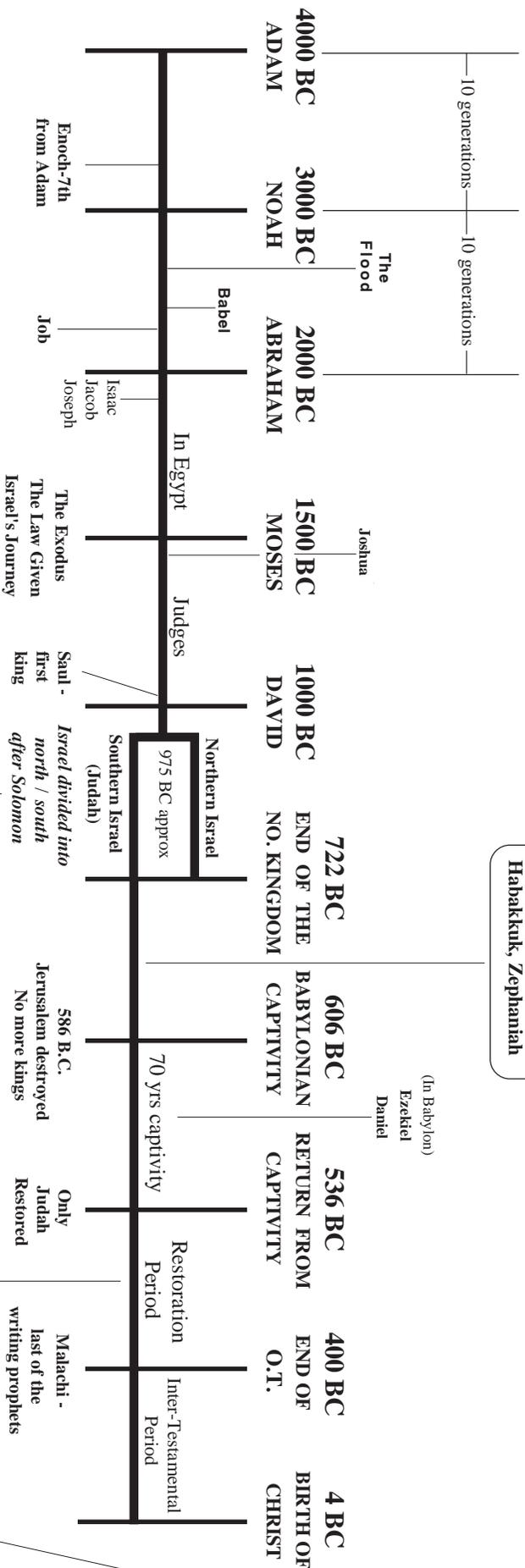
CHRONOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Use this sheet with your Bar Chart - p 47

- 1.) **Adam to Noah - 10 generations:** The Creation, the Fall, The Flood.
- 2.) **Noah to Abraham - 10 generations:** From the Flood, to Babel's tower, to the call of Abraham.
- 3.) **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel):** By a sure covenant, God promised them the land of Canaan. The Lord purposed to start a holy nation with Abraham and his seed, and then extend the light to the whole world. But before inheriting Canaan, Jacob and his family were forced into Egypt by a famine.
- 4.) **Israel grows into a nation while in Egypt:** After Joseph's generation died off, another Pharaoh imposed slavery upon Israel, but within several hundred years they grew into a nation of three million.
- 5.) **Deliverance from Egypt, and the wilderness wanderings:** Then God raised up Moses who judged Egypt with ten plagues and brought Israel out of Egypt. The Law was given to Moses at Sinai soon after. The books of *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy* compose this time period.
- 6.) **Joshua led them into Canaan their inheritance:** After Moses' generation disqualified themselves from entering Canaan's land of promise, Joshua brought the next generation in. (*Book of Joshua*)
- 7.) **The Rule of Judges:** After Joshua and the elders were dead, God raised up judges to govern different sections of Israel. Of the thirteen judges, Samson is the best known. *Ruth* also lived during this era. The period of judges begins after the death of Joshua and closes with Samuel—about 350 years. (*Judges*)
- 8.) **Reign of Kings Begins:** Samuel anointed Saul as the first king. Later, he anointed David, who captured Zion (the last stronghold), and brought Israel into full rest. Then Solomon became king.
- 9.) **The Nation of Israel Divides** After Solomon's reign, Israel became divided—north against south (975 BC approx. 1 Kgs.12:1-19, 2 Chron.10:1-19). a.) *The Northern Kingdom* (rebellious 10 tribes), are sometimes called “Ephraim” since Ephraim was the most dominant tribe of the ten. It is also sometimes called “Israel.” Other times it is referred to as “Samaria” because Samaria was the capital city. b.) *The Kingdom of Judah* was the southern part. David's throne was in Judah, in Jerusalem. The temple and the true worship remained in Jerusalem. The tribes of Benjamin and Levi remained loyal to Judah. There were actually thirteen tribes because Joseph became two tribes. His land was divided between his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Thus, we have — a.) 10 Northern tribes. b.) 3 Southern tribes. The Northern kingdom had 20 kings, and so did the Southern kingdom of Judah. *I-II Kings* cover the reigns of all these kings. *I-II Chronicles* covers the reigns of the kings of Judah only.
- 10.) **The End of the Northern Kingdom:** In 722 B.C. the ten northern tribes were exiled and scattered among the nations by the Assyrian captivities, and never returned to their homeland.
- 11.) **The Babylonian Captivity of Judah:** (606 to 536 B.C. - The 70 years of captivity). Judah, Benjamin, and Levi were exiled to Babylon but returned after seventy years. God sent them there for their good, to cleanse them from idolatry (Jer. 24:5-7). *Daniel* and *Ezekiel* were prophets in Babylon.
- 12.) **The Restoration Period:** (From Judah's return from Babylon in 536 to the end of the Old Testament in 400 B.C.). This period covers the time of *Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Malachi*, when the temple and city were rebuilt and worship was restored.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

* Ussher's chronology places Adam at 4004 B.C. Other chronologists differ 30 or 40 years – 3970 B.C.



Writing Prophets

Isaiah
Nahum, Jeremiah
Habakkuk, Zephaniah

(In Babylon)
Ezekiel
Daniel

Writing Prophets

Hosea, Jonah,
Obadiah, Jonah, Joel,
Micah, Amos, Isaiah

Ezra, Nehemiah
Esther, Haggai
Zechariah, Malachi

BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY:
The southern kingdom of Judah experienced 3 separate invasions:
1.) 606 BC - the first one.
2.) 597 BC - the second one.
3.) 586 BC - the final one.
Judah returned from exile in 536 B.C. after 70 years.

Non-Writing Prophets
Elijah-Elisha, others

Note: The entire New Testament was written in the last half of the first century. (A.D. 50 to 96)

CONCLUSION

From page 19 until now, we have offered *seven* major rules of interpretation. Although there are numerous other laws of interpretation, most of the secondary laws can come under these seven headings. Let's review the seven major rules now:

1.) **Interpret Scripture Literally** – Take the simplest and most literal form of interpretation. “Literal” does not exclude the possibility of spiritual meanings and applications. Generally there is one literal interpretation, but many applications of a passage. After viewing the Scriptures literally we may then look for the deeper meanings. We never discard the literal meaning, but build upon it.

2.) **The Natural Reveals the Spiritual** – *Every* symbol and type in the Old Testament has a counterpart in the New Testament. Jerusalem and Mt. Zion on earth reveal something of the New Jerusalem and Mt Zion in heaven. The earthly is but a shadow of the heavenly. *Everything* in the natural world reveals a spiritual truth. Things in the visible reveal things of the invisible world.

3.) **The First Mention Principle** – The first time our Creator mentions an issue in His Word, it is a *seed* that contains all the other roots, branches and fruit of that subject. All succeeding verses more clearly define what is in that seed. Therefore, the first mention of something is crucial to discovering the full truth as it progressively unfolds.

4.) **Stay in Context** – In literature, the exact meaning of a word or passage is dependent upon the other surrounding words, sentences and paragraphs that are connected to it. To isolate a word or sentence from its context is like tearing a single thread from a garment. Detached and alone it is useless and meaningless. A passage must not be isolated from the rest of Scripture. Scripture is interdependent upon all other Scripture to have the correct and complete interpretation.

5.) **Israel Symbolizes the Church** – Israel is a type of the Church. Virtually everything that pertains to Israel or that is promised to Israel has a *spiritual meaning* to the Church. For example, Israel has numerous promises of its restoration. All of these promises apply to the Church in these days. Israel's journey, tabernacle, priesthood, and offerings all have a spiritual meaning to us.

6.) **The Law of Love Upon Which All Scripture Is Based** – Christ summed up all the Law and the Prophets into two capsules: how we treat God and how we treat people (cf. Mt. 22:36-40). *Everything* in Scripture revolves around relationships, our heart condition toward God and others. Whatever God says in His Word, it will always relate in one way or another to these two things.

7. **The Time Principle – Know Where We Are in History** – It is imperative to have a time frame in Scripture. This involves: 1. The rebellion in heaven which started with self-will; 2. The creation of man (who was created to replace the fallen inhabitants of heaven if we pass the tests that Lucifer and his followers failed); 3. The Old Testament lessons which prepared us for the New; 4. The higher standards of the New Testament which we live under today; 5. The culmination of the Church Age and the choice we must make for Christ or the Antichrist; 6. The Millennial Age which starts when Christ returns; 7. The new heaven and earth. Let's make sure we are there.

IV. KEYS FOR OPENING UP THE OLD TESTAMENT

In this section we would like to go through the Old Testament and give a brief summary of each book. By the grace of the Lord, we hope to offer keys that will make each book more clear, simple, and edifying.

BOOK OF GENESIS

Genesis is extraordinary because it is a book of *origins*. Nearly everything has its beginning in the book of Genesis. It contains many of the “first mentions” of Scripture. The very first time God speaks about an issue in Scripture, it is a *seed* containing all the substance of that subject. Whatever is compacted in that seed is more clearly revealed each time it is repeated in Scripture. Yet its first mention is a *guide* to discovering the full truth as it progressively unfolds. For example, the Lord Jesus Himself invoked the law of first mention to settle the divorce question, saying, “In the beginning it was not so.” The Master Teacher went back to the first man and woman. Therefore, it is imperative to understand God's *original* purpose and intention for everything. Unless we go back to the beginning we cannot properly interpret many subjects in the Scriptures.

Genesis is a book of beginnings. Below are several major beginnings:

- The beginning of heaven and earth
- The beginning of all animate and inanimate life (animals, vegetation, etc.)
- The beginning of man and woman, and marriage
- The beginning of sin in man
- The beginning of redemption by the shedding of blood and the promise of a coming Redeemer
- The beginning of the lines of good and evil — Cain and Abel (and then Cain and Seth)
- The beginning of man again after the earth was destroyed by a flood.
- The beginning of the races, nationalities, and languages at Babel
- The beginning of a special holy nation with Abraham (this nation typifies the Church)
- The beginning of the 12 tribes of Israel with the 12 sons of Jacob
- The above beginnings (and many more) are *seeds* with numerous other seeds within them

Importance of Staying With the Original Plan

God created man for fellowship. In the cool of the day, God came seeking Adam. This was His original plan, and although man failed, it still *remains* the ultimate purpose for man. The Church of the early centuries went into great darkness for one reason: the original plan laid down by Christ and His apostles was put aside. The luminaries that followed drifted into worldly philosophies and added traditions that contradicted the teachings of Christ and the New Testament Scriptures. They did not build according to the original blueprint, and when people ignore the pattern set down by God, “every man will do what is right in his own eyes.” Starting with the Reformation period, it has taken five hundred years for God's people to get back to the original purpose for the Church.

Outline for Genesis

Chapter 1 - 2	The Creation
Chapter 3:1-14	The Fall
Chapter 3:15-24	The Plan of Redemption
Chapter 4 - 5	The Lines of Good and Evil
Chapter 6 - 9	The Flood
Chapter 10 - 11	Dispersion of the Nations
Chapter 12 - 25	The Life of Abraham
Chapter 17 - 35	The Life of Isaac
Chapter 25 - 50	The Life of Jacob
Chapter 37 - 50	The Life of Joseph

The Creation Was Made by Design, Not An Explosion **Chapter 1–2**

Some unbelievers claim that the universe came into being as a result of a tremendous explosion. Even a child understands that explosions never create something with order and design—but only chaos and destruction. The universe was made with perfect design and extraordinary exactitude that required the genius of a Supreme Being. It is by faith that we understand the creation story, but sin hardens the heart and brings spiritual blindness. Faith is the key to understanding (Heb.11:3).

The Entire Human Race Was in Eden – In Adam

All of the human race existed in Adam and descended from him. Therefore, we need to observe the weaknesses of our first parents and understand that their propensities are resident in each and every one of us. One of the immutable laws of creation is that everything (animal, vegetable, and man) reproduces “after his kind.” A horse reproduces a horse and a cow reproduces a cow; likewise, a man with a fallen nature produces children with a fallen nature. All of us were “in Adam” and we are made of his substance and nature. But every person who experiences *new birth* becomes “in Christ” and thus has a new father and begins to take on a new nature.

Just As Adam – God Also Seeks a Bride

In a very true sense, all of creation is based upon marriage. Every creature was designed to have a counterpart. The Scripture says it was not good for Adam to be alone; he needed a woman. This fact reveals God's desire for intimacy. The Designer Himself is in search of a counterpart, someone totally compatible to Himself. We see this truth evolving from the beginning of man in Genesis until the Book of Revelation (Rev.19:7,8). God wants a people who love Him out of their free will. Love is always a choice. Love can never be demanded or legislated. Thus, God created man with a will and the power to choose. God offers His love to all but only *some* choose to respond to that love.

Man Was Created to Be Tested – To Whose Voice Will We Listen?

Man was born to be tested (cf. Job 7:17,18). This is the next obvious scene in the Garden of Eden. God gave unto man every imaginable blessing in Eden to prove His great love for them. But the Lord also looked for a reciprocal response of love from Adam and Eve. Would man yield to the gracious voice of the Lord, or would he hearken to the wiles and rationalizations of the Serpent and forfeit his inheritance and even his soul to the Evil One? This is the test everyone must face.

Man is the object of great controversy in the unseen world, for both God and the Serpent are vying for rulership in the heart of man. Which one are we going to follow? One-third of the inhabitants of heaven listened to the Deceiver and they have lost their eternal inheritance. One of the reasons God created man was to fill the vacancies in heaven that were left by the fallen angels. Thus, man is being tested during this brief life. The eternal destiny of every human being depends on who they listen to—God or the Adversary?” This truth develops more and more throughout all the books of sacred Scripture. In the final Book of Revelation, all the earth must make a choice in our times, either for Christ or the Antichrist, the imposter.

The Fall

3:1-14

Sin entered the world when Satan attacked marriage in Genesis chapter 3. While Eve was away from her husband, the Serpent came with his smooth rationalizations. Eve made the disastrous mistake of being induced into a dialogue with the Serpent, and then she made a major decision without consulting her husband. Later Adam came on the scene. Finding her in a fallen state and not wanting to lose Eve, Adam identified himself with her and also partook of the forbidden fruit. Eve had listened to the Serpent instead of God, and Adam chose human love above God's. Thus, sin entered the human race. These same elements that constituted the fall confront all of us continually and they are further illustrated for us on all the succeeding pages of Scripture.

The Plan of Redemption

3:15-24

Genesis 3:15 is the first mention of Satan's judgment. God pronounces to the Serpent that an offspring of the woman would later come and destroy him. This act of judgment is portrayed by a man slamming his heel upon the head of a snake. The *heel* of the Savior would be temporarily injured in doing so, but the *head* of the serpent would be fatally crushed. This was fulfilled when the Son of God came down to earth and was born of woman. As a man He defeated Satan in every area. To defeat the Proud One, He humbled himself and became obedient unto the death of the cross. To defeat the Bitter One, He accepted injustices without complaining and became a perfect Lamb. As a man and for man, Christ totally *overwhelmed* Satan and stripped him of all his power.

The Curse

3:16-19

Now that Adam and Eve had accepted the venom of the Serpent, they had the same revolting, rebellious nature as the Serpent. Therefore, in order to hold back a wild, rampant and rebellious nature, God had no option but to impose restraints upon mankind (Eccl.8:11). If God did not place limits upon man, he would be helplessly out of control and corrupt. Thus, God pronounced “Cursed is the ground for thy sake” in Genesis 3:17b. It was the *mercy* of God, not anger, to announce that man needed pain, trouble, sorrow, and hard work. These are the ingredients that help man stay on course. When man throws off the restraints that God places upon him, man becomes vile and has to be destroyed. We see this divine principle emerging constantly throughout all the Scriptures.

Liberty can actually be very dangerous. It requires great maturity to have freedom. Paul warns, “Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh” (Gal. 5:13). When God heals people, will they use their healthy bodies to glorify Him, or will they use their healthy bodies for fornication or going their own way? When Christ healed ten lepers, only *one* used his healthy body to glorify the Lord (Luke 17:11-19).

God's Only Covering for Sin – The Shedding of Blood

3:21 “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” The fact that God covered their nakedness and clothed them with skins, presumably the skins of lambs, is very significant. “Skins” infer that blood had to be shed in order to cover Adam and his wife. This prefigures the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ who would later be slain for the sins of the world. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (cf. Heb.9:22). Adam had tried to cover his nakedness with fig leaves (3:7), but God does not accept man's covering for sin. God only accepts the means that He prescribes. This too is a major theme that runs throughout the entire canon of Scripture. Man cannot come to God on his own terms or by his own works. Man must come to God by the means He has given—and that is by the shedding of His own blood.

The Godly Line and the Wicked Line – Abel and Cain **Chapters 4–5**

Here we have the first mention of the sons that were born to Adam: Cain and Abel. Both sons had the same opportunities and both had the knowledge of God. Abel cooperated with the Lord, but Cain hardened his heart against God and hated his younger brother and murdered him. The message is very clear—people choose their own fate. There are only two kinds of people in the world—the children of God and the children of the devil (1 Jn. 3:10-15). People become a child of God or a child of the Devil, depending on whom they choose to follow. Anyone who ends up in hell has chosen to listen to and follow a *Liar*, and they will go where he is going — to hell!

In the history of man, from this point on, there has been a struggle between the righteous and the wicked, the children of God and the children of the Devil. Those who follow God are hated by those who will not follow God. In Romans 9:22,23, the Lord likens the wicked to “vessels of wrath,” but the righteous He likens to “vessels of mercy.” In these passages it is clear that God needs the wicked because He uses the wicked to *refine* the righteous. God said to David that if his sons sinned, he would chasten them “with the rod of men” (2 Sam. 7:14). Once again, this profound truth which begins in Genesis is developed throughout all of Scripture. Then it reaches its zenith in the Book of Revelation where the followers of the Antichrist persecute and slay the followers of Christ (cf. Rev. 6:9-11, 16:4-7). After God is finished *using* the wicked to perfect the righteous, He will destroy the wicked (Satan included) in the lake of fire (cf. Rev 20:10-15).

When God confronted Cain as to the whereabouts of his brother whom he had slain, he answered, “I don't know; am I my brother's keeper?” (Gen 4:9). Cain knew God, he talked to God, and he even lied to Him. *Ignorance* is not the real problem in man. The problem is rebellion! There was never any acknowledgment of his sin, but only a complaint that his sentence was too severe (4:11-13). When people never truly acknowledge their sin, all they do is wander aimlessly through life. The remainder of chapter four lists Cain's descendants, who were basically evil. In 4:25,26, Adam and Eve had another son named Seth who was godly. Thus, the godly line continues in chapter five.

The Flood **Chapters 6–9**

Even with the restraints of “the curse” that were placed upon man, society was rapidly becoming evil. *At the bottom* of society's moral declension was the decay of the home and family. Genesis 6:1,2 says, “The sons of God [the believers] saw the daughters of men [the unbelievers] that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.” The believers were marrying unbelievers, [as many as they wanted], and this was producing children who walked in the ways of the world.

Violation of God's Marriage Laws Led to World Destruction

O, the awesome seriousness of *leaving God out* of the most important decision in life—by marrying an unbeliever in disobedience! Can you imagine the kind of children that are produced in such a union when beauty, wit, wealth and worldly honors are preferred in a spouse rather than faith, holiness, and eternal values. The ways of the world and of the flesh overtake such a home, and *family faith* is brought virtually to an end. And what kind of children will the next generation produce? The rapid degeneration of the home and family is the reason God had to destroy the whole world with a flood (Gen. 6:5-7). When God is dismissed from one's life and home, worldliness, sensuality, hatred, and violence begin to infiltrate homes and all of society.

We are now living at that time of history which Christ foretold: “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man.” Today there is a rapid downward spiral in morality, and each generation is becoming progressively worse. I cannot overemphasize the terribleness of Adam's root sin—the preferring of human love above God's love.

The Evil of Infatuation

Sin is very deceitful (cf. Heb. 3:13) and dulls the heart to the coming consequences. Sin does not seem serious. Eve was beguiled and enamored with sin and could not have understood at the moment all the ramifications of her action in taking the forbidden fruit. Yet our sins can affect many unborn generations. It is evil to allow our hearts to be overcome with *infatuation* and then make major decisions void of sound judgment. The effects of sin can be unspeakable and often ongoing.

God's Patience Comes to an End

6:3 “And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” God saw where the human race was headed and warned of the coming worldwide destruction by a flood. Although the Lord is longsuffering and slow to anger, His patience does have limits. God gives deadlines, and when people overstep the line there is no recourse. This aspect of God's nature is revealed repeatedly throughout Scripture. We should never presume that God's mercies are going to continue forever in spite of how we live. Actually, His mercies continue only with those who fear him (Psa.103:11).

Thus, the flood came, and only eight people were spared. Only eight people had prepared themselves for the coming judgment. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (6:8). Are we seeking righteousness and meekness (Zeph. 2:1-3, Mt. 5:5)? Today we are approaching the time of the Great Tribulation. Are we preparing ourselves to be hidden in that time? Noah and his family passed from one dispensation to another, and in our time, those who are accounted worthy will pass from the Church Age into the Millennial Age to rule and reign with Christ.

The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth

When the flood waters receded and Noah stepped off the ark, he literally inherited the whole earth. But there are *qualifications* that have to be met in order to be hidden during times of judgment. All of the promises of God, in fact, have *conditions*. The promises of God are given to those who overcome (cf. Rev. 21:7). In Genesis 9:1, God tells the survivors to be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth. To “replenish the earth” is a repetition of what God had said to Adam and Eve.

The Dispersion of the Nations

Chapters 10–11

Genesis is not in perfect chronological order. It jumps ahead, then comes back again. In chapter 9:29, we are given the record of Noah's death. Yet in chapters 10–11, he is still alive. Noah lived another 350 years after the Flood (9:28) to about the time of Abraham's birth. Noah lived to the tenth generation after the Flood and saw the whole world turn away from God once again.

Chapter 10 lists the descendants of Noah's three sons, and by these three sons all the world was repopulated. The flood had reduced the population down to just eight people—Noah and his wife, and their three sons and their wives.

The Rebellion All Over Again

Chapter 11:1 All the earth's inhabitants were descendants of Noah. Thus, there was one race and one universal language at that time. Being united with one language and purpose, they used their combined energy and ingenuity to rebel against God and build a tower which was going to be used to worship the planets (11:1-5). Understanding the tremendous power of unity, God said: “Now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do” (11:6b). Therefore the Lord had to intervene and impose further limits upon man to dissipate their combined purposes to work evil; otherwise, man would warrant another worldwide extermination.

Most of Humanity Learns Nothing From History

Fully aware that the entire world had been wiped out by God's judgment, what did mankind learn from the flood? Virtually nothing! This is the one main thing that history has taught us, that we have learned nothing from history. The new generations after the flood quickly turned away from God, and Noah himself was there to protest and warn his descendents. Just *four* generations after the flood, in the days of Peleg (10:25, 11:10-16), the Lord had to take action and come down from heaven to neutralize man's unified rebellion. Thus, by a sovereign stroke of action, the Lord divided mankind into their peculiar races and differing languages and nationalities, and then He dispersed all these families throughout the world (11:7-9). Here we have the beginning of the nations.

Ignorance Is not the Problem, But Rebellion

The problem is not ignorance of the truth, but that man in general does not love the truth. “Men love darkness rather than Light” (Jn. 3:19). People want to enjoy their sins but still have peace. Thus, the children of darkness hate the children of light because the light makes them miserable.

Romans 1:18-32 is a picture of the history of man, starting with Cain, but especially it depicts the scene at the Tower of Babel. Romans one is an indictment of mankind, and rules that the whole world is guilty before God and “without excuse” (Rom.1:20). “Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful: but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (1:21). “They changed the glory of the incorruptible God” into objects like animals, and worshipped them (1:23); “and worshipped and served the [creation] more than the Creator” (1:25). “They did not want to retain God in their knowledge” thus, “God gave them over to a reprobate mind” (1:28). Even though they know that such deeds merit death and judgment, “they have pleasure in doing them, and laud others who likewise do them” (1:32).

The Life of Abraham

Chapters 12–25

The Beginning of a New Nation

After the judgment of the world by a flood, and the rebellion at the Tower of Babel after the flood, God desired to start a new nation. This nation was to be holy and separated unto Him from among all the other nations. To start this new nation, God looked for a man whose heart was perfect toward him, and thus He found Abraham who was later termed “the friend of God.”

Abraham was a man of faith, and faith comes from a heart relationship with God. The Lord looked at the heart of Abraham and desired to reproduce a whole nation of people like Abraham. God wanted people of faith, which is a heart relationship with Himself. Since the remainder of the Book of Genesis focuses upon Abraham and God's desire for a new and separate nation, the lives of Abraham's descendants—Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are treated extensively.

The Nation of Israel Symbolizes a Much Larger Nation – The Church

The rest of the Old Testament will now revolve around Abraham's nation, the nation of Israel. Perhaps the most important truth about the nation of Israel is that it points to a much larger nation, the Church. The Church itself is called “a holy nation” (1 Pet. 2:9). The Church is composed of people of faith out of every nation, tribe, and language (Rev. 5:9,10). Out of every nation God has *some* who are people of divine faith who belong to Him. Everything in the Old Testament nation of Israel contains a spiritual meaning and is a counterpart of the New Testament Church. Therefore, we should thoroughly acquaint ourselves with the Old Testament, because “all these things are written for our learning.” (cf. Rom.15:4, 1 Cor.10:11).

Many Separations Before Obtaining the Promises

12:1,2 “Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation.” Before Abraham could receive the promises of God, he had to make many separations in his life. First he had to separate himself from his country in Ur, his relatives, and his father's house. He also had to separate himself from Lot (13:5-9). Jesus said in Matthew 10:37: “If any man loves father or mother, son or daughter more than me, he is not worthy of me.” Abram had to overcome where Adam failed. Abram had to choose God over his father, and God over his son Isaac.

Canaan – The Land of Inheritance

12:1,5 The land that God was promising Abram was *Canaan*. That land would later become the inheritance of his descendants, but it never became Abram's land in his lifetime (Acts 7:2-5). Abram, Isaac, and Jacob were strangers in Canaan, living in tents (Heb.11:9,10). It did not actually become their inheritance until Joshua brought their descendants across Jordan four hundred years later, but this land is important! It would become God's holy nation, and in this nation a special “Seed” would be born who is Christ. In this Seed would all the nations of the earth be blessed. Thus, salvation and all its blessings came from the land of promise. God intended the nation of Israel to be a blessing and a light to all the nations of the world through Abraham's seed.

Conception, Gestation, and Birth of the New Nation

Abraham was the father of the nation of Israel. Starting from Genesis chapter 12, we are looking at the *conception* of the nation. It was not yet a nation, but one that had been conceived. Perhaps we could say that the lives of Isaac, Jacob, and his twelve sons (Genesis 17–50) are the *embryonic* years of the newly conceived nation. The formation period continued as famine forced Jacob and his family to settle in Egypt for several hundred years. While in Egypt, Israel's family grew into a multitude of about three million people, but was still constricted in the womb of Egyptian bondage. Then in the Book of Exodus, Moses brought the nation of Israel to *birth*, delivering them from Egyptian bondage and heading them toward Canaan, the land of promise.

The Nation Was Conceived in Faith

The life of Abraham was a life of faith. The new nation itself was conceived in faith, for it started by a promise from God, and Abraham believed that promise. He left Ur of the Chaldees by faith and headed for a new country without knowing all the details (cf Heb.11:8,9). While Abram was childless, God promised that his seed would be too numerous to count. Still “he believed God, and this was reckoned to him for righteousness” (Gen.15:2-6). Later in time when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Abraham believed God was able to raise him from the dead (Heb.11:17-19). Faith is a condition of a soft heart. Faith is a relationship! Abraham was justified by faith, and all of his true children are justified by faith. Each time we believe and respond to God's message, our faith is counted for righteousness. In a capsule, this is the Gospel. (See Romans 4:3-5; 4:17-24.)

God's Immutable Covenant With Abraham – 15:7-21

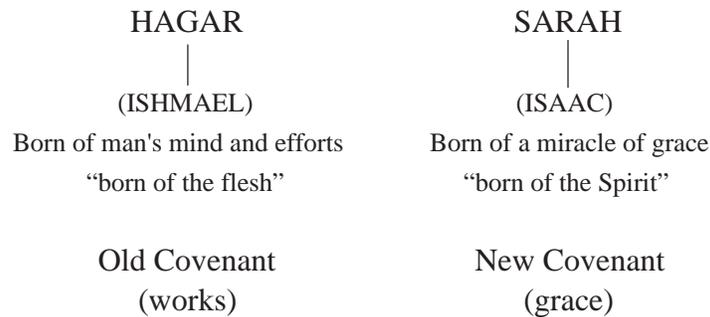
In Genesis 15:7,8, the Lord repeats His promise to Abram that He will give him all the land of Canaan for an inheritance. Abram responded, “Lord, how shall I know this?” Abram was asking for confirmation and reassurance. Thus, God made a covenant with Abram. In Bible times, when two parties made a covenant they would divide an animal in half, laying one part on the left side and the other part on the right side. Then the two parties would walk together through the pathway of the divided sacrifice, thus sealing the covenant. Abram prepared the sacrifices as he was commanded (v9-10), but then in verse 12 a deep sleep fell upon Abram.

While Abram slept, God declared (v13,14) that Abram's seed would *first* be strangers in another land [which was Egypt], then after 400 years God would judge that nation who imposed slavery upon them, and Israel would come forth with great substance. After the passing of four generations the Israelites would come out of servitude and inherit the land of Canaan (v16). God made it very clear that Abram's descendants must *first* suffer affliction in Egypt, then they would inherit the land.

15:17-21 - While Abram remained in a deep sleep, two others passed through the divided sacrifices. “A smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between those pieces.” The smoking furnace is symbolic of God the Father who is called “a consuming fire” in Hebrews 12:29. The “burning lamp” is representative of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. Normally, God and Abram should have passed between those divided sacrifices. Instead, it was God the Father and God the Son. Thus, the covenant was not between God and Abram but between the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son agreed together to give the land of Canaan to Abram and his seed forever. Therefore, this was an immutable covenant which can never be broken. Therefore, the whole land of Israel belongs to the Hebrews forever, and anyone who tries to take it away is cursed.

Birth of Ishmael – The Product of Human Thinking and Man's Works

Genesis 16:1-16 is the birth of Ishmael. Abram and Sarai had already dwelt in Canaan ten years and still had no children. Besides this, they were growing older and it was becoming more and more impossible to have a child. Therefore, Sarai suggested to her husband that they try to obtain children through Hagar, a handmaid. The result was the birth of Ishmael. Thus, Ishmael was the product of impatience and the natural mind. Abram and Sarai had tried to bring God's promise to pass using their own mind and efforts, but the birth of *Isaac the son of promise*, required a miracle. Isaac was something that only God could produce. In Galatians 4:21-31, Paul uses these two women and their sons to compare the Old Covenant of works with the New Covenant of grace.



The Lord makes it clear right from the beginning that He will not accept our works; He will only accept what He prescribes. Adam tried to cover his nakedness with fig leaves, which God refused. God Himself clothed them with the skins of animals, signifying that the shedding of blood was necessary for God's acceptance. God rejected Hagar and her fruit from partaking of the covenant and promises made to Abram (cf. Gen. 21:9-12). Ishmael was something man could produce. But the promises were only for Isaac, the son of promise, and he was the result of a miracle of grace.

This truth not only applies to salvation, it also applies to all the endeavors we try to do for God. Many Christian works that are started for God are born of the human mind, emotions, and motives of the flesh. The fruit of it is never good. All our works must be wrought in God and “born of God” if we want our fruit to be good and our endeavors to last. Although Abram and Sarai were champions of faith, they still needed their faith *purified* of natural elements. This is an ongoing process (1 Pet.1:7).

Without Circumcision There is No Inheritance

Genesis 17:4,5. After changing Abram's name to Abraham, God said he would make Abraham exceedingly fruitful, and again promises to give unto him and his seed the land of Canaan (v6-8). Then the Lord established a sign or “token” of the covenant, and that token was *circumcision*. In order to have the land of promise, every male child had to be circumcised (v9-14). This meant that anyone who was not circumcised could not inherit the land and was in danger of being cut off. Without circumcision there was no inheritance, there was no inheriting the land of Canaan. When Joshua crossed Jordan many years later, he stopped and had the new generation circumcised. They could not go into the land until they were circumcised (Josh. 5:1-9).

Circumcision has great spiritual implications. As the spiritual seed of Abraham, we must have a spiritual circumcision of the heart before we can have our inheritance. Our inheritance is a call, a ministry, and a relationship with God. Yet it is only as we allow God to cut away those things of the fallen nature which we are born with that we can have our full inheritance (Rom. 2:28,29; Acts 7:51).

The Life of Isaac

Chapters 17 - 35

Isaac was born as a result of a promise and a miracle (21:1-3). Certainly, God would bless Ishmael numerically, but the covenant of inheriting the land of Canaan and all of the spiritual promises would only be established and descend through *Isaac and his offspring* (17:20-22; 21:9-12).

Sodom Destroyed the Same Year as Isaac's Birth

After reaffirming that Sarah would bear a son in her old age (18:10-15), the Lord reveals unto Abraham His intention of judging Sodom (18:20-33). Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed that year, the same year as Isaac's birth, only 452 years after the flood. Sodom had given itself over to homosexuality and is now suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (cf. Jude 1:7). Eternal judgment is awesome. It is also the fate of unrepentant Christians (1 Cor. 6:9,10, Eph. 5:3-8, 2 Pet. 2:20-22). In Genesis chapter 19, Lot and his family had become so attached to Sodom that the angels had a hard time getting them out of the city before it was destroyed. Lot was a *righteous* man but he was not *holy*. In Scripture there are many people like Lot who did right acts but fostered other affections in their hearts. This is another strong theme in all the succeeding books of the Bible.

Offering of Isaac / The Crucial Test

In Genesis 22:1-2, God tested Abraham, asking him to give back his only son Isaac. Isaac represented the call, the promises, and Abraham's dearest possession. God wanted to know if the Lord Himself was number one in Abraham's life, or if he put the promises and the blessings first. This was the key issue in heaven upon which Lucifer had failed miserably. Lucifer loved position and ministry *more* than his relationship with God. He had attempted to usurp God's position on the throne, convincing one third of the angels to side with him. Later in history, Satan sneered at Job and claimed he was only serving God for the benefits. Thus, when men like Abraham and Job passed this test, it was a victory over Satan, for they were passing the test that Lucifer had failed. God's favor was more important than the blessings. Remember, there are many unseen eyes watching us. Paul says we are "a spectacle of men and angels" and that we are called to judge angels (I Cor. 4:9, 6:3).

Also, the willingness of Abraham to offer his only son is a perfect type of God the Father who was willing to sacrifice His only Son for us. There are many *types of Christ* in Scripture, but extremely few types of God the Father. Abraham is the most singular and profound type of God the Father.

Choosing of a Bride for Isaac

In Chapter 24, Abraham was concerned that his beloved son Isaac have God's choice of a spouse. A marriage partner must not merely be a believer, but of the same vision and purpose and call. The Lord is seeking a godly seed. Abraham sent Eliezer, a trusted servant, to search for the right wife for Isaac. Eliezer asked God for infallible confirmations (24:13,14), and Rebekah, a hard working, industrious young woman was chosen. God will not choose passive, unmotivated wives for His sons. Neither will He himself be wedded to a halfhearted, uncommitted Bride. He is coming for a glorious bride that has no spot or blemish or any such thing (cf. (Eph. 5:27, Rev.19:7,8). Here again is a truth that is repeated over and over again in Scripture. God is looking for an eternal companion who is very much like Himself, a people conformed to His image.

Isaac – The Heir of all Things

After the death of Sarah, Isaac's mother, and marriage to Rebekah, Abraham married Keturah and had an additional *six* sons (24:67, 25:1,2). Bestowing gifts on these six sons, he sent them all away from Isaac to the east country (Saudi Arabia), but he gave all that he had unto Isaac (25:5,6). Thus, Abraham had made Isaac the heir of everything. All the rights to the land of Canaan, and all the other promises of God were passed on to Isaac alone. After these things, Abraham died and was buried next to his wife Sarah in Hebron (25:7-11), by his sons, Isaac and Ishmael.

As it was back then, so it is today. There are many who are “sons” of Abraham, but there are few *Isaac's*. Isaac's are those who have the promises, the call, and the vision. These are the ones who really go on with God and fulfill the purposes of God.

“Isaac's” Face the Opposition of Envy

26:12-16 - Isaac became exceedingly prosperous, even while living as a stranger in the land of promise. The result of this was that his neighbors envied him and stopped up all of his wells. This is a problem as old as man. People without promises and vision *envy* those who do have them, and often attack them. It is still this way in the Middle East today, and it is still this way in the Church. Isaac was a man of peace and did not fight back; he simply moved on and dug other wells (v17-22).

The Life of Jacob **Chapters 25 - 50**

The Birth of Jacob and Esau / Another Miracle Required

Just as Sarah had been barren and needed a miracle, so also was Rebekah barren. Isaac prayed for his wife, and by a miracle she conceived (25:21). Thus, in order for the nation of Israel to be born, miracles of faith continued to be required. Rebekah produced twins from her womb—Esau and Jacob (25:22-26). Esau cared very little for spiritual things, but Jacob highly valued eternal honors. Thus, the call and the promises that had been given to Abraham and Isaac were passed on to Jacob (Psa.105:9-13), and Esau was separated from any involvement in the new holy nation.

Esau only cared about satisfying his natural appetites, and treated the things of eternity lightly (25:27-34). In addition to this, Esau was a fornicator and did not consider the future generations of his offspring (Heb.12:16; Gen. 26:34,35). How different brothers can be! Cain and Abel had the same opportunities, but one hardened his heart and the other submitted to God. Jacob treasured heavenly things, but Esau did not. By their own choosing, people determine their place in eternity.

Weaknesses of Parents Are Passed on to the Children

25:28 - “And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.” Here we see the problem of “partiality” in the parents. Isaac loved savory meat and favored Esau who was a skilled hunter. Thus, Esau inherited a lust for food from his father Isaac. Later in life, Esau sold his birthright to satisfy his present appetites. Those things which are not conquered in parents are passed on to the children, but usually they are *stronger* in the children. Rebekah gave her nature of deceit to Jacob, her favorite son, and Jacob had to suffer many years to be made straight.

Deceit of Rebekah / Passed on to Jacob

Isaac still favored Esau (25:34), ignoring the fact that Esau had bartered his birthright for a dinner of lentils, married heathen women, and was a fornicator (26:34). Isaac was also disregarding the word God gave to Rebekah before the birth of the twins that “the elder shall serve the younger” (25:23).

27:1-4 - Isaac's eyesight was dim, and he wanted to lay his hands upon Esau and pass on the family blessing. First of all, instead of fasting before the laying on of hands, he wanted a nice big dinner. Thus, he sent Esau off hunting. Rebekah, hearing the conversation between her husband and Esau, took matters into her own hands. (Proverbs 14:1 is a warning to women not to destroy their home by taking matters into their own hands.) Rebekah instructed her favorite son Jacob to lie to his father and to pretend to be Esau. She did not believe God was able to work out this situation, so she *helped* God. Rebekah had failed in the area of faith; thus, she resorted to manipulation.

Another important truth here is that the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah did not grow in harmony over the span of many years, even though God had put them together. When a parent confides more in a child than in the spouse, you know there is not a close relationship. Neither Isaac nor Rebekah dealt with certain issues in their hearts; thus their marriage did not grow. Actually, there are very few marriages in the Scripture that were intimate, where *both* parties were fully consecrated to God. Even as our relationship with God should grow, so also should our relationship grow with our spouse. Yet the only way our marriage can grow is when we are growing spiritually; and to grow spiritually we must pay attention to those areas God is pinpointing in our lives.

Deceit – A Generational Iniquity

Deceit was a generational iniquity in Rebekah's family. Her brother Laban, for example, was an arch-deceiver (31:6,7). The ungodly counsel that Rebekah gave to her son divided the home, and Jacob had to flee from the wrath of Esau, who had purposed to kill him. In 27:41-45, the domineering mother again instructs Jacob to flee to her brother Laban's house for refuge until Esau's wrath cooled down; but what she thought would be “a few days” turned out to be twenty years. There is no evidence that Rebekah ever saw her son again before she died. Rebekah's deceit divided her home and marriage, and it caused Jacob a lifetime of heartaches as he suffered to be made straight.

The Years of Reaping

Jacob yearned for eternal honors, but he had sought them by deceit. Therefore, in order to be worthy of the call and promises made to Abraham and Isaac, his crooked nature had to be changed. Thus, he was sent to a man even more underhanded than himself. Suffering intensely from Laban's treachery, Jacob learned to abhor deceit (31:41). However, the iniquity did not stop there, for he produced sons with his identical conniving nature. A few years later the sons plotted the death of their younger brother Joseph, but then decided to sell him as a slave instead. In order to explain his whereabouts, they presented to their father a bloodied coat. Recognizing the coat, Jacob wept for months thinking Joseph had been torn to pieces by an evil beast. In all, Jacob suffered twenty-two years from depression. Jacob's deceit, inherent in his sons, had greatly *multiplied*, and now he was reaping what he had planted (37:28-35). One of the great lessons of Genesis is that little seeds produce tremendous harvests. Whatever a man sows (whether it be natural or spiritual) he will surely harvest, and usually he reaps *much more* than was sown.

Jacob's Twelve Sons

Jacob lived at Uncle Laban's for twenty years (28:10 - 31:13 and 31:38-41). His uncle had cheated him ten specific times, and Jacob learned to hate deceit. During these twenty years, eleven sons were born to Jacob. Joseph, his eleventh son, was by far the most honorable. Benjamin, his youngest son, was born in Bethlehem after Jacob and his family returned to Canaan (35:16-20). Rachel, the favorite wife of Jacob, died at a young age while giving birth to Benjamin.

Jacob's Four Wives

Leah	Bilhah	Zilpah	Rachel
Reuben, Simeon	Dan	Gad	Joseph
Levi, Judah	Naphtali	Asher	Benjamin
Issachar, Zebulun			

Jacob had twelve sons by four different wives. These twelve sons later grew into twelve tribes which comprise the new nation of Israel. Each tribe had different promises and a different call. The mothers and the births of the twelve sons have great significance. Some of the sons (like Joseph and Judah) were more spiritual than the others because the mothers who bore them were more spiritual (cf. 37:2). *Mothers* represent churches and denominations. The sons and daughters of each church all have the same Father, and the seed [Christ in us] is the same, but the mothers who raise these children all have a different emphasis and mentality. Some churches have greater vision and higher standards than others. In heaven there are also different levels; not everyone is on the same plane.

Polygamy Was Not in God's Original Plan

In the Old Testament, the standards were *much lower* than those in the New Testament. In Old Testament times, polygamy and divorce were allowed, but they were never blessed. Never at any time did God change His original plan. God made one wife for Adam. Polygamy and divorce resulted from the Fall. When Abram took Hagar in addition to Sarah, it created terrible strife. Samuel's father Elkanah had two wives, but that home had no peace. David and Solomon multiplied wives, and it was disastrous. And when Jacob had four wives, his household was chaotic. Today, Christ's New Covenant has eliminated divorce and polygamy, for He takes us back – “to the beginning.”

Jacob Changed to Israel

32:1-23 - As Jacob was returning to Canaan from Uncle Laban's, tidings came that his brother Esau was approaching him with four hundred men. Fear seized Jacob, for he thought Esau was seeking revenge. This brought Jacob to his wits' end, and he cried mightily to God for mercy. At this time, he wrestled with the Lord all night and had a fresh meeting with God (32:24-32). Jacob's name, which means “deceiver,” was changed to Israel, meaning “prince with God.” Jacob prevailed with God, not by strength but by desire and determination to be changed. Jacob was tired of his wretched nature and miserable sufferings; thus he pleaded with God to change him and bless him. From this time forth he limped on his right thigh. God had weakened *Israel* to make him dependent upon Him.

Jacob summed up his life, saying: “Few and evil have the days of my life been” (47:8,9). Jacob had a life of unnecessary suffering—all because of his crooked nature. Yet, he died in victory and was later named *Jeshurun*, which means “straightened one” (Deut. 33:5,26). The father of the new nation learned righteousness at the end. This is prophetic of the nation of Israel, for at the end, when surrounded by their enemies, they will turn fully to Christ (Zech.14:1-4; 12:10; 13:6).

The Life of Joseph Chapters 37 – 50

Of all the major Bible characters, Joseph is one of the very few in whom we can find no fault. The eleventh son of Jacob, Joseph is a profound type of Christ who saved not only his own nation but many nations of the world. In “Joseph” all the nations of the world were blessed. Thus, Joseph *partially* fulfilled the promise made to Abraham concerning the coming Christ.

Genesis chapters 12 to 50 covers the embryonic stage of God's new nation. These chapters record the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his twelve sons. In these founding fathers we see a divine process taking place which will establish Israel as a nation, a nation that will bring blessing to the whole earth.

- Abraham had to make many separations in his life. He had to separate himself from his native country, his father's house, and from Lot. In fact, he had to make seven major separations in order to become the founding father of the new nation. We will need to make separations as well.
- Abraham and Sarah's faith had to be purified. They produced Ishmael by using their own mind and ingenuity. Yet God would not accept their works, for the birth of Isaac required a miracle. God's new nation was to be born entirely of grace and faith. Therefore, Ishmael had to be separated from the new nation because it could only come about by grace through faith, not man's works.
- Abraham and his descendants needed to be circumcised. The natural mind, emotions, and fallen propensities of man must be cut away by the Sword in order to obtain the promises.
- Abraham later was asked to give Isaac back to God. The Lord wanted to see if Isaac and the promises were more important to Abraham than God Himself. Abraham gained the victory when he released Isaac.
- Isaac married a wonderful woman named Rebekah, but she was barren and needed a miracle to conceive. Thus, in order for the new nation to be born another miracle of faith was needed.
- Esau and Jacob were born, but Esau the fornicator had little interest in eternal matters. Therefore, Esau, like Ishmael, was separated from the new nation and the call was passed down to Jacob.
- Jacob aspired to the things of eternity, but first he had to be purged of deceit. At the end, Jacob was transformed into Israel, a prince with God. He was the father of the twelve tribes of Israel, and as a prophet, he pronounced a blessing upon each of his twelve sons who became the twelve tribes.
- Jacob's wife Rachel was barren; once again a miracle was needed for Joseph the deliverer to be born. (See Genesis 30:1, 22-24).
- Joseph brought worldwide recognition to the Israelites when he nourished the nation of Egypt and all the other surrounding nations during a severe famine (Gen. 41:54-57). Joseph, like Christ, was rejected by his Jewish brethren but was accepted by the Gentiles. Later he was gladly received by his own brethren as well. Joseph was Abraham's *seed* in whom all the world was blessed. In a figure, Joseph represented Christ the coming Redeemer, Abraham's *greatest* seed—the One who is called “The Bread of Life.” Christ sustains and gives life to the whole world.

The Life of Joseph the Deliverer

It was evident to Jacob that his eleventh son, Joseph, was a person of great integrity. Therefore, Jacob determined to make him the family heir, giving him a coat of many colors. This coat, symbolizing the seven spirits of God by its colors, set Joseph apart from his older brothers as God's anointed. Therefore he was envied by his brothers, and some of them plotted his murder (37:11, Acts 7:9).

Envy and Jealousy – Major Problems of the Heart

Envy and jealousy are serious character flaws, but these maladies did not start with man. They started in heaven when Lucifer wanted to be number one. Envy and jealousy are fruits of an uncrucified ego. Jealousy demands to be unexcelled and hates all rivals. Envy dislikes and even wishes evil against those who have notable advantages or something superior. Envy was the vicious agent that urged the religious leaders to have Jesus nailed to a cruel cross (Mt. 27:18, Mk.15:10). A heart with pure motives does not strive to lift itself up. A person with pure motives only wants God to be exalted, and esteems others better than himself (Phil. 2:3).

I am bringing up this subject again for an important reason: envy and jealousy thrive in hearts that have self-seeking motives. The whole of Scripture is filled with examples of this wretched moral defect, starting with the slaying of Abel by Cain. Remember, all of Scripture is based upon two things—love for God and love for people (Mt. 22:36-40); and love does not envy (1 Cor.13:4).

Joseph Was Blessed By Betrayal and Injustices

Another marvelous truth in Genesis, and in all of Scripture, is that God is able to turn curses into blessings. Joseph perfectly exemplifies this principle. In Genesis 37:5-11, Joseph was given a dream in which God gave him a glimpse of his destiny. As usual, the Lord supplied few details, but in the dream he had the preeminence over his brethren. God did not tell Joseph *when* or *where* this would happen, or all of the anguish he would pass through before this dream was realized in his life.

The dream would be fulfilled later in life, about twenty-two years later, and it would take place in another country—Egypt. Joseph would experience betrayal, an unwarranted prison sentence, loneliness, confusion, and disgrace in the years following his dream. First, his brethren conspired to kill him, and then he was sold as a slave into Egypt. God was using the envy of his brothers to get him to the *location* where the dream would be fulfilled. When his employer's wife tried to seduce him, he flatly refused. The woman then accused him of the very crime he had stood against, and he was cast into prison for perhaps seven years. Psalm 105:18 speaks of his time in prison, saying, “he was put in iron,” but the original syntax reverses the arrangement of words, saying “iron was put in him.”

Every injustice was actually working in his favor. The conspiracy of his brothers placed him in the land where the dream would be fulfilled, and his time in prison was developing iron in his soul and preparing him to be a world ruler. Later he was able to say to his brethren, “You thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good ... to save much people alive” (Gen. 50:20 cf. 45:4-7). One of the greatest keys to victory is understanding this simple truth—that God uses injustices and adversity to promote us and push us to the throne of rulership. The reason so many people fight and defend themselves and become bitter is because they do not have the revelation of Romans 8:28. Indeed, God is using all things to work together for our good when we love Him (see also Deut. 23:5b). This is another major theme that we will see throughout the whole of Scripture.

Joseph Nourishes All the Nations

Pharaoh had a dream, but no one had the interpretation. Then God gave Joseph the interpretation, and he warned Pharaoh that seven terrible years of famine were coming after seven years of plenty. Pharaoh, seeing that Joseph had understanding of the times, appointed Joseph ruler over all the land to prepare for the dearth. Thus, Joseph was elevated from the dungeon to the throne literally overnight (Gen. 41:1-49; 41:54-57).

When the famine came, just as Joseph had foretold, all countries came to Joseph for food. Because the famine was in Canaan as well, Joseph's brethren had to travel to Egypt to buy corn (Gen. 42). After his brethren came *the second time* to Egypt to buy food, Joseph revealed himself to them (Gen. 43–45), for they did not recognize him the first time (see Acts 7:8-15). In like manner, Christ's Jewish brethren did not recognize Him at His first coming, but they certainly will know Him at His second coming.

All Israel Settles in Egypt / Israel Grows into a Multitude

The famine was so severe that Jacob and all his sons and their families moved to Egypt (See chapters 46, 47). In 47:27-31, Jacob (Israel) multiplied exceedingly while in Egypt, but Jacob insisted that he not be buried in Egypt but in Canaan, the land of promise. In chapters 48 and 49, Jacob then lays his hands upon each of his sons and prophesies their destiny. After Jacob's death and burial in Canaan (ch. 50), the Israelites returned to Egypt and continued to dwell there (50:14).

Joseph Predicts the Future Exodus / Gives Commands to Bury Him in Canaan

50:24-26 - Joseph, who was also a prophet, predicted that God would visit them at a later time and bring them into the land of Canaan which the Lord had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He also charged the people to bury his bones in the land of promise when they made their future exodus. The Israelites remained in Egypt for several hundred years, during which time they grew into a nation of two to three million people.

This prepares us for the Book of Exodus, where God's people began their journey to the Land of Promise. This journey beautifully depicts the journey of the believer—from Egypt (worldliness), to Zion (holiness).

Since Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation, we are looking more closely at the Book of Genesis because virtually everything has its beginning in Genesis. Because nearly everything in Scripture has its roots in this book, we have taken extra time to look at many of its key thoughts and “seeds.” On the next few pages we would like to summarize these foundational truths, for they will be enlarged and developed more as we look into all the succeeding books of the Scripture.

Summary of the Seeds in Genesis

- Genesis means “origin.” Virtually all the truths of Scripture have their origin in Genesis. All life has its beginning in Genesis.
- The creation story must be received by faith. Without faith we cannot please God; neither can we receive anything from God, apart from faith. Moral impurity destroys faith. When young people go to college and fall into moral sin, they become agnostic or atheistic, and the light goes out. The real problem is moral and spiritual, not intellectual. (cf. Rom.1:21; Mt. 6:23). No amount of “reasoning” will help the unrepentant (1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3,4), for there is a veil over their minds.
- We must always go back to the original plan God had in Genesis. Man was created for fellowship with God. This plan did not change because of the Fall, and neither did God's plan for marriage change. At any time in history when men forsook the original design, they drifted into grievous error.
- Creation was made by design, not an explosion. Even the animal kingdom knows the difference between male and female and are attracted to the opposite gender. A reprobate mind is a mind that has lost common sense, the result of a rejection of God (Rom.1:24-28). When man brings God down, God brings man down and gives him confusion.
- All of creation is based on marriage; every creature was designed as “male and female.” The Creator is known by His creation; and the creation tells us that God Himself is desirous of a counterpart—a bride. This truth is developed throughout all of Scripture and culminates in Revelation.
- Man was born to be tested. We are all descendants of Adam and will have the same test he faced. Adam was given every blessing imaginable, but God wanted a reciprocal response of love.
 - 1.) Will we listen to God's gracious voice and follow Him? Or,
 - 2.) Will we be swayed by the rationalizations of the Evil One and follow him?Every human being is required to choose between these two voices.
- Sin entered the world when Eve listened to the seductive voice of the Serpent. The Serpent persuaded her to violate a direct command of God and partake of the forbidden fruit. Adam, not willing to lose her, also took of the fruit. Therefore, Adam preferred human love above God's love. Herein are mankind's two greatest weaknesses, as seen in our first parents:
 - 1.) The tendency to listen to enticing, persuasive, wrong voices, and follow the wrong people.
 - 2.) The tendency to choose human love and acceptance above God's love (Jn.12:43, Mt. 6:1).Are we going to do our will or God's will? This is the whole issue of Scripture (Josh. 24:15).
- God promised a Redeemer (born of a woman) who would bruise the Serpent's head. The Co-creator of the universe would become a man. As a man, and for man—He would *crush* Satan.
- God imposed the Curse upon fallen man to restrain an evil nature. When man throws off the limits God places upon him, he becomes totally corrupt and has to be destroyed.
- Man tried to clothe himself after his sin, but God clothed man with skins, signifying that the shedding of blood was the only covering God accepted. He would not accept man's works. He would only accept the means that He prescribes. Man cannot justify himself or come to God by his own doings.

- Cain and Abel represent the lines of good and evil. Both had the same background and opportunities, but one followed the Lord and the other yielded to the Evil one. Everyone will make his choice—either for God or the Serpent. Remember, anyone who goes to hell has chosen to be there. Anyone who misses eternal life has listened to the Serpent and taken lightly the commandments of the Lord. The Lord will use those who choose to follow Satan to *refine* the righteous.
- The flood was the result of a breakdown in society; and society degenerated because of a breakdown in marriage and the family. Believers were marrying unbelievers, and the children became profane and wicked. Thus, Jesus warned that it would be “as the days of Noah” when He came again. There are conditions to be met in order to be preserved in perilous times. The condition is this: “Noah was perfect and upright.” God's patience with the others came to an end, and only eight people survived the world-wide deluge. Noah inherited the earth after the Flood; therefore, he typifies those who pass from one dispensation into another. Let us also be found worthy to pass from the Church Age into the Millennium to reign with Christ (see Job 19:25-27).
- After the flood, man quickly strayed from God again, showing very clearly that man rarely learns *anything* from history. The problem is not ignorance, but rebellion in the heart. The tower of Babel was built in rebellion while Noah was still alive. The people perfectly understood that the recent flood had destroyed the entire human race. Therefore, to dissipate evil, God came down and confounded the languages. He changed the races and dispersed them all over the earth. This is the beginning of the nations.
- After the flood and the rebellion at Babel, God conceived a new nation with Abraham. Among all the nations, God wanted a separate and holy nation that belonged solely to Him, and this new nation would prefigure the Church, a distinguished people from among all nations.
- God made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15:7-21. God promised to give Abraham and his seed all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession. As long as the earth remains, the land of Israel belongs to Isaac, the heir of Abraham, and all of his seed. In actual fact, God made this covenant with Himself (it was between the Father and Son), while Abraham was asleep. Thus, it is an immutable covenant which cannot be broken. Anyone who tries to take Israel's land is cursed.
- Isaac was born by a miracle of *grace* and *faith*. Ishmael was man's doing and was born of *works*. The new nation was to be born entirely of grace and faith, not works.
- The promises to Abraham were passed on to Isaac. Ishmael was disqualified.
- Circumcision was necessary to have the land of inheritance. Today circumcision is of the heart.
- Isaac married Rebekah, who also was barren. They also needed a miracle to have children.
- Isaac had Jacob and Esau. Esau had no interest in spiritual things; and the call was given to Jacob.
- Jacob's wife Rachel was barren, and needed a miracle for Joseph the deliverer to be born.
- Jacob's shrewd nature was changed by many hard trials. He became Israel, the prince of God.
- Joseph became a world deliverer, preserving Israel and many other nations as well.
- Jacob (Israel) stayed in Egypt for several hundred years, growing into a nation of 2 to 3 million.
- Jacob's twelve sons became the twelve tribes of Israel.

Now we are ready for the Book of Exodus. In Egypt, as the tribes of Israel continued to multiply, a new Pharaoh imposed slavery upon them. Thus, we see conditions that required a deliverer, Moses, who would set them free from Egyptian bondage and get the new nation marching toward Canaan.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—the first five books of the Bible, were all written by Moses. These five books compose the Law, or Torah. The book of Exodus begins where Genesis ends. Jacob and his family had moved into Egypt and settled there because of the famine. In the process of time, all the patriarchs passed on, but their descendants multiplied exceedingly. A new Pharaoh had arisen, imposing slavery and bitter bondage upon the Israelites, just as God had said to Abraham (Gen.15:12-16). Then Moses the deliverer was born. He was destined to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, give them the Law, teach God's statutes for worship and order, and lead the new nation toward Canaan, the land of promise.

General Outline for Exodus

Chapters 1 - 18 The Exodus from Egypt

Chapters 19 - 24 The Law Given at Sinai

Chapters 25 - 40 The Tabernacle of Moses

The Purpose of Oppression

Egypt is called “the house of bondage” ten times, and “the iron furnace” twice. Egypt represents the world; and Pharaoh is a type of Satan, who is holding God's people in bondage in the world. In actuality, God is allowing the Israelites to be oppressed (Psa.105:23-26) and the new Pharaoh to treat them harshly. God wants His elect people to hate being in Egypt (the world) and long for deliverance from its clutches. Remember—soon after they were delivered, they wanted to *return* to Egypt. Indeed, God's *greatest* obstacle is in dealing with the rebellion in the hearts of His redeemed.

Birth and Preparation of Moses the Deliverer

Exodus chapter two records the birth of Moses. Satan tried to destroy him as soon as he was born. After all, Moses was destined to destroy Satan's kingdom, and the adversary was well aware of this. The child was hidden in the bulrushes of the Nile River. When Pharaoh's daughter discovered him, immediately she thought to adopt him. Moses' sister, who was looking on, suggested that a Hebrew nurse take care of the child for her. Thus, Moses was returned to his own mother; and Pharaoh paid the mother for the upbringing of Moses, the one who would later destroy his kingdom. God uses Satan any way He wishes; and in this case, Satan was obliged to nourish God's deliverer.

Moses became the son of Pharaoh's daughter because God wanted the deliverer to be trained in Pharaoh's court. Moses would later stand in this same court and break the power of Pharaoh. Thus, “Moses was learned in all the ways of Egypt and was mighty in words and deeds” (Acts 7:20-22). Remember, Scripture explains Scripture. Stephen in Acts and Paul in Hebrews provide more details and shed further light on the life of Moses, and so also do many of the Psalms.

At age forty, Moses slew an Egyptian who was oppressing a Hebrew (Ex. 2:11-15). Acts 7:25 explains that Moses “supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not” (7:23-30). When Pharaoh heard of this he was angry and sought to slay Moses (Ex. 2:15). Moses fled from Egypt, but he left in *faith* not fear, as Hebrews 11:27 makes clear (11:24-27). Once again, we see that other sections of Scripture are needed for the full picture. Thus, Moses spent the next forty years in the wilderness being prepared to be a deliverer.

Moses is Commissioned after Forty Years in the Wilderness

In chapter 3, God meets with Moses after he had been in the wilderness forty years. This is the pre-incarnate Christ who is appearing to Moses, and He reveals Himself as the I AM. I AM means “I always was and I always will be.” Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever (Heb.13:8). Moses is then commissioned to go back into Egypt and announce to the elders of Israel that God is about to visit them, bring them out of bondage, and take them into the land of Canaan.

Pharaoh Will Surely Harden His Heart

God also made it clear to Moses that Pharaoh would not cooperate or let the people go (3:19-22). God had *purposely* placed an evil Pharaoh in power who would not listen. God needed an obstinate man on the throne because He had determined to judge Egypt for their wickedness. Each time Pharaoh hardened his heart, God issued a judgment upon Egypt until Egypt was totally destroyed. Ten times Pharaoh hardened his heart, and ten times God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Certainly, God would never harden a good man. Therefore, we see in Exodus that God is sovereign. He controls governments and all of the other affairs of man. He always has the final word on everything.

Moses Makes Excuses / Also His Family is Uncircumcised

In chapter 4, Moses shuns the call of God. He complains that Israel will not believe God really sent him and also that he is not eloquent enough. God would not accept either excuse, but He does give him Aaron his older brother to minister beside him. Circumcision was necessary to inherit Canaan, but his own sons were not circumcised. Thus, as Moses was on his way to Egypt, God met him and was ready to kill him (4:24-26). Moses was contradicting his own message to Israel, whom he was endeavoring to lead into the land of promise. Circumcision is essential for having our inheritance.

The Burdens Increase

In chapter 5:2, Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?” The evil king said, “You are idle, you need more work to do!” Therefore, he took away the materials they needed to make bricks, yet required their output not to diminish (v4-19). Thus, their burdens were increased and life became intolerable; but God was using this bitter bondage to cause the people to hate Egypt and never want to return there. In 6:1-9, God reaffirms that He will deliver the Israelites from their bondage and bring them into the land of promise, but they did not have the faith to believe.

The Ten Plagues Poured Out upon Egypt

From chapters 7 to 12, God poured out His fury upon Egypt with ten great plagues. The Lord was judging the gods of Egypt and the powers that were holding His elect in bondage.

- 1.) 7:14-24 - Water was turned to **blood**
- 2.) 8:1-15 - The plague of **frogs**
- 3.) 8:16-19 - The plague of **lice**
- 4.) 8:20-32 - The plague of **flies**
- 5.) 9:1-7 - The plague of **dead cattle**
- 6.) 9:8-12 - The plague of **boils**
- 7.) 9:13-35 - The plague of **hail**
- 8.) 10:1-20 - The plague of **locusts**
- 9.) 10:21,22 - The plague of **darkness**
- 10.) 11:1-12:30 - The **slaying of the firstborn**

- God was judging Egypt for their wickedness.
- He was judging the gods of Egypt.
- He was breaking the powers holding His elect.
- God was putting a difference between Israel and Egypt.
- Israel represents the redeemed, Egypt the unredeemed.
(The children of light vs The children of darkness)

The Power of Egypt – The Pull of the World

It requires the power of God to overcome the pull of the world and to break Satan's hold on people. These ten plagues were loosening the clutches of evil. Often people cannot free themselves from the formidable powers of sin.

The Blood of the Lamb – The Only Means of Salvation

The tenth and final plague is what released God's people from Egypt's bondage. This is recorded in Exodus 11:1 to 12:30. God was about to smite every household with the plague of death. Those who applied the blood of the lamb to their homes were spared, but those who ignored the message died. This is the most singular difference between the redeemed and the unredeemed. Those who apply the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to their lives find salvation; those who do not, die eternal deaths. There was a great cry in Egypt that night (12:29-32), for every house in Egypt was smitten with death. After this, Pharaoh released the elect from bondage. Thus, Israel's redemption and journey to the land of promise *started* after the application of the blood of the Passover lamb.

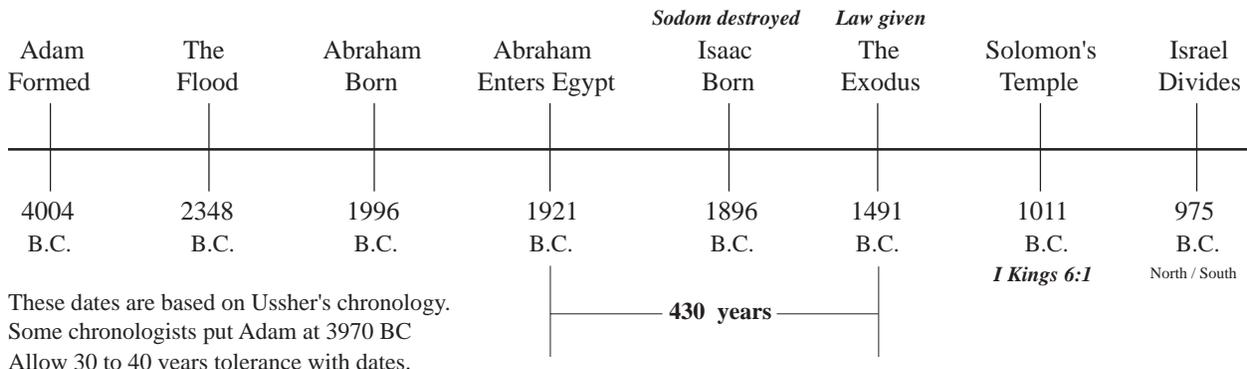
The Passover – To Remember the Source of Salvation

The Israelites were to observe this event ever after to remind them that salvation and release from Satan's power and bondage was due to the blood of the Lamb. Also, they were to eat unleavened bread seven days. Bread symbolizes the Word of God. Unleavened bread represents the pure Word of God without the mixture of false doctrine or men's opinions. Thus, upon being saved by the blood of Jesus, we must continually feast upon the pure, unadulterated Word of God (ch.12 & 13).

The Exodus – Exactly 430 Years Since Abraham Entered Egypt

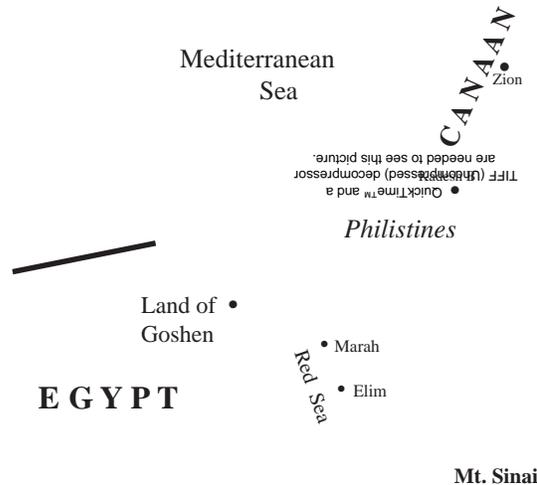
In Exodus 12:37, Israel made their exodus from Egypt, but a *mixed multitude* went with them out of Egypt (v38). These were non-Israelites, and they represent an important truth. This “mixed multitude” speaks of insincere and ungodly people who mingle themselves among the redeemed. These people infiltrate a Christian group or congregation and corrupt the others (Num.11:4).

Abraham had set his feet in Egypt 430 years earlier (Gen.12:5-10). First he entered into Canaan where God reaffirmed that He would give him the whole land for an inheritance. But because there was a famine, Abraham continued to travel south into Egypt. It was *exactly* 430 years later (to the very day) that his descendants made their exodus from the land of Egypt (Ex.12:41). That same year, God gave the Law to Moses at Sinai. Paul confirms this in Galatians 3:17,18.



Israel Begins Their Journey

In Exodus 12:37, Israel started their journey toward Canaan land. The Lord could have taken them on a more direct route through the land of the Philistines (13:17,18), but He knew their hearts would faint if they encountered war in that region. Our God is a good Shepherd. He knows exactly how much pressure people can bear. Thus, He took them south into the wilderness of the Red Sea and eventually to Mount Sinai (Chapters 13–19). Later, He would head them toward Canaan.



The Red Sea - Symbol of Water Baptism

Taking the bones of Joseph with them, the Israelites headed in the direction of the Red Sea (13:19), but the Lord wanted to deal another death blow to Pharaoh. Therefore, God hardened Pharaoh's heart and the Egyptians pursued the Israelites, who were hard pressed against the Red Sea (14:1-9). Pharaoh and the Egyptians were trying to bring the people back into bondage, but God had purposed to bury Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. This miracle is seen in the remainder of chapter 14.

The passage through the Red Sea was for two purposes. First, it was to separate the redeemed from Egypt, but also it was to judge the powers that were trying to pull them back into Egypt. The Red Sea therefore symbolizes the experience of water baptism. In the waters of baptism, our old life is to be dead and buried with Christ. It is to cut off our ties with the world, the house of bondage. Then, coming up out of the waters of baptism, we are to live in newness of life. Paul explains this in the New Testament.

Acts 2:38 - "Repent...be baptized...and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"

The message is clear and simple here in the Old Testament. First of all, the elect were redeemed by the blood of the lamb. Immediately they got out of Egypt (the world) and were separated from its power by being baptized in water (passing through the Red Sea). After that they came to Mount Sinai, which symbolizes the infilling of the Holy Spirit. They came to Mount Sinai in the third month, which is the month of Pentecost (Ex.19:1,2).

From the Red Sea to Mount Sinai

The people were paralyzed with fear as Pharaoh pursued them to the Red Sea (Ex.14:10-14). Fear is at the root of many sins. The confession of the newly redeemed Israelites was that they wished they had never left Egypt. Yet the purpose of every test is only to give us a victory and strengthen our faith. God defended His people, luring the Egyptians into the middle of an opened Red Sea, destroying every single one of them there (14:27-31).

The Destination of Their Journey Revealed

In Chapter 15:1-21, the people sang and rejoiced at the victory over Pharaoh in the Red Sea. This was actually a prophetic song of praise, and in verse 17 the final destination of their journey was clearly revealed. “Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the *mountain* of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary O Lord, which thy hands have established.” Although they were marching to Canaan land, the ultimate destination was *Mount Zion* in Canaan. It was not until the time of David, 400 years later that they finally captured Zion and entered into full rest.

Miracles Never Convince an Evil Heart

With all the miracles that God performed for Israel, they did not cease to criticize God, and had no faith in His unfailing character. This is a truth we will see all throughout the Scriptures. John 12:37 says: “But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.” Luke 16:31 - “If they hear not Moses and the prophets [the Scriptures], neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Israel Comes to Mount Sinai

In Exodus 19:1-2, Israel came to the foot of Mount Sinai. They arrived “in the third month,” which is the month of the feast of Pentecost. It has now been about seven weeks, or fifty days, since they made their exodus from Egypt. The coming to Sinai is another major landmark experience along their journey, for it represents Pentecost, or the baptism in the Holy Spirit. All the signs that accompany the pentecostal experience were evident here. They saw the fire of God, the glory of God, the power of God, and they heard the voice of God. Still, they were in the wilderness. They were called *to move on* to another mountain—to Mount Zion, which was in the land of promise.

Israel Remains at Mount Sinai for Nearly a Year (58 consecutive chapters)

Israel would remain at Mount Sinai for nearly a year. They arrived in the third month and departed “the second month, in the second year” (See Num.10:11-12). Therefore, from Exodus 19:1 until Numbers 10:11, a total of fifty-eight consecutive chapters, the Israelites were camped at Sinai. Further up the mountain, Moses was receiving instructions for Israel.

At Sinai:

Exodus 19–40 - The Law was given, and all the dimensions of the Tabernacle.

Leviticus 1–27 - We have all the offerings, feasts, laws of holiness, and instructions for priests.

Numbers 1–10:11 - God gives the order of encampment and preparations for marching from Sinai.

On Sinai—Moses Receives the Law

In Exodus Chapters 20-24, Moses is given the ten commandments and other civil laws which still apply to our lives today. Jesus upheld the ten commandments (Mk.10:19), and so also did Paul (Rom.13:8-10). Christ came to fulfill the Law, giving the Law higher implications. Under the Law of Moses, adultery was evil, but in the New Covenant, Christ dealt with the real cause of adultery—the heart. All sins are *conceived* in the heart and schemed out in the mind (Acts 5:3-4). Sin must be *aborted* within our hearts and thoughts before it develops and is birthed into an act. The Apostle Paul and other writers explain this in the New Testament epistles.

The Law Was Good but Offered No Power to Obey It

“The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (Jn.1:17). The Law was good, because it showed men what was right. Yet it offered no power to obey it. Grace, which is divine enablement, gives us the power to obey and the ability to be transformed. The Law, which was good, became a curse in that it only condemned men for disobeying but gave no strength to perform it. A “No Smoking” sign is a good law but it gives a smoker no ability to stop smoking. This only aggravates his problem. Grace gives people the power to change, if they are willing to receive it. Herein lies *the great difference* between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The New Testament Interprets the Old Testament and Governs It

Remember, “*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...” (2 Tim. 3:16). Every one of these laws in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers have a present application for our lives that is profitable for our perfecting; however, we must use the law lawfully (1 Tim.1:8).

The Tabernacle – Chapters 25 to 40

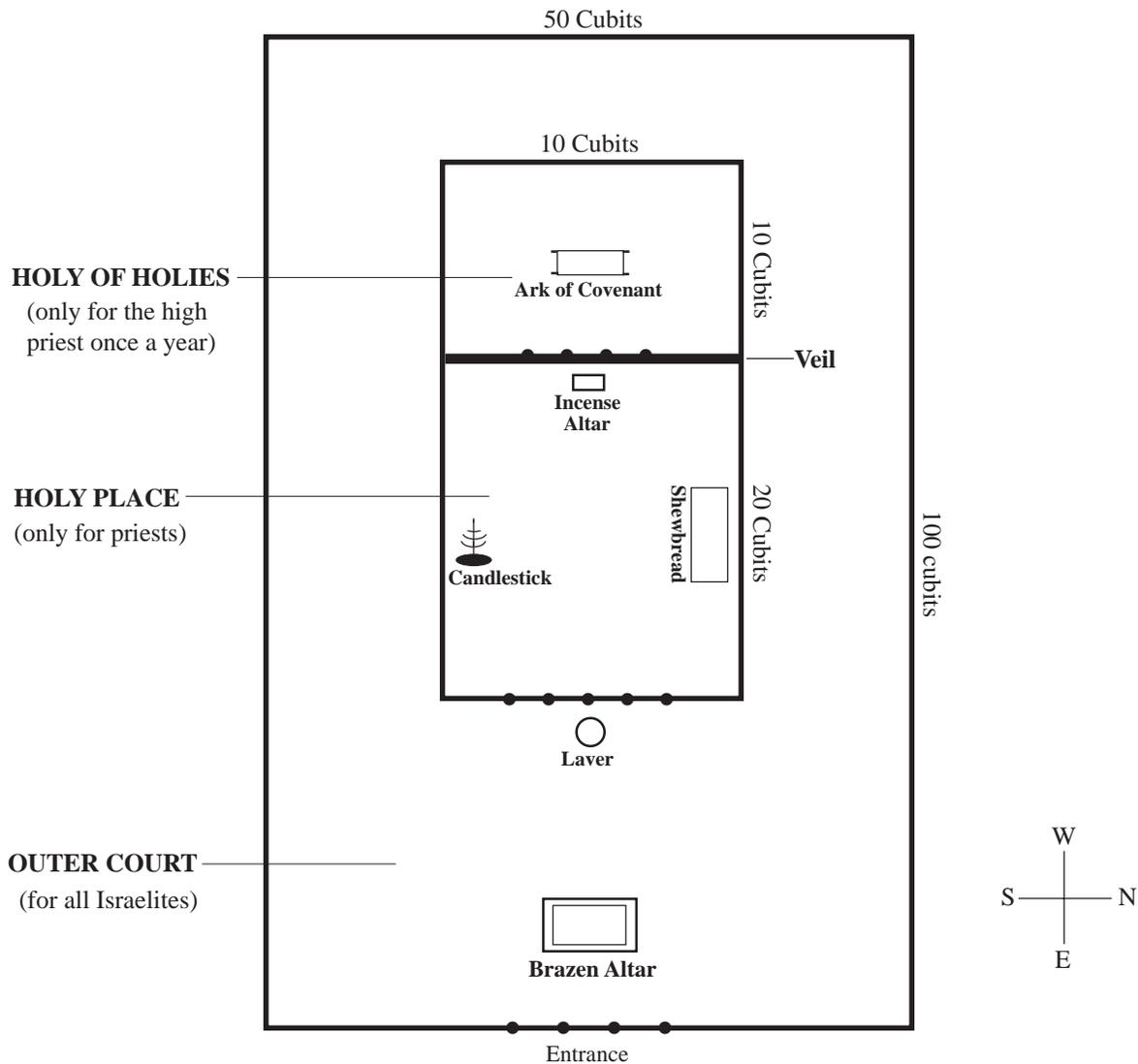
In Exodus Chapters 25 to 40, the main subject, except for several interruptions, is the tabernacle. God commanded, “Let them make me a sanctuary; *that I may dwell among them*” (25:8). It is interesting to note that it is God who is taking the initiative here. The whole desire of God is to dwell with His people. “The Word was made flesh and [tabernacled] among us” (Jn.1:14, cf. Rev. 21:3).

Exodus 25:40 - God commanded that the tabernacle be built *exactly* as it was revealed unto Moses in every detail and measurement. See Hebrews 8:15. Today, the Church is very haphazard about God's standards of holiness. There is an order to come into His presence, and there are high standards to be met.

The Framework of the Tabernacle

The tabernacle had three distinct sections: The Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. The Outer Court was only a fence that outlined the perimeter of the sanctuary. The Outer Court had no covering. It was open to the elements of the weather. The sanctuary itself (composed of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies) was a small, oblong building. It was 30 cubits in length, 10 cubits in width, and 10 cubits in height. There were 48 boards enclosing the framework all around. There were 20 boards on each side, 6 boards on the back, and 2 corner boards. The entrance always faced east; the back (or Holy of Holies) always faced west. (See the next page please.)

Top View of the Tabernacle (not according to scale)



Every article and measurement in the tabernacle has a divine message. This sanctuary shows us the way into God's presence. David declared, "Thy way O Lord is in the sanctuary" (Psa. 77:13). Every Israelite could come into the Outer Court. It was at the brazen altar that the blood of animals was shed for his sins; thus, the Outer Court represents the cleansing of sin. However, only consecrated priests could go into the Holy Place, and first they had to thoroughly wash at the laver of water. The standards were much higher in the Holy Place, but only *the high priest* could go into the Holy of Holies. There was a veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, signifying that access into God's full presence was not yet opened. (See Heb. 9:2,3,7,8; 6:19,20). When Christ our High Priest died upon the cross, the veil was rent (Mt. 27:50,51), showing that *everyone* with clean hands and a pure heart could enter God's full presence. (See *The Tabernacle of Moses* by Dr. Brian Bailey).

The measurements of the tabernacle also showed the *three* remaining dispensations:

1. Outer Court - 50 x 100 x 5 cu. high = 1500. The Age of the Law was 1500 years.
2. Holy Place - 10 x 20 x 10 cubits = 2000. The Church Age is 2000 years.
3. Holy of Holies - 10 x 10 x 10 cubits = 1000. The Millennial Age is 1000 years.

Israel Worships a Golden Calf

In Exodus chapters 32, 33, and 34, the narrative on the tabernacle is temporarily interrupted. Moses had *delayed* coming down from Mount Sinai, and the people grew impatient (Ex. 32:1). *Time* is the real test of a man's character; it is an indicator of the level of one's commitment to the Lord. Therefore, commitment is another major issue of Scripture. Things were not happening fast enough for Israel. Thus, the people erected a golden calf, and claimed the golden calf as their god who had brought them out of Egypt (32:1-4). God will test every Christian as well. He wants to know what our real motives are for following Him. Are we following Christ only for what we can receive for ourselves, or are we following Him because we desire to please Him? Most of the Israelites were looking for fun and excitement—eating and drinking, and rising up to play (Ex. 32:5).

Moses Intercedes for Israel / Moses Changes God's Mind

Exodus 32:7-14 - The Lord thought to destroy Israel for their wickedness and hardness of heart. Yet because of the intercession of Moses, God changed His mind and spared the nation. Moses was willing to have his name *blotted out* of God's book in order to save Israel (32:30-33). If one's name can be blotted out of the book of life, then it must have been written there first (cf. Revelation 3:5). Let us remember that some of these Israelites who were redeemed by the blood, were later destroyed by God (cf. Jude 1:6,7).

Moses Is Overcome by Exasperation

Exodus 32:15-19 - Moses was so angry with Israel that he took the two tablets of the Law, which were written by the finger of God, and threw them to the ground and broke them. Earlier in life, Moses in anger had slain an Egyptian, who was oppressing one of his brethren. This resulted in Moses having to flee Egypt. At the end of Israel's journey, Moses smote the rock instead of *speaking* to it, and for this, God would not allow him to go into the promised land (Num. 20:7-13). This is an important warning to all of us. If areas of weakness are not carefully watched, and if we do not learn from repeated past mistakes, it could cost us part of our inheritance.

The Tribe of Levi Stands on the Lord's Side

Exodus 32:25-28 - Often we do not know when we are being tested. Most of Israel joined in the folly of the golden calf episode. Thus, Moses drew a line and demanded, “Who is on the Lord's side?” and all the tribe of Levi stood on the Lord's side. Moses then commanded them to use the sword on their brethren who had done such evil, but only Levi was willing to use the sword for the sake of righteousness. Soon after this event, God separated and chose the tribe of Levi to be the priests and teachers of the whole nation. Instead of choosing the firstborn from each tribe to be priests, God gave the priesthood and ministry uniquely to the tribe of Levi (see Num. 3:12,41,45). This is a major turning point in Israel's history. During times of moral declension, we are all being tested. Those who will stand on the Lord's side and not compromise God's standards of holiness will be exalted and used to do exploits in these last days.

Moses Asks for a New Revelation of God

Although Moses knew the Lord face to face (33:11), he wanted an even greater revelation of God. He said to the Lord, “I beseech thee, show me thy glory” (33:18).

God answers, “There is no mortal man who can see my face in my full glory and live” (v20). Therefore, God would only allow Moses to see His back parts (v23). Before God showed Moses His glory, He reminded Moses of the two tables of the Law which he had broken (34:1-4).

The New Revelation / God Describes Himself

In 34:5-6, God revealed Himself to Moses in a most remarkable way, and describes Himself as being: *Merciful, Gracious, Longsuffering*, and abundant in *Goodness and Truth*. The Lord God is the very essence of these virtues. Therefore, if we are called to be conformed to His image, we need to have these same things developed in our lives. What is the secret to becoming like the Lord? It is “to see Him as He is” (1 Jn. 3:2b)! Then we can model ourselves after Him!

The Glory Comes Upon the Tabernacle

In Exodus Chapter 35, Moses resumes the instructions for the tabernacle, until Chapter 40. When everything was complete and every article was in its place, the glory of the Lord came and filled the tabernacle (See 40:33-38). The Church is the temple of God, and we as individuals are His temple. Therefore, when everything is made right in our lives, God's glory will fill us (Isa. 40:3-5).

Summary of Exodus

- God's new nation is brought to birth in Egypt. It was the blood of the Lamb that redeemed and separated the elect from Egypt (the world), and broke the power of Pharaoh (Satan).
- It also required many divine acts of power to break the hold Egypt and Pharaoh had upon the elect.
- Israel perfectly symbolizes the Church because they are a *distinguished people* among all people.
- Israel set off on a journey to the land of promise. After the blood of the Lamb was shed for their salvation, they crossed the Red Sea (water baptism), and came to Sinai (pentecost). The Lord revealed to them that Zion, the holy mountain in Canaan, was the ultimate destination (Ex.15:17). This journey is a pattern for all believers. We must pass our tests, come into our inheritance, and eventually come to Zion—the place of rest, glory, and fulfillment.
- While encamped at Mount Sinai, Moses gave them the Law and instructions for the Tabernacle. All of these laws and dimensions for the tabernacle have an application to the Church today.
- Israel was hard and unbelieving and rebellious from the onset. The greatest problem God has is *not* His enemies, but the rebellion that lies resident in the hearts of His own people.
- The redeemed were angry with “delays” and erected a golden calf for their god. God uses *time* and *delays* to test believers. He will test us to see why we are following Him. Many only follow the Lord for selfish benefits, not because they love God (see John 6:26,27,66).
- The tribe of Levi, who stood on the Lord's side *in a time of moral decay*, were chosen to be the priests and teachers of the new nation. If we want to be God's man there can be no compromise.
- After the tabernacle was entirely put together and every article was set in place, the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Exodus closes with the completion of the tabernacle. Leviticus is a record of the instructions God gave Moses for the Levites while they were still camped at Sinai.

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

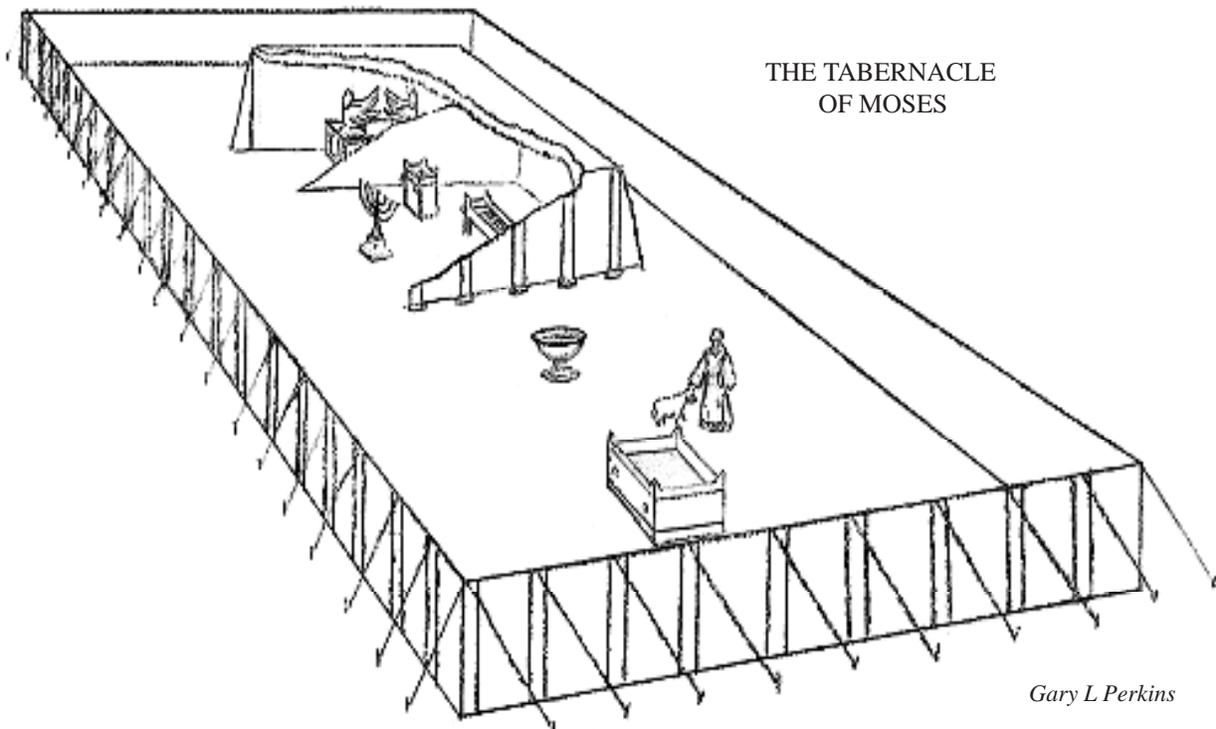
Still at Sinai

The Book of Exodus closes with the erecting of the tabernacle, and the Book of Leviticus opens with the Lord calling unto Moses “out of the tabernacle of the congregation” (1:1). It is apparent that the glory of God that was upon Mount Sinai has now descended upon the tabernacle at the base of the mountain. The Israelites are still encamped in the wilderness of Sinai (27:34, cf. Num.1:1). Therefore, Leviticus was written during Israel’s sojourn at Mt. Sinai.

Genesis and Exodus can be read like a narrative, but Leviticus must be *studied*. Leviticus literally means “pertaining to Levi.” It is the handbook of the priests—a guide to making the right offerings and sacrifices in order to approach a holy God. In Leviticus, the word “holy” is found 87 times. Two key verses sum up the theme of this marvelous book: 19:2 – “Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy,” and 11:47 – “To make a difference between the clean and the unclean.”

Leviticus — The Sacrifices for the Redeemed, Not the Unredeemed

We must differentiate between *the Passover lamb*, which is the offering made for salvation, and the *other sacrifices* that are listed in Leviticus. Remember, the offering for the unsaved person is the Passover lamb, but the offerings in Leviticus are for the saved person. When we come to Christ, we come to Him as our Passover Lamb. Afterwards, when we commit sin, we need a different sacrifice. The sacrifice is not Jesus Christ our Passover Lamb, but Jesus Christ our trespass offering. When you commit sin after salvation, you are not losing your salvation. In other words, you are not going back to Christ for salvation again as your Passover Lamb. Jesus Christ was many things upon the cross. He fulfilled all of these offerings in Leviticus and we have to appropriate these offerings for each of our needs after salvation.



Holiness—The Key to Revival

Leviticus is a key to revival, and as such, it is one of the most important books in the Bible. It is the priest's guidebook, pointing believers to the way of holiness and cleansing. There is much defilement in the Church because her priests do not uphold God's standards, but when the priests return to the laws laid down in Leviticus, there will be revival in the Church and God will defend the nation.

Outline for Leviticus

- I. How Israel was to approach unto God (Chapters 1–16)
 - A. Holy Sacrifices (chapters 1-7)
 - B. Holy Priesthood (chapters 8–10)
 - C. Holy Worshippers (chapters 11-15)
 - a.) Clean foods - chapter 11
 - b.) Clean bodies - chapter 12:1 - 13:46
 - c.) Clean clothes - chapter 13:47-59
 - d.) Clean houses - chapter 14:33-57
 - e.) Clean contacts - chapter 15
 - D. Holy Nation / Day of Atonement - (chapter 16)
- II. The Holiness That Befits God's People (Chapters 17-27)
 - A. Holiness in one's personal life - chapter 17
 - B. Holiness in the family - chapter 18
 - C. Holiness in social relationships - chapters 19-20
 - D. Holiness in the priesthood - chapters 21-22
 - E. Holy seasons (the feasts) - chapter 23-24
 - F. Holy speech (judgment on blasphemy) - 24:10-23
 - G. Holiness of the land (the year of jubilee) - chapter 25
 - H. Holy blessings to the faithful - chapter 26
 - I. Holy vows and free-will offerings - chapter 27

The Offerings

The Hebrew word for “offering” in the Old Testament is *corban*, or a *gift*. By definition, corban is “a means of acceptance or approach.” When an Israelite came with an offering, he was seeking to approach a holy God in order to obtain His favor and acceptance. God Himself instituted these offerings so that men could approach Him. God also gave the tabernacle so that He could “dwell among them.” Thus, we can see that the Lord is a very loving God who is looking for fellowship.

Leviticus is a book that gives us understanding of what happened on the cross. No single sacrifice can explain all that was accomplished by Jesus on the cross. Jesus fulfilled many sacrifices. He became the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, and much more. His redemption is so complete that He is able to save us to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25). The blood of Jesus is so powerful that He is able to make us perfect (Heb. 7:19). A provision has been made for every problem we have. Let us look at these offerings in chapters 1-5.

The Five Principal Offerings

* *The Passover Lamb - for salvation*

In addition, the Israelites were to make these five offerings to be pleasing to God

The first three were of a sweet savor

Chapter 1 - The Burnt Offering. . . .(For total commitment to God)

Chapter 2 - The Meal Offering(For total commitment to our fellow man)

Chapter 3 - The Peace Offering. . . .(For receiving the peace of God)

Chapter 4 - The Sin Offering.(For dealing with our sinful nature)

Chapter 5 - The Trespass Offering. . .(For covering our sins, after salvation)

The Burnt Offering

The burnt offering represents a total commitment to God. Christ offered Himself without spot to God (Heb. 9:14). He “gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor” (Eph. 5:2). The burnt offering foreshadows Christ on the cross, not so much bearing sin as accomplishing the will of God. In Leviticus 1:6-9, there were four things that had to be upon the altar of sacrifice in order to fulfill the burnt offering: the head (our opinions); the fat (our energy); the legs (our walk and the places we go); and the inwards (our affections, love or hate). These four areas compose the first and greatest commandment—to love God with all our mind, all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength (Mk.12:29,30). Because of Christ's sacrifice as a burnt offering, there is grace available for believers also to be totally committed to God (cf. Rom.12:1).

The Meal Offering

The meal offering had no blood in it; thus, it represents our relationships with man. The meal offering fulfills the second great commandment to “love thy neighbor as thyself” (Mk.12:31). The main ingredients of this offering were fine flour, oil, frankincense, and salt. It contained no leaven or honey. Fine flour represents smoothness of reaction, but grit speaks of irritation with others. We have to be *ground* into fine flour in order to fulfill the meal offering and be of a sweet savor to God. Jesus was holy and *harmless* (Heb. 7:26), willingly laying down His life for the sheep (Jn.10:11; 15:13). A meek person is able to bear injustices and seeks no retaliation (Mt.11:29, Lk.23:34). Truly, Jesus fulfilled the meal offering, and *the grace that is in Christ Jesus* makes it possible for us to go through the necessary processes to become fine flour and offer a meal offering to God. Honey, a type of human sweetness, cannot stand the fire, for human graces break down in the heat of trials.

The Peace Offering

Christ is our peace offering. “Peace” can also be translated prosperity, welfare, joy, and happiness. When we accept Christ as our Savior (our Passover Lamb), immediately we are at peace with God. But the peace mentioned here has deeper signification. For even after our new birth experience, we can still be troubled with anxiety and many fears (cf. Lk.10:41). Christ is the Prince of Peace; He had perfect calm in the storms (Mk. 4:37-39). Just a few hours before facing the cross, He said, “My peace I give unto you” (Jn.14:27). His peace surpasses knowledge, and guards our hearts and our minds (Phil. 4:7). “He is our peace...and hath broken down the middle wall of partition” (Eph. 2:14). Christ has made a provision upon the cross that can deal with everything in our hearts that causes disunity and which takes away our peace. Isaiah 53:5 says...“the chastisement of our peace was upon him.” Let us experience the overshadowing of His peace that He has purchased for us.

The Sin Offering

There is a difference between the sin offering and the trespass offering. The trespass offering is for *acts* of sin, but the sin offering is for the *nature* of sin. The trespass offering covers our sins, but the sin offering deals with the *nature* of sin that is causing the sin. A provision was made upon the cross for a sinful nature. Paul said: “Knowing this, that our old man [old nature] was crucified with him” (Rom. 6:6). Romans 6:6 is a revelation—“knowing this”: It is an actual experience. Paul could say by experience, my old nature “is crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20). God will lead us into this experience when we cry out to Him for holiness and are willing to admit the depths of our need. First we need to be fully convinced that “in this flesh dwelleth no good thing.” After salvation and after being persuaded of our evil nature, the sin offering can deal with our old nature.

The Trespass Offering

The trespass offering is for acts of sin we may commit after salvation. We do not go back and get saved all over again. We do not go back to Christ our Passover Lamb, but to Christ our trespass offering. When a Christian commits sin, this does not mean he is unconverted or an unbeliever. No, he is a *believer* who needs forgiveness (see I John 2:1). Chapters 6-7 give additional laws regarding these offerings. It is interesting to note that in some cases restitution was necessary for forgiveness. The trespass offering at times required the transgressor to repay an additional 1/5 (5:15,16; 6:1-7).

Jesus Fulfilled These Offerings in the Order Given in Leviticus

Jesus fulfilled these five offerings in the same order they are laid out in chapters 1-5. He was the burnt offering, totally fulfilling the first great commandment to love God with all the heart, mind, soul and strength. He offered himself without spot to God. He was the meal offering, totally fulfilling the second great commandment to love our neighbor as our self. He was the peace offering, and was indeed the very Prince of Peace. He was the sin offering, bearing even our old nature upon the cross. He was also our trespass offering, our eternal Advocate who ever lives to make intercession for us.

These Offerings Are Appropriated by Us in the Opposite Order

When we become a Christian, we have to constantly come back to Christ as our trespass offering. After a while, when we get tired of our repeated failures and sins, we seek Christ our sin offering who is able to break the power of our sinful nature. Then we can experience Christ our peace offering, and have the nature of the Prince of Peace in our hearts. This allows us to love our neighbor as ourselves and fulfill the meal offering. Finally, we become a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable to God, as we become a burnt offering. Yet this is only accomplished by the mercies of God (Rom. 12:1).

A Holy Priesthood / Then the Glory Comes

Chapters 8-10 contain the consecration of the priesthood. The qualifications for being a priest [minister] are very high. The priests had to be washed thoroughly (8:6). They were anointed (8:10). The blood was applied to his ear, hand, and foot (8:23,24). The ear was consecrated to God to hear His voice. The hand was consecrated for holy service, and the foot for a holy walk. In 8:33, the Lord required the priests to remain seven days in the tabernacle to be consecrated to Him. On the eighth day, the Lord appeared unto them in His glory (9:1,4,6). For the glory of the Lord to appear, it required the right sacrifices, washings, coverings, consecrations with the blood, anointings, and waiting. Thus, the standards for having the power and glory of God are very high ... and lacking in the Church today.

True Fire / Then Strange Fire

Chapter 10 is the incident of offering strange fire. Aaron's sons took it upon themselves to mingle strange incense upon the holy fire, something that God had not prescribed. In actuality, they were trying to perpetrate the presence of the Lord with methods devised by their own minds. Therefore, it was false fire, an *imitation* of the presence of God. God's jealousy devoured them for this act, and it is recorded for our learning. God makes it very clear that He that does *not* accept all worship. Some worship is an abomination to Him. To worship God using the world's lyrics and beat is like offering strange fire to the Lord. We are to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, not with the fragrances of the world. Some of the music in the Church today brings many demons into the service instead of the presence of the Lord. False worship can bring a false spirit of prophecy, and false guidance.

The Clean and the Unclean

Chapters 11-15 are instructions for a holy people and holy worshippers. Although chapter 11 is speaking of clean and unclean animals and birds, it is the *spiritual* lesson that we must grasp. In Genesis, God created “the clean and the unclean” to teach His people discernment. Leviticus 11:47 is the key verse for chapter 11: “To make a difference between the unclean and the clean.”

The eating characteristics of these animals and birds are often what make them clean or unclean. For example, vultures and other scavengers eat things that are dead or putrefying. One of the main reasons Christians are defiled is because of the corrupt things they imbibe daily. I am referring to the consumption of evil books, magazines, pornography, and other devilish appetites. One evangelist asked the congregation to bring all their evil books, pictures, and music to be burned like they did in Acts 19:18-20. As these satanic books and tapes and emblems burned, he could hear the screaming of demons that were in these articles.

Jesus Interprets Leviticus

Jesus never taught dietary laws. Instead, He interpreted them; “It is not what *enters* the mouth that defiles a man [as in foods we eat], but what *comes out of* the mouth.” Defiling words spring from a defiled heart (Mk. 7:15-23). Defilement of heart in man is the result of a carnal appetite that has absorbed and assimilated evil nourishment. The discourse compares natural and spiritual intake.

The New Testament Governs / Interprets the Old Testament

Paul declared that all foods are good and to be received with thanksgiving, for they are sanctified by the Word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:4-5). Peter said that observing all the numerous Levitical laws to the letter was “a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear” (Acts 15:10). Paul further explains that Christ “blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was contrary to us.” These Levitical ordinances of ... “touch not, taste not, handle not” are not to be observed literally (Col. 3:14,21). However, all Levitical law should be kept *in spirit*. Only two Levitical *dietary* laws are upheld in the New Testament: there was to be no drinking of blood, and no one was to eat any animal that died of itself (cf. Acts 15:20,29).

11:3-8 - The animal that had a divided hoof (a separated walk from the world) and chewed the cud (meditation on the Word day and night) was considered clean. If either was missing, he was considered unclean. Some believers have one without the other, and are unclean because of it.

The Two Natures

Chapter 12 deals with the sin offering and burnt offerings that were required after the birth of a son or daughter. Both offerings were mandatory. When baby Jesus was presented to the Lord, these two offerings were made (See Lu. 2:21-24; Ex.13:12, Num. 8:17). To offer a sin offering was to acknowledge and recognize that the nature of sin existed in a child. And since this was the offering for Jesus Christ when He was born, we understand that original sin must have been in His physical body. The soul and spirit of Jesus were eternal, yet his body was made of Mary's substance by the workings of the Holy Spirit in her womb. He was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom.1:3). Thus, he was "made in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3) in order to be "tempted in all points as we are" (Heb. 4:15), yet He was without sin. Jesus was subject to the same battles we have, but He never yielded to temptation. In doing so, He condemned sin in the flesh and He is able to show us grace and mercy when we are tempted.

Other Laws of Cleansing

Chapter 13-15 - These chapters contain the laws for leprosy, physical maladies, and the need for clean garments. Leprosy symbolizes sin—it will eventually destroy a person and it will spread like a plague to others if it is not contained. The priest had to have discernment to know when leprosy [or sin] was cleansed, for he had the authority to pronounce a person or a building clean or unclean. There are certain buildings that are not clean because of sins that were committed there by previous inhabitants, and there are some places that cannot be cleansed. We must understand these things before we purchase a building or house. Pray for God's direction. Remember, Jesus healed lepers and even *touched* them, and He is still able to cleanse us from every sin (Lk. 5:12-14; 17:11-18).

Although Leviticus required clean garments, they depict our *spiritual* garments and coverings. Thus, we must be sure that we are clothed with the right spiritual garments. Spiritual nakedness is warned against in Revelation 16:15, in light of Christ's soon coming. Revelation 3:4 makes reference to "a few who have not defiled their garments." This is referring literally to undergarments. People can be dressed very well outwardly, but underneath they can have filthy undergarments. God sees the hidden man, for He looks upon the heart. Great tribulation is for the express purpose of washing our garments and making them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14).

Going within the Veil / National Cleansing

Chapter 16 - Only *one* day in the whole calendar year could the *high priest* come within the veil. On regular days the Israelites and priests entered the Outer Court and made numerous offerings upon the brazen altar, but the common person could not enter the Holy Place. Only the priests were permitted to enter the Holy Place and that was to perform various duties. The candlestick required fresh oil daily. The showbread needed to be replaced, and the altar of incense had to be attended to; however, none of the priests could go into the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest went within the veil into the Holy of Holies, and that was on the Day of Atonement. The high priest went with blood, first to cleanse himself and also to cleanse the nation.

Today we are beckoned to come within the veil because Christ our forerunner has opened the way. However, the requirements for entering the Holy of Holies still remain high. The three sections of the tabernacle represent *degrees* of spiritual attainment. 1.) Outer Court - represents little children. 2.) Holy Place - represents young men. 3.) Holy of Holies - represents fathers (cf. 1 Jn. 2:12-14).

Seriousness of Blood

Chapter 17 - This chapter concerns the importance of blood and also the right location for sacrifice. In verses 10-11, the Lord emphasizes that “the life is in the blood.” Therefore, there was to be no drinking of blood. This commandment is upheld in the New Testament as well (Acts 15:20,29). Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness (cf. Heb. 9:22). Blood is sacred; God gave blood for sacrifice and forgiveness. Also, five times, and with severe explicitness, one divine place of sacrifice is stipulated—“at the door of the tabernacle of the Lord.” This was to prohibit sacrificing to any other but the Lord God. The message is clear—there is only one place where God cleanses sin and that is at the cross, of which the altar at the door of the tabernacle was a type. Redemption, holiness, and spiritual maturity only come by grace, through the blood.

The Wickedness of Nakedness

Chapter 18 - God created the family and He is very particular about holiness in the family. These verses warn against incest and moral indecency, especially with close relatives, and immorality of any kind. Verse 22 shows God's abhorrence of homosexuality. God said that because of these acts of defilement, He cast out the inhabitants of the land. He also warns that if His people do these things, the land will spue them out as well (18:24-29). A Christian nation that gives itself to moral decay will eventually experience war or exile. Christians themselves who *continue* in these sexual sins will deny themselves entry into heaven (Eph. 5:3-6; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Holiness in Social Relationships

Chapters 19-20 - These are commandments to honor parents; to do good to foreigners, the poor, the deaf and the blind; commands not to steal; not to harbor grudges or be a talebearer; to honor the elderly; to be honest in commerce; and in short—to “love thy neighbor as thyself” (19:18). Once again there are awesome warnings against incest and moral impurity. These sins bring many evil spirits into the heart, spiritual blindness, and hardness of heart. There are also solemn warnings against spiritism and witchcraft; and all of these commandments are upheld in the New Testament.

Holiness in the Priesthood / Ministry

Chapters 21-22 - Now the emphasis is upon the priests, the Lord's ministers. There is a much higher standard for ministers than for the common believers. Often, this is not understood. The Old Testament priests were not allowed to marry divorced or profane women, for they were role models among the people. There were higher standards for the *children* of the priests (21:7-9). There were also very high standards for the *high* priest. The high priest could not marry a divorced person, and his wife had to be of the Aaronic family as well (21:10-15). A priest who had any blemish could not minister in the Holy Place, but was limited to an Outer Court ministry (21:16-23). These are Old Testament standards, yet the standards for the New Testament priests are even higher.

Chapter 22 echoes the higher standards for the priests. In verse 4, if there was leprosy or “a running issue” he could not minister until this was healed. A running issue is something that is not healed. Spiritually, if there is bitterness in the heart, it is better not to be behind a pulpit. Other various laws for sacrifices are mentioned here. We could conclude this chapter by saying that sacrifices were to be offered with a spirit of thanksgiving (22:29).

The Seven Holy Feasts

Chapter 23 - This chapter begins with the sabbath, a feast of the seventh day. The actual seven feasts of the Lord, however, start with the Passover. These seven feasts contain dispensational truths. They also show us where we are in our spiritual lives, and where to go from there. The seven feasts are to be progressively fulfilled in our personal lives, *in spirit*. We do not need to go to Israel or anywhere else to observe these. Since seven is the number of perfection, we must experience all seven of these feasts in our personal lives to come to perfection.

Paul taught the seven feasts to all his churches. He taught the *same things* “everywhere in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17).

Fulfillment of the Feasts in Our Personal Lives:

1. Feast of Passover - represents salvation by the blood of the Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7)
2. Feast of Unleavened Bread - represents a continuous imbibing of the pure Word (1 Cor. 5:8)
3. Feast of Firstfruits - represents water baptism (1 Cor.15:23) - buried and risen with Christ the firstfruits
4. Feast of Pentecost - represents the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; 1 Cor.14:18)
5. Feast of Trumpets - represents a fresh call to move on (Heb. 6:1)
6. Feast of Atonement - represents affliction and deeper cleansing (2 Cor. 7:1)
7. Feast of Tabernacles - represents a manifestation of the glory of God (2 Cor. 3:8-11, Isa. 60:1-5)

Fulfillment of the Feasts In Israel's Journey:

Passover - in Egypt (Exodus)

Unleavened Bread - in Egypt and ever after (Exodus)

Firstfruits - crossing the Red Sea (Exodus)

Pentecost - at Mount Sinai (Exodus)

Trumpets - a fresh call to go over Jordan into the inheritance (Deuteronomy)

Atonement - circumcision and driving out 31 kings, in Canaan (Joshua)

Tabernacles - finally at Mount Zion when David brought Israel into rest, and glory (2 Samuel)

The Feasts - Dispensationally for the Church Age:

Passover - when Christ, the Lamb of God, died on the cross

Unleavened Bread - the doctrine of Christ and the apostles

Firstfruits - when Christ rose from the dead (He was the firstfruits from the dead.)

Pentecost - when the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost

Trumpets - in 1948 when Israel became a nation again (God also moved upon His Church.)

Atonement - in 1973 when Israel was attacked (God began a new cleansing in the Church.)

Tabernacles - when God pours out His Spirit in the end time revival and harvest

Dispensations:

Passover - the feast that inaugurated the Age of the Law (Exodus)

Pentecost - the feast that inaugurated the Church Age (Acts)

Tabernacles - the feast that is celebrated in the Millennium (Zechariah)

Totally Genuine

Chapter 24:1-10 commanded *pure* olive oil to be used in a *pure* golden candlestick. God also required the showbread to be put upon a *pure* table, with *pure* frankincense. He wants our anointing to be pure, our nature and our light to be pure, and the bread we serve (the Word of God) to be pure. Frankincense speaks of suffering, and there can be no real truth in our inward parts without suffering. Verses 10-16 are a judgment against blasphemy. Most sins are not what we *do* but what we *say*. The greatest evidence of a holy heart is pure speech (cf. Jas. 3:1,2; Lk. 6:45). Zechariah 5:3 reveals that a tremendous curse is coming in these last days upon everyone who steals and *swears*.

Eye for Eye, Tooth for Tooth

24:17-21 - Christ taught us not to “get even” (*an eye for an eye* - Mt. 5:38, Prov. 24:29). Vengeance belongs to the Lord, He will recompense. Notwithstanding, a man will reap precisely what he sows. There is a warning in Revelation 13:10 that “he who leads into captivity will go into captivity, and he who killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.” Some Christians will be tempted to bear arms when the Man of Sin comes. Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) was a mighty preacher, but he was also a warrior who used the sword. Zwingli had many enemies and was later killed.

One Law for Everyone—Saved or Unsaved

24:22 - God gave the same laws to non-Israelites as He did to His own nation (Ex.12:49), and this principle remains true to this day. God's moral laws are the same for Africa, Asia, and the USA. He does not have different laws for each country; nor does He have one set of laws for the unredeemed and another set of laws for the redeemed. Adultery, murder, stealing, and divorce are wrong for a Christian, and they are wrong for an unbeliever. Can a man have ten wives in the USA? No, and neither can a man in Africa have ten wives. The Gospel standards are the same everywhere.

Jubilee, the Year of Release—On the Day of Atonement

Chapter 25 - After every sixth year the Lord commanded the land not to be sown. At the end of the sixth year, He blessed the land with an extraordinary harvest that provided enough food for the seventh and eighth years (v21). After repeating the cycle seven times [or 49 years], there was a special Year of Jubilee—a year of release. Liberty was proclaimed to all Israelites who were in bondage to any of their countrymen; everyone's property was restored to the original owner; and the land had rest for the year. 50 in Scripture signifies release, and it is also associated with Pentecost. Yet the trumpet proclaiming the Year of Jubilee did *not* sound on the Day of Pentecost, it sounded on the Day of Atonement (25:9). This signifies that full release from our bondage is *not* accomplished by the Pentecostal experience, but rather when we are *cleansed* and set free on the Day of Atonement.

Conditions for Blessing / Consequences for Disobedience

Chapter 26 starts with promises of enormous blessings for all those who obey; but from verse 14-46 there is a list of punishments for those who disobey. When God's people disobey, He sends trouble to get their attention and to bring them to repentance. This is love! God wants to save His people from eternal loss. Therefore, if there is no response, He increases the pressures and troubles. All God wants is for man to return to Him and be blessed. If there is still no repentance after all these punishments, God will reject His people. Anyone who misses heaven has chosen not to be there (Acts 13:46). Chapter 27 deals with vows. Vows to God must be kept (Eccl. 5:1-6; Psa.15:4b), and this includes marriage vows. Whatever is given to the Lord becomes holy (27:28). It belongs to God.

Summary of Leviticus

- The instructions laid out in Leviticus were given while Moses and Israel camped at Mt. Sinai. The key word in Leviticus is “holy.” It is found 87 times. Leviticus holds the key to revival.
- The sacrifices in Leviticus are for believers, not unbelievers. Christ our Passover Lamb is for salvation, but Christ fulfilled many other sacrifices on the cross. For sins after salvation, Christ is our trespass offering. We do not go back and get saved all over again if we sin.
- God instituted these offerings so man could have a means of acceptance or approach to God. Thus, we see that God is the one seeking us more than we are seeking God. Although Christ fulfilled these principal offerings in the order laid down in Leviticus, we appropriate them in the opposite order, as seen on page 79.
- Before the glory of God appeared—the right offerings, washings, applications of the blood, anointings, garments, consecrations, and the discipline of waiting had to be accomplished.
- Strange fire is equivalent to worldly, sensual, and devilish music and worship. God wants to purify the worship in His Church and delete the sounds and lyrics of the flesh and of the world.
- Clean and unclean animals often depicts the wrong *appetites* in which Christians indulge. The only dietary commandments upheld in the New Testament are the forbidding of blood, and the eating of things that died of themselves. (Although it would be best to *limit* the consumption of these creatures mentioned in Leviticus, such as pork, etc.)
- Leprosy represents sin. It eventually destroys, but it also infects others. Priests had the authority to pronounce a person or building clean or unclean. Likewise, Christ had power over leprosy, and even *touched* lepers.
- The need for clean garments has a more important spiritual meaning. Our spiritual garments must be clean, and the spiritual coverings that influence us must be right.
- The going in of the high priest within the veil typifies Christ who rent the veil. Therefore, let us follow him past the veil into God's presence. The qualifications for life within the veil are still very high. The standards for a priest / minister are much higher than for the common believer.
- The seven feasts of the Lord are to be fulfilled in our personal lives, in spirit. We must not try to observe these feasts to the letter by going to Israel or to some other geographical location.
- We should not seek vengeance—“Eye for eye, tooth for tooth”—for vengeance belongs to God. Notwithstanding, every human being will reap what he sows.
- God's standards are the same for everyone in every nation—believers and unbelievers alike.
- All Levitical law can be observed in spirit. When God said, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn,” He was really saying this for the benefit of believers, more than the animals (See 1 Cor. 9:9-10, Deut. 25:4). It is the New Testament that interprets the Law. Leviticus involves: sacrifices, cleansing, coverings, appetites, social and sexual behavior, separations from the world, godly worship, right attitudes, fulfilling the feasts in spirit, coming within the veil, high standards for ministers—and the glory of God coming when all these requirements are met.

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

Still at Sinai

At the end of Exodus the tabernacle had been reared up, in the *first* month in the second year (40:17,33). The instructions for Leviticus were given, and then one month later, the Lord commanded Moses to number the people in the *second* month of the second year (Num.1:1-3). The Israelites had been encamped at Sinai for nearly eleven months [since Exodus 19:1]. In several weeks they would leave Sinai and resume their march toward Canaan land (Num.10:11).

Israel Is Numbered

The Book of Numbers: The title is taken from numbering the people. There were two numberings:

- 1.) Chapter 1:46 603,550 - when they came out of Egypt
- 2.) Chapter 26:51 601,730 - after forty years in the wilderness

The women, children, and Levites were not numbered with them. The census included those who were “from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war” (1:3). The Levites (or ministers) were not numbered with the military, showing the battle is not against flesh and blood; the battle is spiritual. When the ministers are holy, it causes the people to become holy, and then the Lord fights for the nation. The reason for war in the first place is that God's people are not living right.

General Outline for Numbers

Chapters 1–14 - Mt. Sinai to Kadesh Barnea
Nine Months (The Old Generation)

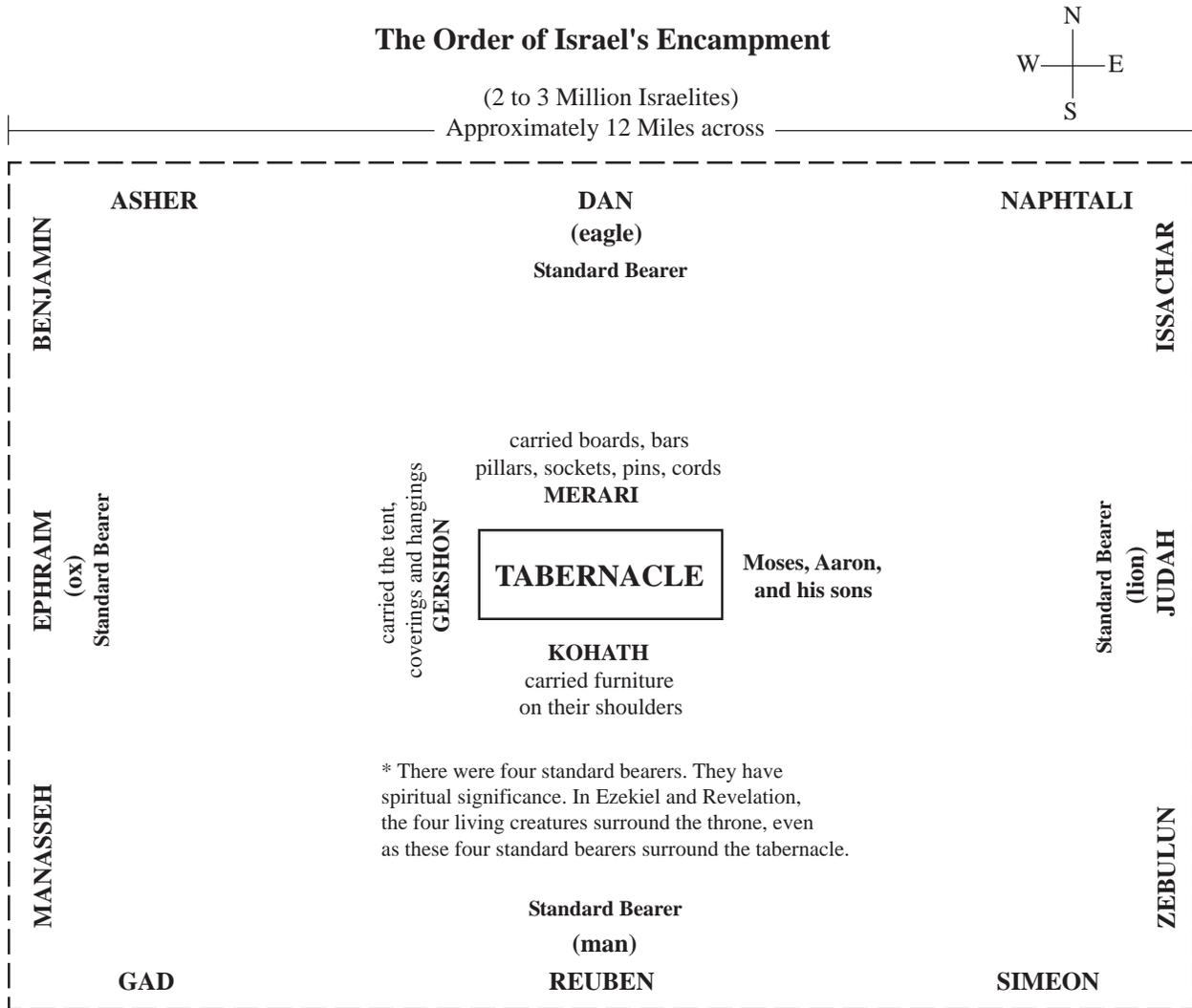
Chapters 15–20 - The Wilderness Wandering
38 Years (The Transition Era)

Chapters 21–36 - Kadesh to the Plain of Moab
In the 40th Year (The New Generation)

Still at Sinai 1:1	From Sinai to Kadesh Barnea 10:11	Failure at Kadesh Barnea Ch.13–14	Reassembling at Kadesh after 38 yrs Ch. 20	End of the Book Ch. 36
Several weeks	About 9 months	38 years wandering		(The 40th year)
Leaving Mt. Sinai after being there nearly a year, they resumed their journey and headed toward Kadesh Barnea in Canaan land	Deut. 2:14 Heb. 3:7-19 Coming to Kadesh and rebelling there, God told them they would wander until that generation died off. A new generation would inherit the land	Chapter 20 to 36 is at the end of the 40 years' journey, just prior to going into the land.		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miriam dies - 20:1 • Moses strikes rock a second time. • Aaron dies - 20:29 • Episode with Balaam - Ch.22-25 • New census, ordinances - Ch.26-27 • Other sacred laws - Ch. 28-30 • Victory over Midian - Ch. 31-33 • Other directions on taking possession of Canaan land - 33:50–36:13 		

Preparing for the March from Sinai

From 1:1 to 10:10, Israel is being prepared at Sinai to march toward Canaan. In Chapters 1-2, the people are numbered and the arrangement of the twelve tribes around the tabernacle is given. Then the Levites are appointed to their specific duties in Chapters 3-4. In Chapters 5-6, laws of holiness after the highest spiritual order are laid down, culminating in the blessing of the priests. In Chapter 7, a prince from each tribe brought an offering for the dedication of the altar. After the cleansing of the Levites in Chapters 8-9, specific instructions were given regarding the cloud that guided them, and they were only to move when the cloud of glory moved (9:15-23). In 10:1-10, two silver trumpets were to sound when the camp was to move on. In 10:13-28 we see the marching order of the tribes starting first with Judah. God has an order and a system for everything, even as Paul taught, saying, "Let everything be done decently and in order" (1 Cor.14:40).



NOTE: Kohath, Gershon, and Merari were three families of Levites that camped around the tabernacle and performed various ministries for the service of God (Num. 4:5,15,19). When camp broke up and they disassembled the tabernacle, it was *only Aaron and his sons* who could see the ark. They took down the veil and covered the ark and the other Levites carried it, but they could not see it. The Levites were not allowed to even touch it, except through the coverings. Only *Aaronites* could see and touch the most sacred things. It depended on what rank a person had in the ministry. Most Levites were not priests. Spiritually, not everyone is permitted to see the secrets of God.

Israel Moves on From Sinai to Kadesh Barnea 10:11 - 14:45

Chapter 10:11,12 - After nearly a year at Mount Sinai, the Israelites, guided by the cloud of glory, dismantled the tabernacle and began their journey from Sinai towards the land of promise. God said to them, “Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount” (cf. Deut.1:6-8). After terrible outbreaks of rebellion, criticism, and complaining along the way, they came to the wilderness of Paran, an area south of Kadesh Barnea. Here the Israelites requested that spies be sent to search out the land. Since this was not God's idea but their own (Num.12:16; 13:2, cf. Deut.1:19-22), it was like inspecting a gift before accepting it. Ten of the twelve spies came back and reported that the situation was insurmountable, which discouraged the congregation and utterly paralyzed them with fear. Israel had just failed her tenth and final test. Chapter 14 takes a major turn in the history of the journey. At Kadesh Barnea, God swore in His wrath that this evil generation would never enter the land of promise. They would not enter into rest. Instead they would wander aimlessly until they all died off.

The Wickedness of Complaining

11:1 - “And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled.” The sin of complaining is one of the main reasons God's people did not enter the land of Canaan or receive the promises. They kept remembering the good times back in the world (11:5). This was a grief and an insult to the Spirit of God who had rescued them from such terrible bondage.

The Wretchedness of Criticism

12:1-15 - Moses' own sister and brother now criticized him. Miriam instigated the incident, and God became angry. It is one thing to criticize a Christian brother, but to speak against a man to whom God showed His face was inexcusable to God, and He smote Miriam with leprosy. This was like spitting in God's face. The Lord will never choose a bride who has a tongue of poison. The one main thing that separates believers from God's favor is an unbridled tongue of negativism.

The Evil Report of the Ten Spies

13:1-33 - This is the evil report of the spies who searched out the land. They looked at the size of the giants in the land and said, “The problem is bigger than God.” Caleb and Joshua said, “No, God is bigger than the problem” (v26-33; 14:8,9). Chapter 14 deals with the effect these ten spies had upon the congregation. It is absolutely incredible how a tiny minority can turn the majority, but Israel was in the habit of “hardening their hearts” every time a test came. This episode at Kadesh Barnea is known as “The Day of Provocation or Temptation” (cf. Heb. 3:8-12; see also Psalm 95:7-11).

Again Moses Saves Israel from Extermination

In 11:10-15, Moses lamented to God, “They are too much for me.” Yet when God said (14:11,12), “I am going to wipe them out and make of you a greater nation,” the reaction of Moses must have warmed the heart of God. This was perhaps the greatest trial a man has ever faced, but Moses came out triumphantly. He begged God not to destroy Israel and besought Him to consider how this would damage His reputation among the nations (v13-20). Then Moses appealed to the greatness of God's character and power to forgive and forbear, and God for the second time changed His mind because of the intercession of Moses. (Compare this with an earlier account - Ex. 32:9-14, 31-33).

Israel Disinherits Themselves from the Land of Promise

14:22-38 - Israel had failed *ten* tests, and now they would wander another 38 years (40 altogether since coming out of Egypt). The Lord said, “Ye shall know my breach of promise” (v34). God will not fulfill the promises to His people if they rebel or fail to meet the conditions. This truth is not preached enough in the Church today. Many believers wander aimlessly through life and never enter into rest because of disobedience. Let us be as Caleb and Joshua, who *did* make it into the promises of God (v30). The key to getting into the land of promise [or the promises of God] is “delighting ourselves in the Lord” (14:8).

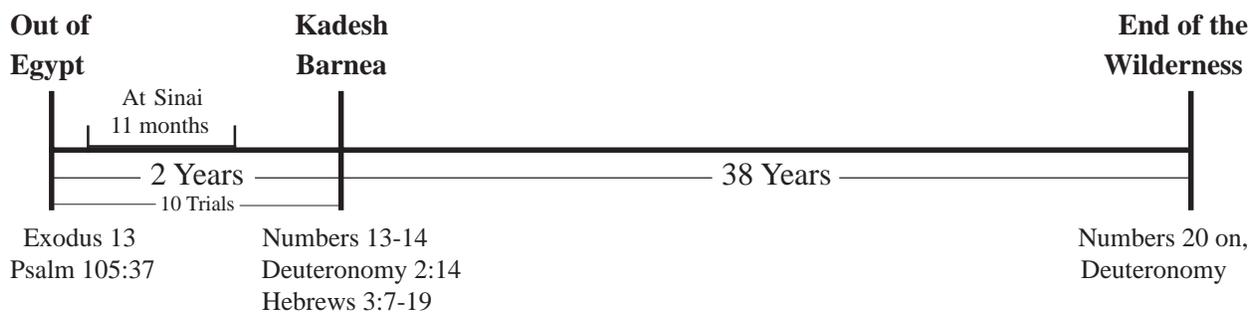
The Ten Tests / The Ten Failures:

1. Opposition from world - Pharaoh tried to pull them back. Israel accuses God (Exodus 14:1-12).
2. Bitter experiences - bitter water - Exodus 15:22-24
3. Wrong appetites - Exodus 16:1-3
4. Dry experiences - Exodus 17:1-7
5. Idolatry / Immorality - Exodus 32:1-14
6. Complaining - Numbers 11:1-3
7. Longing for the past life - Numbers 11:4-6
8. Gluttony - Numbers 11:31-34
9. Criticism against leadership - Numbers 12:1-16
- 10 Total unbelief - at Kadesh - Numbers 13-14

Let us pass our tests and
obtain the promises. Let us
learn from Israel's mistakes.

“What shall we eat, what shall we drink, what shall we put on...O ye of little faith” (Mt. 6:30,31). Israel complained, criticized, and was angry all the time with God and His leaders. A hardened heart is the result of *practice*. Let us learn to receive grace in times of need (Heb. 4:16) and maintain a rejoicing spirit with thankfulness. Unthankfulness is the first step to backsliding (Rom.1:21).

Israel's 40 Year Journey



What should have been a two year journey ended up being another 38 years because of rebellion. Also they did not get into the land of promise. All these things are written for us (1 Cor.10:11).

38 Years of Wandering / Then Returning to Kadesh Chapters 15-20

After the failure at Kadesh-Barnea, Israel was returned into the wilderness to wander. They were washed in the blood of the Lamb, baptized in water, baptized in the Spirit, and wandered in circles. Israel had been called to Mount Zion [rest] in Canaan land; instead they remained in the wilderness.

Years of Wandering

Chapters 15-20

The *wilderness* was a necessary preparation for Israel before they went into the promised land, but the years of *wandering* were not. These were wasted years of going nowhere. Numbers 33:16-39 is a summary of the places Israel encamped after their departure from Mount Sinai. The wandering years began at Kadesh and lasted until the fortieth year, when they returned to Kadesh and Miriam died. Numbers is the book of *arrested progress*. After 38 years, Israel is back at Kadesh (20:1,29).

Strange Punishment for Violation of the Sabbath

In 15:32, a man gathering sticks on the sabbath was stoned. This seems very severe, but we have to consider another factor here. Israel had seen the Red Sea open and they had heard the voice of God from heaven (Dt. 4:12). They had extraordinary knowledge and opportunities; therefore, God held them more responsible (cf. Lk.12:48). Ananias and Sapphira died for lying (Acts 5:1-11), but they were in the midst of revival and had the twelve apostles as the leaders of their church.

Uprising of Korah, Dathan and Abiram

Chapters 16-17 - During the wandering years there was a major attack against the leadership of Moses. Korah, a Levite, stood up against Moses and wanted equal position. So he gathered other men of renown around him to oppose Moses. Korah already had a high position in the ministry, but he wanted a rank *equal* to Moses and Aaron. Basically, to be a priest or high priest, a man had to be of Aaron's line (16:8,9). The Levites carried out the service of God's house but the priesthood belonged to Aaron and his family. Thus, not all Levites were priests. It was envy and jealousy that prompted Korah's actions. In v31-33, the earth opened and Korah and his followers fell into hell. When people seek a spiritual position that God has not given, God's blessing lifts and a curse ensues.

In the New Testament, Jude 1:10-12 warns against “the gainsaying of Korah.” Hebrews 5:1-4 is a reminder that “no man can take this honor unto himself [i. e. hold a spiritual office], but he who is called of God as was Aaron” (Heb. 5:4). Being wealthy or influential does not give anyone spiritual authority. In Chapter 17, when God wanted to prove He had chosen Aaron, He caused his rod to bud.

Back to Kadesh—Where They Started From

In Chapter 20:1, the wandering Israelites had now come back to Kadesh, and here Miriam died. In verses 23-29, Aaron also died. Salvation is one thing but to enter into the promises of God is another. Israel again faced the problem of having no water, and they complained grievously (see 20:2-8). The Lord carefully instructs Moses to *speak* to the rock this time, but in a rage Moses *struck* the rock and he did so *twice*. Moses was breaking an eternal type, for Christ represented the Rock, and to strike it twice meant that Christ would have to die twice. God reprimanded Moses. He had eliminated himself from the land of promise (Psa.106:32,33; Dt. 3:23-27). It is one thing for a babe in Christ to have an outburst of wrath, but for someone of the caliber of Moses, it is much more serious.

The Evil of Discouragement

21:4,5 - “The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.” We cannot allow our hearts to be overrun with discouragement, for then criticism and accusation against the Lord results. By grace, we must surmount discouragement and *refuse* to listen to or side with the wrong voice.

The Episode with Balaam

Chapters 22–25

Balaam is a puzzle to many theological students. He was a major prophet to whom God appeared, and he had tremendous spiritual authority. Yet because of motives in his heart that were not pure, he drifted into another anointing. Balaam went back and forth from the true anointing to another spirit. Unbelievers looked upon him as a spiritist medium. Whomsoever he cursed was cursed, and whomsoever he blessed was blessed. Therefore, when Moab and Midian saw the Israelites marching near their territory, they wanted to hire Balaam to put a hex upon the Israelites. Thus, they came to Balaam with “the rewards of divination in their hands” (Num. 22:1-7).

When the elders of Moab came to Balaam he requested time to first ask God for direction. When Balaam inquired of God, the Lord said, “You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people: for they are blessed” (22:8-12). That should have been enough, but of course, as people in the world do, Midian thought Balaam was holding out for more money. Thus, they returned with a better offer. Balaam went back to prayer and asked the Lord if He would change His mind and allow him to go. God then said, “Go,” but when Balaam went with them, God was *furious* (22:15-22).

God Will Say Yes to Requests That Are Not His Will

Here is another major key to interpretation, which we will find throughout all of Scripture. When people ask God long enough for something they know is not His will, God will say *Yes*—but then give them emptiness of soul. (See Psalm 106:15): “He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.” God will deal with us according to the motives of our hearts. “With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward [perverse] thou wilt show thyself [perverse] (Psa.18:26). When people love a lie, God will give them a lie. He will smite them with false religions and spiritual blindness; but to those who love the truth, He will He show *Himself*, for He is Truth.

Balaam went, but God was very angry. Notwithstanding, every time Balaam tried to curse Israel, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he was only able to bless them. Thus, God turned the curse into a blessing. When Balaam saw that he was not going to be paid by the Moabites, he told them how to bring a curse upon Israel. He counseled them to send beautiful girls among them with whom they would commit fornication, and thus a curse from God would fall upon them. (See Numbers 25:1-9; 31:16). This is known as the “doctrine of Balaam” (Rev. 2:14). See “the error of Balaam” (Jude 1:11), and “the way of Balaam” (2 Pet. 2:14-16). *Balaam loved money*, and this led to the mixture and perversion of his prophetic ministry. “Balaam's” (who covet money and the praise of men) counsel people to divorce and marry someone else, but this brings a plague into the Church.

Closing Chapters

Chapters 26-36

Chapter 26:64,65 is the new numbering of the people after 40 years in the wilderness. There were fewer in the new census than in 1:46 when they were numbered 39 years earlier. Chapter 27 gives the laws of inheritance. If a man died and had no sons, he was to give his inheritance to his daughters. If he had no children, the inheritance went to his brethren or to the nearest kin. In 27:15-23, Moses then asks God to give a successor for his office so that “the congregation be not as sheep which have no shepherd” (v17). God selected Joshua to be the successor, and Moses laid his hands upon Joshua, and “put some of his honour upon him” (v20). See Deuteronomy 34:9. Joshua had the spirit of wisdom imparted to him from the laying on of the hands of Moses.

Vows—Authority of the Man over the Family

Chapters 28-29 are further instructions and details on the feasts and offerings. Chapter 30 deals with vows. When a man makes a vow to God, he must keep his word (30:2), but a woman is in a different position, for she is under the covering and authority of her husband. This is true of a daughter as well if she is unmarried and living at home. With respect to vows, a man can make void a vow that a wife makes to God. Of course, it is only in disorganized homes where this would be an issue because normally the woman would do nothing without asking the husband what he thinks she should do. For example, if a husband hears his wife vow and say, “I am promising to give twenty per cent of my wages to the Lord,” he has the authority to make that promise void or to establish it. However, if he hears it and says nothing, that is like giving his affirmation to the matter. He also is responsible to make sure that she keeps her promise. A husband has the authority to establish or make void any vow the wife makes (v12-15).

Here is another more serious application: If an underage daughter runs away and gets married, the father has the right to make her vows void on the day he hears it. However, if he holds his peace, her marriage vow is established and it should not be broken.

Several Tribes Do Not Want to Go into Canaan

Chapter 31 is the judgment on Midian and the slaying of Balaam (v8). In Chapter 32 is the sad account of the two-and-a-half tribes who wanted to remain on the wrong side of Jordan and not go into the land of inheritance. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh said, “Bring us not over Jordan” (32:4). See verse 33. They had many cattle and thus the other side of Jordan seemed more appealing to them. It was for worldly reasons and finance that they did not want to go on with God. Likewise, there are Christians in the Church who decide they have had enough of the spiritual life and have no desire to go any further. Yet if we stop short of God's purposes, the enemy will catch up with us. Usually the enemy will get our children. These tribes were the first to go into captivity in later centuries. Let us not love the world or the things that are in the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

Chapter 33 lists the precise places and stops on the journey. Verses 51,52 warn against *evil pictures* and icons in the land of Canaan that must be destroyed because there are wicked spirits in pictures. If people do not get rid of pornography and such things, they will be bound and driven by evil spirits. God also chose the boundaries of their land of inheritance (v54). In verse 55, the people are warned to drive out all the enemies, because compromise with the enemies will later destroy them.

Chapter 34 gives other preparations (and territorial boundaries) before entering the land of promise. Chapter 35 mentions the forty-eight cities given to the Levites, which were scattered throughout the land of Israel. The Levites had no defined area of landmass, thus they had cities within the other tribes. Also, there were six *cities of refuge* for people to escape to if they had accidentally killed someone (Deut.19:1-13). Fleeing to one of these cities gave time for emotions to quiet down so that a fair and rational trial could be held. Perhaps even more applicable to our times is the fact that God chooses certain cities in the world to be a haven of protection and provision when trouble comes.

Chapter 36 concerns the inheritance of daughters. They were commanded to marry within their own tribe so that the lot of land would not become the property of a husband from another tribe. Spiritually, this means we should marry someone of the same tribe – i. e. of the same calling.

Summary of the Book of Numbers

- While they were still at Sinai, God numbered the tribes of Israel. The Levites, women, and children were not numbered. At the end of the journey, there was a new census taken.
- God is very organized. He arranged the positions of the tribes around the tabernacle and gave explicit instructions for each Levite's service in God's house. Also, when the camp was ready to move on, there was a specific marching order, with the tribe of Judah leading the way. The camp was only to move when the cloud moved, a pattern that symbolizes being led by the Spirit.
- After being camped at Sinai for nearly a year, Israel headed for Canaan's land of promise (10:11). They were very close to Canaan, yet there were numerous rebellions along the way, with complaining and criticism as they came to the wilderness of Paran, a little south of Kadesh Barnea.
- Twelve spies were sent in to search out the land. This was not the Lord's idea but Israel's. Ten of the twelve came back with an evil report, greatly discouraging the congregation. Remember, a small minority can turn the majority. Such is the power of the tongue.
- Discouragement, if yielded to, can bring great sin and then judgment. Discouragement is *another voice* that says, "There is no hope, just give up;" and this spirit accuses God. Thus, the people complained. Israel criticized and despised the leadership of her Heavenly Bridegroom. By keeping herself out of Canaan, she was keeping her Lord out of the land too! She ruined everything for Him.
- After Israel had tempted God *ten times* (the tenth being at Kadesh Barnea), God swore in His wrath that they would never enter into rest, in the land of inheritance. At this point they were returned to the wilderness to wander. What should have been a journey of two years became forty years, and that generation never saw the land of promise. It was the next generation that entered glory land.
- No one obtains God's promises by having evil attitudes or not meeting the conditions (Heb.10:36). Caleb and Joshua had another spirit—the spirit of faith that honors God! These two men fought the good fight of faith as they testified: "If the Lord delight in us, he will bring us into this land" (14:8,9). Delighting the heart of God is *the key* to receiving promises.
- Chapters 15-20 are the wandering years. At Kadesh they started wandering, and 38 years later they returned to Kadesh. These were wasted, aimless years. Let us learn from Israel's mistakes. God dealt severely with sin, especially because of all the miracles they had seen and heard. The Lord requires more from people when they have more light and opportunity.
- Korah, a Levite, had a prominent position in the ministry, but he wanted the priesthood as well. There are serious consequences for grasping after *a position* that God has not granted.
- Balaam was a prophet of God, for God would never have appeared to a soothsayer. Balaam was backslidden, going in and out of the anointing. He counseled the Moabites to send in their girls to commit fornication with the Israelites. Immorality is what brought a curse upon Israel.
- Two and a half tribes were pleased to dwell on the wrong side of Jordan and not go into the land of inheritance. Many are satisfied with the place they have settled on and wish to go no further. Their inward thought is: "I don't care about going on to Zion or having the presence of God. I am content with salvation and financial blessings." These tribes were the first to go into captivity.

THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Deuteronomy is a series of sermons and final exhortations given by Moses just before his death, after the old generation had died off. Moses is addressing the new generation who are about to pass over Jordan to inherit the long-awaited land of promise. Moses begins these prophetic messages “in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month.” Geographically, he is in the land of Moab, overlooking Jordan and the land of Canaan (Deut.1:3,5). See Numbers 35:1, 36:13.

Deuteronomy is the Greek title affixed to this book. It means “The Second Law.” For the sake of the new generation, most of whom had not been at Sinai forty years earlier, Moses is repeating the Law. He also is giving Israel final instructions on how to conduct themselves in the promised land. In a sense, Deuteronomy is easy to analyze. Chapters 1-11 are looking back and Chapters 12-34 are looking ahead. The first eleven chapters are a review of their history since coming out of Egypt, and from chapter twelve and onwards, Moses is looking ahead to the new life in Canaan.

General Outline for Deuteronomy

I. Looking Backward - (Chapters 1–11)

- a. Review of the way since Sinai - 1–3
- b. Review of the Law from Sinai - 4–11

II. Looking Forward - (Chapters 12–34)

- a. Final Rules / Warnings to Israel - 12–30
before entering the earthly inheritance
- b. Final Words / Actions of Moses - 31–34
before entering the heavenly inheritance

Review from Sinai to the End of the Forty Years Chapters 1–3

Chapter 1 is *a review* of Israel's journey from Mount Sinai (also called Horeb) to Kadesh Barnea. At Kadesh they were discouraged by the ten spies, whose report incited a rebellion against the Lord. (Discouragement is evil; it brings accusation against God, but ultimately it results in judgment.) They charged: “God hates us and has brought us out here to destroy us by the Amorites” (v26-28). God was so grieved with that generation that He pronounced that they would not enter the land (v34-35). A kind and loving Lord was turned to become their enemy because of the evil accusations they constantly hurled against Him (2:14,15, Isa. 66:9-13). Yet even in the wandering years, God was good to them and they lacked nothing (2:7), for even their clothes and shoes did not wear out (29:5).

Deuteronomy 2:16 is at the end of the forty years. At this time God gave the new generation significant victories on the eastern side of Jordan—against Og king of Bashan, and Sihon king of Heshbon. All this territory was given to Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh (3:12-20). Moses besought the Lord to reconsider and allow him to enter the land of promise, but again the Lord flatly said, “No, and do not ask me again.” Moses could see the land but not enter it. It was Joshua, his successor, who would lead the people into the land of inheritance (3:23-29).

Review of the Law from Sinai Chapters 4–11

In Chapter 4:1, Moses instructs the new generation. “Their wisdom and understanding is to keep the commandments of the Lord” (4:6). If they would obey God's laws, even the heathen nations would recognize that God is with them (4:7,8). In years past, the USA was a God-fearing nation, and the world looked on them with awe. Today the world has lost respect for America because she has turned away from the Lord. Verse 9 commands God's people not to *forget* the commandments; instead they are to *teach* them diligently to their children. The remainder of the chapter warns against making graven images. They had only heard the *voice* of God on Sinai; they saw *no shape or image* (v12). God did not want any images or relics worshipped, nor does He want saints worshipped.

Review of the Ten Commandments

Chapter 5 reviews the ten commandments that were given on Sinai to the first generation (5:5-22). Israel literally heard the voice of God from Sinai, but they begged Moses to speak to them on God's behalf, so that they would not have to hear that dreadful voice again. Thus, they had need of a human mediator. The ten commandments are still applicable to us (Rom. 8:4; Mt.19:17-19; Rom.13:8-10). There are consequences for breaking any of them. Yet today we can receive *grace to obey* (Rom.1:5).

Do Not Forget the Lord When the Blessings Come

Chapter 6 commands the people *not to forget the Lord*, especially when they come into the land of promise and they are blessed on every side. It is so easy to forget the Lord when we are blessed so lavishly, and for a long time. Paradoxically, it is easier to live with adversity than with prosperity. Verses 4 and 5 contain Christ's summation of the whole Bible.

Chapter 7 continues the theme—“When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land.” These chapters are warnings on how to conduct themselves when they come into the blessings and promises. Actually, very few are able to survive when they are blessed mightily. Please remember that there is a *great risk* involved when you are blessed. This is where God loses so many of His servants. Often, we need difficulties to keep us on course and to remind us of our frailty. This chapter commands a separation from the ways of the world—something the Church has nearly forgotten. Yet the Lord assures His people that He will fight for them when they live righteously.

Difficulties—So That Our Latter End Is Good

Chapter 8 is an exhortation to *remember* all the lessons they had learned in the wilderness. These trials were: 1.) to humble thee; 2.) to prove thee; 3.) to know what was in thine heart. All the difficulties in life are for the ultimate purpose of changing our heart so that we will be prepared for the blessings that follow, that our latter end might be good. Once again, God's people are warned that when the blessings are poured out immeasurably— “beware that you do not forget the Lord” (v11).

These Blessings—Not Because You Are Good, but Because the Canaanites Are So Bad

Chapter 9 - The Israelites are warned not to be proud. “God is not giving you Canaan land because you are so good, but because the Canaanites are so bad.” On the contrary, the Israelites had been rebellious from the very day they left Egypt (v24). If Moses had not interceded, Israel would have been wiped out (9:1-8). Likewise, we are replacing the fallen inhabitants of heaven, not because we are so good but because they are so evil and because Christ has given us His righteousness.

God's Love for His People

In Chapter 10, Moses continues to review the Law that was given on Sinai unto the new generation. After the golden calf episode at Sinai, God rewrote the ten commandments on two new stones because Moses had smashed the first tablets. He also separated the tribe of Levi for the ministerial duties. In this chapter, the tender love of the Lord is more pronounced. God is asking His people to love Him with their whole heart (v12), because the Lord had a special delight and love for their fathers. The *fathers* are a reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (v15). Therefore, God desired love and cooperation from the descendants of the fathers (v16). Circumcision takes on new meaning here. Much more than a ritual, circumcision is a work performed in the heart, in the spirit of man, by the Sword of God's Word. Evil must be cut away from the heart for a person to love God (Deut. 30:6).

Conditions for Blessings—Obedience

Chapter 11 - The new generation was more accountable and responsible for keeping the commandments of God because of all that they had seen and heard. (Some had not *seen* all of the events of the past forty years, but they had certainly *heard*, and were well acquainted with them). Yet the command to observe God's Word was only for their good, so that they could *prolong* their days in the land of promise (v7-9). It was a very good land (v9-15). If Israel would diligently obey the Word of God and teach it to their children, they would be blessed exceedingly and God would defend them always (v16-25).

Blessings and Cursings

11:26 - "Behold I set before you this day a blessing and a curse." In the final verses of the chapter, a choice is set before God's people: a blessing for obeying the Word and a curse if they disobey. Unfortunately, some ministers only preach the blessings and *omit* the cursings. As ministers of God, we must preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20,26,27). The problem today is not so much what is preached from the pulpit, but what is *not* preached. To withhold the other side of the truth is equivalent to being a false witness. Not to faithfully warn people of the consequences of sin is to have blood upon our hands (Ezek. 33:1-9). We must be faithful watchmen and warn people.

Final Rules and Warnings to Israel Before Entering the Inheritance

Chapters 12–30

These chapters deal with the conduct of God's people after they enter the land of inheritance. In chapter 12, God tells them that He is very particular *how* and *where* they worship. Remember that God will not accept our worship or service unless we are in *the place* He chooses (v13). The Canaanites had altars of worship all over the land, but Israel was commanded to worship only in the designated place which the Lord would choose. God was very emphatic about the importance of worship. They must drink no blood, and they were not to worship the gods of the land or copy any of their methods. They are also not to forsake the Levite, but to make sure the ministers are well cared for.

Chapter 13 warns against people who would turn you from God unto other forms of worship. These enticers are like cancer cells that destroy a whole body. It could be a prophet who performs miracles (v1-5), a close family member (v6-11), or a segment of a city (v12-18). Israel was to deal severely with these instigators so that the whole nation would hear and fear and not follow the same course (v11). Paul commanded a congregation to excommunicate unrepentant members (1 Cor. 5:9-13).

Standing Before the Lord / Not Empty-handed

Chapter 14 is a review of dietary laws; chapter 15 lists other civil laws; chapter 16 are commands to observe the three major feasts each year. Three times each year an Israelite was to appear before the Lord, and he was not to come before the Lord with empty hands (16:16). Below is a list of Israel's feasts, and how they were celebrated during the year:

Passover (also known as Unleavened Bread) *These three feasts were observed in the first month*
Unleavened Bread
Feast of Firstfruits

Pentecost (feast of weeks) *This was observed in the third month*

Feast of Trumpets
Day of Atonement

Feast of Tabernacles *These were all observed in the seventh month*

Israel's seven feasts were celebrated *in groups*. The first three were celebrated at the beginning of the religious calendar in April, the first month. Pentecost was celebrated in the third month. And in the seventh month (Sept / Oct), the last three were celebrated. Spiritually, these feasts represent:

- Passover - salvation. Those we have led to Christ, to salvation.
- Pentecost - the Spirit-filled life. Those we help into the life of the Spirit.
- Tabernacles - maturity, glory. Those we bring to maturity and perfection.

When we stand before God, we do not want to come with empty hands. We want to be able to present to the Lord those we have led into the salvation experience, the Pentecostal experience, and those we have brought to maturity. Not only must we bring people to salvation and to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but our converts must also be brought to perfection. Saint Paul led the Corinthians into the salvation experience and the Pentecostal experience, but they were far from holy. Paul's goal was their *perfecting*: "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1; 13:9,11; 1 Cor.1:8).

Israel Will Demand a King

Chapter 17 contains various civil laws, but verses 14-20 predict that Israel in the future will demand to have a king like all the other nations. It is interesting—the writings of Moses predicted *all* of Israel's history before they even went into the land. This demand to have a king was fulfilled in First Samuel 8:5,19,20. Israel no longer wanted God to be their king. They wanted something more tangible. They hated living by faith. Israel wanted someone they could *see*. Thus, Saul became their first king, but it was disastrous. 17:14-20 gives instructions for the conduct of a king.

The Coming Christ Predicted / He Resembles Moses

In 18:15-19 is the great Messianic prophecy. God will raise up a Prophet who would be very much like Moses. (See Acts 3:22,23; 7:37; Jn.1:21; 6:14; 7:40). Israel dreaded hearing the voice of God on Mount Sinai, thus they requested a human mediator. Therefore, Christ was going to transform Himself into a Man and dwell among us. He would be their Mediator. Anyone who does not hearken to His words shall "be cut off from the people"—this is a reference to eternal judgment.

The Right of the Firstborn

The remaining chapters contain many various civil laws for Israel, and virtually everything can have a spiritual application for us today. In Deuteronomy 21:15-17, a firstborn son was to have a double portion of his father's inheritance that gave him certain privileges and responsibilities. He was the head of the house in the father's absence. He was also responsible for the welfare of his younger brothers and sisters, as we see in Reuben's case (cf. Gen. 37:20-23, 28-30).

Jesus is the Firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:28,29). He has authority over us, his brethren. Jesus is the Firstborn of every creature (Col.1:15-17). He has authority over every created thing. Jesus is the Firstborn from the dead (Col.1:18; Rev.1:5). He has authority over death. Hebrews 12:22,23 mentions "the Church of the firstborn [ones]." In the original language, this is plural. Here is a group of *firstborn ones* on Mount Zion in heaven (cf. Rev.14:1-5). In the Church there are some who are firstborn among their brethren; they have a double portion of the Spirit. Those who are closest to the Lamb on Mount Zion in heaven are firstborn ones.

Old Testament Laws of Marriage Are Subject to New Testament Standards

The New Testament governs the Old Testament. Remember, it was the pre-incarnate Christ who gave the Law to Moses. And who could interpret the Law better than Christ? In 22:13-19, a man could divorce his wife if he *hated* her, and found uncleanness in her. In the New Testament, hatred and hardness of heart are forbidden because *provision has been made* for us to have a new heart.

In 22:23,24, an engaged man and woman were called *husband* and *wife* even before marriage. Christ allowed the Jews in Matthew's Gospel to "put away" an *engaged* wife if there had been "fornication," not adultery. Adultery involves married people, not engaged people. This was Christ's only exception for putting away. It was confined to putting away an engaged spouse in Jewish society. In Matthew 1:18,19, Joseph and Mary were *engaged*, and Mary was expecting a baby. Joseph, not understanding the situation, determined to put away his wife. "Then Joseph *her husband* ... was minded to put her away" (Mt.1:19). The angel of the Lord told him not to be afraid to take Mary his wife, for that holy thing that had been conceived in her was from the Holy Spirit.

In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the Old Testament permitted a man to divorce his wife if he had found some uncleanness in her. Jesus Himself interpreted these passages (Mt.19:7-9; Mk.10:4-9). He said Moses allowed divorce "for the hardness of your hearts" but from the beginning (in Eden) it was not so. Hardness of heart always brings a curse. In the New Testament, Christ came to give us a new heart and to take away our stony heart. Thus, Christ abolished divorce for our times.

Israel to Declare Both the Blessings and Cursings

In Chapter 27, after Israel came into the land of promise, six tribes were to stand on Mount Gerizim and announce the blessings, and six tribes were to stand on Mount Ebal and announce the curses. The curses were for those who ignored, rejected, or disobeyed the Laws of the Lord. Remember that we must preach not only the blessings, but also the curses that result from disobedience. Chapter 28 starts off with the blessings for the obedient (v1-14), and verses 15-68 proclaim the curses for the disobedient. In Chapter 29:1-6, with all the signs and miracles Israel had seen and heard, still they did not understand what God was endeavoring to do for them. God Himself deprived them of understanding because their hearts were so hard. (See Hebrews 3:7-13).

Repentance / Returning to the Lord Brings Deliverance

Chapter 30 is a promise to Israel of restoration if they repent. Though they be driven and scattered among the nations for their sins, God will gather them again. This promise had a fulfillment in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah when the Jews returned from Babylon after seventy years of exile.

The covenant God made with Israel on Mount Sinai had conditions, yet this Mosaic covenant was built upon a greater covenant—the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen.15:17,18; 17:7,8). This covenant insured that Canaan belonged to Abraham and his seed forever. When Israel turns back to their Redeemer, the veil over their blinded hearts will be taken away and God will deliver them. At the Second Coming of Christ, there will be a national repentance and all Israel will be saved (Rom.11:25,26; 2 Cor. 3:13-16). The answer to all of life's dilemmas is not far away—it is not up in heaven or in the depths of the sea—it is within our hearts. The *Word* is very nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thine heart. It is “Christ in you”—He is the answer (Deut. 30:11-14; Rom.10:5-10).

The Final Words and Actions of Moses Chapters 31–34

31:1-9 - Moses is ready to die. Moses therefore announces publicly that Joshua will now lead them and cause them to inherit the land (v7). It is important to have a successor, for success depends on having the right successor. While giving Joshua a divine charge, God makes it very clear that Israel will soon go astray and fall under terrible judgments. Thus, they were to learn *a prophetic song* that testifies of their entire history of rebellion, but ultimate restoration when they turn to Christ (v10-30).

The Song of Moses — An Overview of Israel's History Before it Happens

Chapter 32 is the Song of Moses that they were to memorize. This song is Israel's history before it happens. v5 - Israel would corrupt themselves. v6 - They are foolish and unwise. v7-14 - God chose Jacob when he was nobody in “a waste howling wilderness.” God preserved Jacob as the apple of His eye, and blessed him exceedingly. v15-20 - But Jeshuran [or Jacob] became fat and lazy and forsook God, and God was so grieved that He hid His face from them. They are “children in whom is no faith.” Hardened hearts have no faith. v21 - Since they moved God to jealousy by turning to other gods, God would provoke them to jealousy by turning to the Gentiles (Rom.10:19; 11:11). v22-35 - To a people void of understanding, who had no ability to consider their latter end, one woe after another would befall them through the centuries. v36-44 - But when their power is gone and their pride is broken, God will come to their rescue. The nations will rejoice with Israel when Christ comes and avenges His people and reigns in Israel (v43). This is the Second Coming and the Millennial Age.

In Chapter 33, Moses prophesies over the twelve tribes. This is a counterpart to Genesis 49 when Jacob prophesied over each of the twelve sons. Of special note is the blessing upon the tribe of Levi in v8-11. Levi was *proved* first—he had put God above his own family and friends. Thus, he was given the priesthood and the ministry. Anyone who opposes Levi (a minister) meets God's wrath.

Chapter 34 is the death of Moses, perhaps the greatest man who ever lived. He was later resurrected (Jude 1:9) and appeared to Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Lk. 9:29-31). Moses and Elijah played a part in our redemption, for they were sent by the Father to strengthen Christ to die on the cross for our sins. They are the two witnesses who are yet to come in our generation (Rev.11:3-12).

The Pentateuch—The Foundation of All Following Scripture

The Pentateuch is the title given to the first five books of the Old Testament. Actually, we could say that it is one large work in five volumes. All of them are the writings of Moses—The Book of the Law, or Torah. These five books are in fact *the foundation* of the entire Bible. All of the Prophets are rooted in Moses and the Law; and the New Testament is built upon the Law and the Prophets. Not less than 1,531 times, the Old Testament Prophets make *reference* to the Pentateuch.

References to Genesis - 149 times

References to Exodus - 312 times

References to Leviticus - 285 times

References to Numbers - 168 times

References to Deuteronomy - 617 times

Summary of Deuteronomy

- Deuteronomy is a series of sermons and exhortations given by Moses just prior to his death. Moses is addressing the new generation who are about to pass over Jordan into Canaan land. He reviews their past forty year journey; then he looks ahead to the new life in Canaan.
- A key phrase in Deuteronomy – “When you come into the land which the Lord giveth thee...”
- He urges them to *remember* the lessons in the wilderness and to *remember* the Law. The blessings in the land of inheritance are so great that it is easy to *forget* the Lord.
- Not only is it important to get into the land, it is also important to *prolong* your days there. In other words, you could lose your inheritance if you forget the Lord and His Law.
- They are not only to mention the *blessings* but also the *curses* that result for disobedience. This is an exhortation for all those who *only* want to hear about the benefits of salvation.
- God will accept their sacrifices only if they are *in the place* God chooses. We cannot serve the Lord just anywhere we wish, but on His terms and in the place of God's choosing.
- They must observe the feasts and not come *empty-handed* when they stand before the Lord. Spiritually, we must have something to offer the Lord when we stand before Him.
- The right of the firstborn and *all* of the laws of Moses have a spiritual application to us today. The marriage laws of the Old Testament are overruled by the higher laws of the New Testament. Divorce was allowed then because they were “hard hearted,” but hardness of heart brings trouble. Permission to divorce was God's displeasure on a hard hearted people, yet today it is not allowed. (Sometimes separation is necessary, but divorce and marrying someone else is not for today.)
- Israel's history is foretold before they ever crossed Jordan into the land of inheritance. Israel even had to sing the prophetic Song of Moses which foretells their rebellious history before it happened.
- Deuteronomy is one of the four most quoted books in the New Testament. When our Lord Jesus was tempted by Satan, He quoted from Deuteronomy all three times to defeat him.

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

The Book of Joshua is a book of battles, a defeating of enemies, a gaining of inheritance, and an entering into rest. Joshua's battles were against flesh and blood, but our battles are much greater. We are fighting against principalities and powers, evil spirits, thoughts, concepts, philosophies, blindness, hardness, delusions, and other works of darkness (see Ephesians 6:10-18).

Our battles are against *intangible* forces. Therefore, our weapons are also *intangible*, and the inheritance we are fighting for is spiritual. We are not in a warfare to capture a physical land, as did Israel. We are struggling for a spiritual inheritance—a people, a mission field, a call, a ministry, a relationship with God, and an eternal inheritance in heaven. We are called to bring down the unseen evil forces that manipulate the minds of men and control society (2 Cor.10:3-5). Our battle is against imaginations, reasonings, and every high thing that exalts itself *against* the knowledge of God.

See our course entitled: Victory Over the Self-Centered Life

General Outline for the Book of Joshua

- I. Preparation for Conquest 1 - 5
- II. The Conquest of Canaan 6 - 12
- III. Dividing the Inheritances 13 - 21
- IV. The Consecration Made 22 - 24

The Leader Prepared and Commissioned

In Chapter 1, God commissioned Joshua after the death of Moses. God always starts by meeting with the leader and clarifying the vision to him. For years, Joshua had prepared himself for this hour. Not only did he stay close to the side of Moses his mentor, he also waited and lingered in God's presence (cf. Exodus 33:11). All true ministry comes from something God deposits in us as we wait before Him. Joshua had a foretaste of the good land 38 years earlier at Kadesh Barnea, and he had remained faithful to the vision. Joshua had “another spirit”—the spirit of faith—because he spent time in God's presence and kept his heart soft. God needs “Joshua's” today who can lead people into their inheritances. Will you be a Joshua?

In Chapter 2, Joshua sent out two trusted men (not twelve), to view the land. These spies were hidden by Rahab, a harlot. She is commended for her faith (Heb.11:31). Rahab was a woman who wanted a better life but did not know how to find it. Yet when she saw the truth, she embraced it with all her heart. When the two spies returned, they said, “The enemies are terrified of us” (2:24; 9-11). Evil spirits know very well when their time of dominating a place is over.

The Crossing of Jordan

In Chapter 3, they crossed Jordan, an act that has great significance. For Israel, it was the end of the wilderness and the commencement of inheriting the promises. For us, it is an actual experience in our Christian life. It is the “dead to sin” experience: “Knowing that our old man [old nature] was crucified with him” (Rom. 6:6). We first have to pass our wilderness tests before we come to our Jordan. Often, it takes a long time to come to this juncture of the journey, and many never come to their “Jordan” because of rebellion during wilderness trials. Thus, they wander aimlessly. Remember, Jordan ran into the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth. It takes great *lowliness* to cross over Jordan.

Jordan—A Landmark Experience

Chapter 4 - This is an account of the two memorials. Twelve stones were taken out of the riverbed and put on land, and twelve stones on land were put in the riverbed. This was to remember the Jordan experience. It was a landmark. Many years later John baptized here and said, “God is able of *these stones* to raise up children unto Abraham” (Mt. 3:9). Our old nature is dealt with at Jordan and the nature of sin is arrested, but still it must be contained. Our sin nature is never *eradicated* during this life on earth. It is only held in check so that we have the power not to serve sin but to yield the members of our body to righteousness. We need to remember our Jordan experience, and then reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God. (See Romans 6:6,11,13).

Chapter 5 - At Gilgal, the new generation was circumcised. Remember, there is no inheritance without circumcision (cf. Gen.17:7-11), and this applies to us spiritually as well. We will not receive our inheritance until we allow God to cut away evil from our hearts. God will not be able to use us and reproduce us until He performs a deep surgical work in our heart with His Sword. Having passed through Jordan and immediately facing circumcision, Israel was ready to go against their enemies and start possessing their inheritance. They had to drive out 31 kings, which speaks of ruling lords in our lives that have to be put to death. God must do a dissecting in our hearts, one area after another.

The Conquest of Canaan Their Inheritance Chapters 6–12

In Chapter 6, they had a tremendous victory at Jericho. Israel had to march around the city once a day for six days, and seven times on the seventh day—and then they gave a mighty shout. This tells us that the battle is spiritual; it is not in the physical. The battle plan God gave did not make any military sense. It defied natural logic. In the same way, when we have a problem or bondage, the solution God gives might go entirely against our natural mind. In Chapter 7, the sin of one man caused the whole congregation to lose the battle at Ai. For example, one unruly tongue can ruin a whole church. In Chapter 8, when Achan's sin was confessed and put away, God gave the victory because God fights for His people when they are living right. Thus, the real issue is spiritual, not natural.

Chapter 9 is the *error of judgment* regarding the Gibeonites. These Gibeonites were neighbors whom God said to destroy, but they feigned themselves to be ambassadors from a distant land and asked to make peace with Joshua and the Israelites. Verse 14 is the key verse. They looked at the outward appearance of the Gibeonites and did not inquire of God. Thus, they entered into a covenant that they could not break. Let us always ask God for His guidance *before* we make commitments.

Chapter 10 - After warring against five kings and making other conquests, Joshua commanded the sun to stand still in order to have time to complete his victory against the Amorites (v12-14). Incredibly, the solar system slowed down and stopped for nearly a day. This is the power of the prophetic voice when the Spirit of God authorizes it. Chapter 11:1-15 is the northern conquest. Joshua was a finisher; he “left nothing undone” (v15). Let's be a finisher too, by grace.

11:18 - “Joshua made war a long time with those kings.” Some enemies in our lives are very obstinate and take a long time to defeat, and some problems are defeated quickly. In 11:19-20, God hardened the hearts of the enemies. (God only hardens evil people). When people harden their hearts and come against the righteous, it is a sign that God is about to judge and destroy them. Chapter 12 lists 31 kings who were smitten. Each king represents a problem that needs to be slain in our lives.

Joshua Divides the Inheritances

Chapters 13–21

12:1-6 records the inheritance on the *eastern* side of Jordan. This land was given to Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh; Moses gave it to them before he died (Num. 32:29,33). These tribes did not want to go over Jordan; they wanted to stay on the wrong side. They were the *first* to receive their inheritance, but Proverbs 20:21 says, “An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning, but the end thereof shall not be blessed.” These tribes were the first to go into captivity later on in history. So often those who want quick success in the ministry are not blessed later in life. The prodigal son said to his father, “Give me my inheritance right now” (cf Lk.15:12). Let us allow God to take His time training us (Heb.12:5-8) so that our inheritance will not be squandered.

Inheritance is the key word in the Book of Joshua. “Inheritance” is found 60 times—more than in any other book in the Bible. In Chapter 13, God commands Joshua to divide the land for an inheritance unto the other nine and a half tribes on the western side of Jordan (13:6-8). The Lord had said in 13:1, “there remaineth yet *very much* land to be possessed.”

Special Reward For Caleb's Faithfulness

14:6-15 is the inheritance God gave to Caleb. He was forty years old at Kadesh Barnea, but now he was eighty-five. God had kept him young and at full physical strength (v7-11). His brethren, the other ten spies, had made the hearts of Israel to faint and turn back at Kadesh, but Caleb “*wholly followed the Lord.*” This is the reason rewards will differ in heaven. Some people are faithful to the end and some are not, even discouraging others from going on with God. Caleb wanted Hebron for his inheritance, for this was the burial place of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the fathers to whom God had made the covenant and promises of receiving the land of Canaan.

Inheritance of Judah

Chapter 15:1-15 is the inheritance given to the tribe of Judah. Verses 16-19 give special tribute to a woman named Achsah. Achsah shows the influence a wife has upon her husband. In verse 18, she “moved” her husband to ask for the “upper and nether springs.” This speaks of the double portion of the Spirit. Many actions of a man are the result of the urgings or advice of his wife. A wife has the power to encourage or discourage her husband with respect to spiritual matters. The quality of a wife will determine the quality of the ministry. Wives, in what direction will you move your husband?

Chapters 16-17 concern the inheritance for Ephraim and Manasseh, and Chapters 18-19 the inheritance for the remaining seven tribes. In 18:1 the tabernacle was first set up in Shiloh. It remained here until the time of Samuel, when it was overrun by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4; Jer. 7:12; Psa. 78:59-64).

Passivity—The Reason Most People Do Not Receive Their Inheritance

18:3 - “How long are ye *slack* to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?” Seven tribes had not yet received their inheritance (v2), for there were many enemy strongholds and “pockets of resistance” in the territory which Israel *ignored*. Most were lazy and had settled for coexistence with their enemies. Passivity, compromise, and an attitude that “someday I will get down to business” are the issues that keep so many from receiving their inheritance, yet God has much more for us if we will apply ourselves. We need violence of spirit (Mt.11:12, Lk.16:16).

The Other Seven Tribes Receive the Lot of Their Inheritance

From 18:4 to 19:51, Joshua, Eleazar the priest, and the heads of Israel divided up the land for the other seven tribes. This was done “before the Lord.” God determined the exact location and the amount of territory each tribe would possess (See 18:10; 19:49-51).

- Judah's portion was in the south (18:5).
- Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) was in the north (18:5).
- The Levites had no land (18:7). They lived in designated cities among the tribes.
- Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh had already received their inheritance, east of Jordan (18:7).

The Seven Tribes:

- Benjamin (18:11-28), Simeon (19:1-9), Zebulun (19:10-16), Issachar (19:17-23), Asher (19:24-31), Naphtali (19:32-39), Dan (19:40-48). The tribe of Dan was the last to have his inheritance (see Judges 18:1). This tribe was unsettled and was still wandering years later. They ventured to the extreme north looking for additional territory, to *Laish* (Jud.18:1-31). This tribe gave themselves over to idolatry. Dan is not mentioned in Revelation. Dan was born of envy (Gen. 30:1-6) and produced bad fruit. Works born of envy do not last long or bear eternal fruit. Simeon had no separate land of his own. He was *mingled* amongst Judah, especially in the south. He is governed by the prophecy of Jacob—Genesis 49:7. Simeon and Levi were *scattered* in Israel.

THE LAND OF INHERITANCE DIVIDED UP

Gilgal - where they crossed Jordan, and were circumcised

Shiloh - where the tabernacle was set up

Dan - an unsettled rebellious tribe who later went north and settled there, far from Zion

Mt. Zion - (rest) the ultimate destination. It remained still unconquered until it was subdued in David's time.



God Chooses Our Inheritance For Us

The supreme lesson we learn in these final chapters of Joshua is that “the Lord shall choose our inheritance for us” (Psa. 47:4). God determined the territorial boundaries of each tribe, but even more importantly—He chooses our boundary lines as well. Our inheritance is *people* (Psa. 2:8) and specific *places*. God selects for us the countries we minister in, the mission fields, and the people He has chosen for us. Therefore we should ask God—*In what places and to whom have you called me?* We cannot presume to go anywhere we wish or take an inheritance that does not belong to us (Dt. 2:4,5).

Final Warnings of Joshua to Israel

In Chapter 23, Joshua gives his final exhortations to the people of God. He warns them not to turn aside from following Him. They are not even to *mention* the names of the gods of the land or serve them in any way. God's people are not to learn the ways of the unbeliever or marry them. If they compromise, they will be ensnared by the powers of evil and vexed until they perish from the land. The same God who intended such good for them will turn and do them evil (v15,16; 24:20).

The people are warned: “put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord” (24:23). Strange gods are *other loves* people cherish and give themselves to. All inordinate affection must be cleansed from our hearts or we will be deflected from the right path.

Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who had overlived Joshua. These had known and seen all the supernatural works of the Lord (24:31), but the next generation *quickly* turned away from God. The same thing has happened in our times. Today's younger generation has not seen the mighty power of God. They too need to see God's majesty and have their own firsthand experience with Christ. Let us pray for a new visitation from heaven for the youth of today.

Joshua Did Not Bring Israel into Full Rest

Paul makes it very clear in Hebrews 4:6-10 that Joshua [Jesus] did not bring them into rest. There were many pockets of resistance left in the land, representing compromise. Israel did not subdue all their enemies. Moreover, Zion, which was their ultimate destination, was still held by the Jebusites. It was David, nearly 400 years later, who conquered Zion and brought Israel into rest. David warned his own generation in Psalm 95 not to harden their hearts as Israel did in the wilderness (Psa. 95:7-11). David had to challenge the people of his own times to not be slack but to press in and conquer the final stronghold of Zion. Too many people allow discouragement to stop them. They harden their hearts and neglect to lay hold of the promises. Truly there remains a further *rest* for the people of God.

Joshua Does Not Appoint a Successor

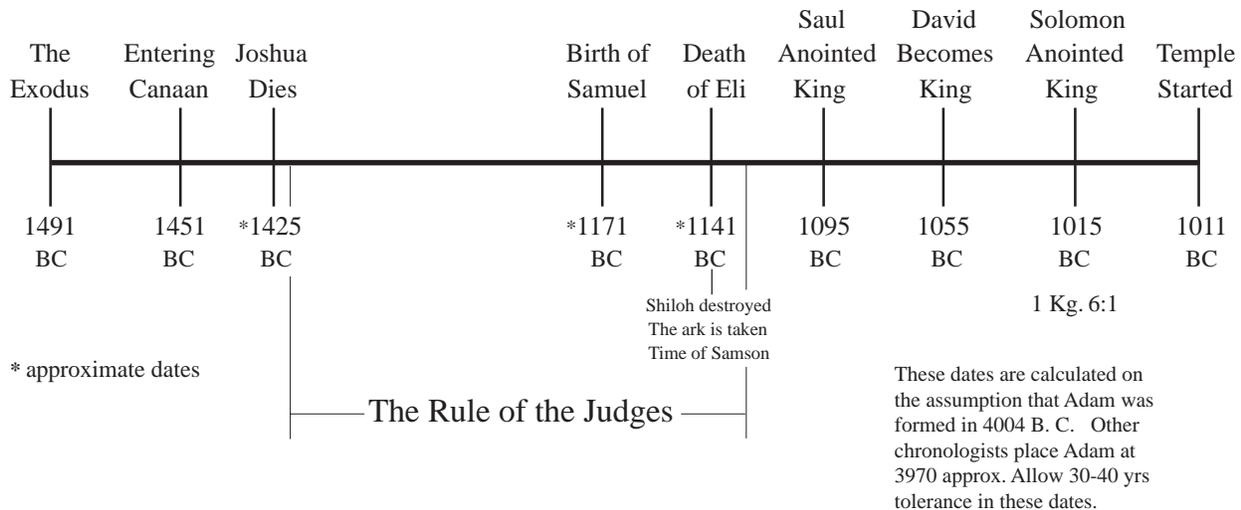
As Joshua passes off the scene, we are struck with a stunning observation. Joshua did not appoint a successor. How opposite of Moses, who had carefully enquired of God for a leader to care for the congregation in his absence—that they “be not as sheep having no shepherd” (Num. 27:15-23). After Joshua's passing, there was no leader over the nation and “every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” From Joshua's death until the birth of Samuel was the period of the Judges, about 350 years. This was a time of terrible confusion, disorder, and anarchy for the kingdom of Israel who had settled in the land of promise.

Summary of the Book of Joshua

- The Book of Joshua is a book of inheritance. “Inheritance” is mentioned 60 times. Inheritance is twofold: The Lord Himself is our inheritance, and then God wants to give us “a people for an inheritance.” Thus, our inheritance is spiritual. The enemies we have to battle against are also spiritual—reasonings, ideas, imaginations, fears, pride, evil spirits, and other bondages within. To inherit the full presence of God, these enemies must be driven out of our personal lives and conquered. Also, we have to drive these enemies out of the people God gives us for an inheritance. Our inheritance is spiritual, our enemies are spiritual, and our weapons are spiritual as well.
- The crossing of Jordan signified to Israel the end of the wilderness and the commencement of entering their inheritance. For us, Jordan represents the old nature being dealt with (Romans 6:6), and walking in newness of life. Then we have new power over our enemies and evil spirits. To come to our Jordan, however, we must *first* pass our wilderness trials and tests.
- Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh did not want to go over Jordan. They did not want to die to their old carnal nature. They wanted to stay on the eastern side of Jordan because it was suitable for cattle ... for material, financial blessing. These represent borderline, carnal believers. They had no interest in going to Zion into rest, or having the intimate presence of the Lord there.
- Following the circumcision at Gilgal (after crossing Jordan), there is a dissecting, part by part, of our inner life. Israel had to drive out 31 kings. These represent ruling lords of the self-life that must be slain by the Sword. Ultimately, the goal is to move on to Mount Zion, God's rest.
- There was *very much land* yet to be possessed, but God's people were slack to go and possess it (13:1, 18:2,3). Passivity has always been a major problem, even for the redeemed. The people were very content to coexist with their enemies. Thus, they compromised and never entered full rest. Rest (at Mount Zion) represents a reaching of our destination, coming into glory, and being fully established in our spiritual life and calling.
- It is God who chooses our inheritance for us. Joshua, Eleazar, and the heads of Israel divided up the land, but only at God's direction. God chooses *where* we minister and to *whom* we minister. Some tribes had their inheritance close to Zion, and some were at a far distance. God determines our eternal lot of inheritance in heaven according to what is in our hearts. In Revelation 14:1-5, some are close to the Lamb on heavenly Mount Zion and some are not. Only those who have “wholly followed the Lord” will be *with* the Lamb on Zion's holy mountain (Rev.14:4).
- In actuality, Joshua did not bring Israel into rest. That generation did not fully drive out the inhabitants of the land. Instead they embraced their gods, intermarried with the heathen, and quickly turned away from the Lord. The Book of Judges deals with this period of anarchy and confusion. Joshua did not appoint a successor, or ask God for one.
- Most of all, Israel had not apprehended Zion, the holy mountain spoken of when they crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 15:17). Zion was their ultimate destination. It is the place of God's rest forever. Zion was God's habitation—the fullness of His glory. It would take another 400 years before David (the man after God's own heart) captured Zion, and brought Israel into full rest and glory.

THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Ussher's Chronology calculates that Judges covers a period of 305 years. It starts at about the death of Joshua and goes to the time of Samson. The book is not in chronological order. Perhaps chapters 1-16 are somewhat in order, but chapters 17-21 go back several hundred years to about the time of chapter 1. Samson, the last judge, probably lived in Eli / Samuel's time during the Philistine era.



Date and Authorship

The author of Judges must have been writing *after* the reign of the kings had begun. In retrospect, he states on four occasions: “In those days there was no king in Israel.” It is also evident that the book was written after the ark was removed from Shiloh (18:31). However, the mention of the Jebusites as dwelling in Jerusalem “unto this day” (1:21) reveals that it was written *before* David's accession to the throne, for David dispossessed the Jebusites and captured Zion in the eighth year of his reign. Therefore, in all probability the author was Samuel the prophet. The Book of Ruth was originally part of the same scroll, making Samuel the author of both Judges and Ruth.

The Theme—Failure Through Compromise

After the death of Joshua, there was still a sense of godliness among the people. In 1:1, Israel asked the Lord, “Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first?” A trademark of the godly is that they always enquire of the Lord before making decisions. One of the sure signs of backsliding is when a person decides that *he knows what he is doing*. Yet Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites (1:21); neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean (1:27); neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites (1:29); neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron (1:30); and Asher (1:31), Naphtali (1:33), and Dan (1:34) did not drive out their enemies.

“I Will Not Fight For You Anymore”

2:1-3 - If we do not drive out the enemies (or deal with the bondages in our lives), there comes a time when God says—“I will not help you anymore; you will keep your habits and sins.” God said, “If you won't destroy these idols, neither will I”— they will be “thorns and snares to you” (v3). It is a solemn thing when God will not give us victory anymore (Isa. 55:6). This is the reason the psalmist cried, “Let not sin have dominion over me” (Psa.119:133). While Joshua was alive the people served the Lord, and even during the years of the elders who out-lived Joshua; but when a third generation came along, they forsook the Lord (2:6-15). Therefore, God has no grandchildren.

Sinfulness — Suffering — Supplication — Salvation

Judges 2:11-19 is a capsule of Israel's history. This cycle repeated itself over and over again. Israel sinned. Therefore, God in His mercy delivered the people into the hands of their enemies, who mightily oppressed them. The terrible affliction softened their hard hearts, and they returned to the Lord. Then God raised them up judges (deliverers or saviors) to deliver them. However, it was not long before they drifted away from God and the cycle started all over again.

- 1.) Sinfulness — Departure from the Lord, serving other gods
- 2.) Suffering — Servitude and oppression by enemies God raised up and sent against them
- 3.) Supplication — Repentance and returning to the Lord
- 4.) Salvation — Saviors or judges God raised up to deliver His people

God Raises Up Enemies to Vex His Backslidden People

3:7-8 - “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord ... Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and HE sold them into the hand of ... the king of Mesopotamia.”

3:12 - “And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel.”

4:1 - “And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord ... and the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan...”

6:1 “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.”

10:6 “And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim and Ashtaroth ... v7 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and HE sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the Ammonites.

13:1 “And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord: and the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Philistines forty years.”

God Fights for Us When We Live Right

“When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov.16:7). Are we getting the message of Judges? Terrorism is not the real problem today! God is permitting evil people to chastise His own people who are not living right! Israel is surrounded by enemies but her heart still *rejects* the only solution—the Prince of Peace. Those enemies are there to help her turn back to the Lord—and the pressure is going to get greater. Many Christian nations are being infiltrated by evil men who are planning their downfall. These are instruments of judgment who are sent to *wake up* a backslidden Church. Thus, in every generation God must raise up a deliverer! The deliverer God used for the last generation will not suffice for this one. After Luther, Wesley, and the other reformers died, the Church went off course and lost its testimony. Today, we need a new deliverer!

The Judges (or deliverers) in this book ruled certain *sections* of Israel. In other words, they did not rule the whole nation. They were governors as well, and some of them lived also at the same time. Thus, the book is not in perfect chronological order, especially chapters 17-21. Chronologically, these chapters would belong at the beginning of the book.

The Thirteen Judges—The Men God Used

1.) Othniel (3:7-11) - “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him” (v10). When the Spirit of the Lord came upon someone, they *said* or *did* something. This expression is found six times in Judges. God used Othniel to free Israel of its oppressors. Othniel lived in Joshua's time (Josh.15:16,17; Jud.1:12,13).

2.) Ehud (3:12-31) - After 18 years of servitude to Moab and Ammon for their sins, Israel cried to the Lord. God sent them Ehud, a left-handed Benjamite who assassinated the evil king of Moab by shrewdness. Then he led Israel to victory. After this, the land had rest for 80 years.

3.) Shamgar (3:31) - God used Shamgar to slay 600 Philistines with an oxgoad. God can use any instrument He wishes to bring deliverance. He used the jawbone of a donkey in the hand of Samson to bring deliverance. He used a nail in the hand of woman to judge an enemy general (4:16-21).

4.) Deborah (4:4 - 5:31) - She was a prophetess. Barak, the Israelite general, would not go into battle without her because she had the word of the Lord (4:6-10). Barak knew if he had divine instructions, he would win the battle, for the battle is spiritual. God can use women in the ministry.

5.) Gideon (6:1 - 8:32) - Though poor, and lacking self-confidence, God reassured him, saying, “Thou mighty man of valor” (6:12). God's Word is creative! After that saying, Gideon became mighty. God is simply looking for *a willing instrument*. Using only 300 men with trumpets and lamps in their hands, God gave a mighty victory against the Midianites. God sent confusion into the enemy ranks so that they destroyed one another (7:20-22). Later the tribe of Ephraim chided sharply with Gideon because they were not participants in the battle (7:24 to 8:3). To quell their jealousy, Gideon said, “I have done nothing compared to what you did; you captured the two princes of the Midianites, the two main instigators.” In order to have peace, Gideon had to take the lower place. With this saying he pacified their big, sensitive egos. It is amazing what the right words can do.

But Gideon had a weakness—he always looked for *signs* (6:17, 36-40). Later in life and after many victories, he took gold and made an ephod (8:27). The ephod was part of the clothing of the high priest, and was only to be worn and used by the anointed priest. The ephod was used *for guidance*. It contained two stones, the urim and thummin. One stone meant yes and the other meant no. When Gideon put the ephod that he made in his city, Ophrah, all Israel paid homage to it. It became a snare and idol. Israel came to worship it and ask guidance of it. We must be very careful on the matter of guidance. Counselling and guidance are God appointed offices. We cannot assume this office if God has not given it to us. Otherwise, we will receive a *counterfeit* spirit of counsel. Sometimes people will do anything to find out their future. Gideon probably made the ephod just like the high priest's, but it was *an imitation* of the original and God was not in it. Be careful of promise boxes. You cannot pick a verse and continue to select until you find the one you want. This is false guidance.

6.) Abimelech (8:33 - 9:56) This man was not a true judge set up by God. He joins the ranks of men like Korah, Judas, Absalom, and Dan—who all became apostate. He grasped the throne by slaying all his brothers, the sons of Gideon. The men of Shechem, who had allied themselves with him for personal gain, perished by the hand of Abimelech after they turned against him (9:56,57). These men received poetic justice (cf. Jud.1:5-7).

13 Tribes - one was a rebel - Dan

13 Judges - one was a rebel - Abimelech

13 Apostles - one was a rebel - Judas

12 is the number of government

13 is the number of rebellion

7.) Tola (10:1-2) - All that is said of Tola is that he “rose to defend Israel,” that he was from the tribe of Issachar, and that he judged Israel 23 years. It is an honor to have your name recorded in God's Word. Enoch, too, is only mentioned in a few passages, yet he was a very great man.

8.) Jair (10:3-5) - Jair has only three verses accorded to him. He was from Gilead, which is on the wrong side of Jordan. Sometimes God has honorable men in places that are not very honorable. Jair had thirty sons, *each one having a city*. May each of our spiritual children grow into maturity and have “authority over cities” during the Millennial Age (cf. Lk.19:17-19).

9.) Jephthah (11:1 - 12:7) - This man (along with Samson, Barak, and Gideon) is listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:32. The son of a harlot, Jephthah was a man of great gifts. His brethren, who had rejected him earlier in life, looked to him for help when in trouble and he delivered them. Surely, a man's gift makes room for him (Prov.18:16). Afterwards he made a terrible vow to the Lord, which he had to keep (11:31-40). Let *God* be the one who initiates vows, not ourselves.

10) Ibzan (12:8-10) - He came from Bethlehem and died there after judging Israel seven years. It seems that his greatest contribution to the Word of God is that he paid special attention to whom his children married. Evidently he did not want his children to inter-marry with close relatives. The spouse God chooses will have different strengths and will often be *opposite* in temperament, but alike in vision and purpose. Let us *pray* that our children marry the right person.

11) Elon (12:11,12) - Elon was born in Zebulun and died there after judging Israel ten years. According to Judges 5:14, they that “handle the pen” come from Zebulun. Writers can change society and bring deliverance by the written page. It is the truth that sets people free. Wycliffe translated the Word of God into the language of the people, and the result was revival. Never underestimate the power of words—whether spoken or *written*!

12) Abdon (12:13-15) - This judge had 40 sons and 30 [grandsons], all who seemed to be men of distinction as indicated by the colts they rode. Nothing extraordinary is said of Abdon, for according to the historian Josephus, “it was a time of relative peace which warranted no glorious acts.” This was short-lived, because Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, and *God* began to stir up the Philistines and send them against His people (13:1).

13) Samson (13:1–16:31) - Samson was the most famous of all the judges. He was strong physically but weak morally. Real strength is the ability to rule the passions (Prov.16:32). An angel appeared to the parents of Samson, announcing the birth (13:2-25). In verse 8, they asked, “How do you want us to bring up this child?” It is good to ask God how to raise our children. Then they asked the angel his name (v17-18), but he refused to give his name or receive any honors. Any spirit or angel that draws attention to itself is *not* of God. Any manifestation that draws attention to God is of God.

Judges 14:1-4 tells us that Samson married a Philistine woman. God sometimes uses a man's weaknesses for His own purposes, but Samson's love for women (and walking after the sight of his eyes) was *forming a pattern* that was going to destroy him later. Patterns are very gradual, but they take us somewhere. The woman he chose was a very nagging and aggravating person (14:16,17). Then Samson went to other women, and finally to Delilah. We are forming patterns in our own lives as well. By looking at our past, we can know our future. Although God used Samson to bring deliverance from the Philistines (15:15), he himself was a captive of manipulating women. Samson knew his weakness, but he did not plead with God for grace to be preserved from these human snares.

Samson repented after losing both eyes. At his death he inflicted more damage to the kingdom of the enemy than he did during his whole lifetime (16:23-31). It is very important *how* a person dies. Jesus absolutely destroyed the kingdom of Satan by the way He died — Christ died as a perfect Lamb. If Samson had “died to self” during his life, he would have abolished the Philistines.

Israel's Early History in Canaan Chapters 17–21

Samson lived in the time of Eli and Samuel, in the Philistine era. But chapters 17-21 go back to the time of the early chapters of Judges. These events probably took place just before and not long after Joshua's death. Chapters 17-18 record the straying of the tribe of Dan.

Joshua laid out the boundary lines for the tribe of Dan (Josh.19:40-48). But because the Amorites pressed them back into the hill country (Jud.1:34-36) and the Philistines occupied the Mediterranean seaboard, the majority of the Danites migrated *north* to Laish. (See map, p.104). Here, the tribe went into gross idolatry, settling further from Mount Zion than any of the other tribes. Some members of the tribe remained *in the original settlement*, with the Philistines as their western neighbors. It was in this region that the stories of Samson, the Danite, had their setting (Jud.13:1).

Chapters 19-21 - Israel had not been in the land of promise very long before there was anarchy, confusion, civil war, and it was unsafe to walk the streets (Jud. 5:6). “In those days there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” A man and his wife were traveling through Gibeah in the tribe of Benjamin, needing overnight lodging. After an old man invited them into his house, the men of the city came and took the wife of the guest by force, raping and abusing her all night, so that she died. When this was published throughout the nation, the whole tribe of Benjamin sided with these evil men, and refused to turn them over to the authorities. This resulted in a civil war, and virtually the whole tribe of Benjamin was killed. What was the consequence of not driving out the enemies that were in the land?—They were becoming like them. Israel had rejected the Lord from being their king and now there was sin, war, and confusion.

Summary of the Book of Judges

- Israel did not deal with their enemies. They settled for compromise and co-existence.
- God has no grandchildren. Every generation needs to have its own experience with God.
- If we do not deal with our sins and bondages, they will overtake us.
- The land of promise soon became a land of evil, a land of civil war, through disobedience.
- When God's people turn their backs on Him, He raises up enemies to get their full attention.
- Remember the cycle in Judges: Sin - Suffering - Supplication - Salvation.
- Samson, the best-known deliverer, experienced the cycle himself.
- Terrorism is not the real problem today; terrorists are instruments to chastise backslidden people.
- When God's people live right, He will fight for them.
- The real problem is *not* Satan or enemies. The real problem is Judges 2:19 — “They ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.” The real problem is the need for a new heart, and I am not talking about unbelievers here—I am talking about the redeemed.

THE BOOK OF RUTH

Time

Chronologically, the Book of Ruth took place during the time of the judges. Boaz, who later married Ruth, was the son of Salmon and Rahab (Mt.1:5). Boaz was only the second generation from Joshua and must have lived in the *early* period of the judges. (Rahab – See Heb.11:31; Jas. 2:25).

Background and Circumstances

Because of a severe famine, Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons left Bethlehem, the land of their inheritance, and went to Moab for refuge. Moab is just across the Dead Sea. They thought it would only be a short “sojourn.” But they “continued,” “dwelled,” and “died” there too. Only Naomi was left. A poor economy must *not* be the deciding factor for relocating. The cares of this life prompted the family to move to a strange land and held them there until they died. Elimelech and his two sons died on the wrong side of Jordan, out of the land of their inheritance.

The Test

Before the sons died, they had married women from Moab. When Naomi, hearing that the famine was over, decided to return to Bethlehem, her two daughters-in-law wished to return with her. Naomi was such a wonderful person that these young women wanted to remain with her and take care of her. But Naomi put them to the test. She said, “Go back home to your mothers and may God grant you *rest*.” Rest signified marriage (Ru.1:7-9). Repeatedly Naomi said, “Turn again” – go back home. With many tears and much emotion, Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth *clave* unto her (v14,15). Ruth was going to follow Naomi until the day she died; but Orpah returned to her gods and her old lifestyle. Tears, emotions, and promises do not impress God. He looks for commitment (v14-18). Ruth could not have known the rewards that awaited her for forsaking home, land, and family to fully follow the Lord. Ruth received something that no other woman had in her generation—she became part of the Messianic line.

Ruth had many tests to pass. Having forsaken her homeland, she now returned with Naomi to Bethlehem and went to work to support herself and her mother-in-law. So many who are in similar circumstances expect others to take care of them, but Ruth humbled herself and went as a “gleaner” to the field. A gleaner was a poor person who picked up what was left over when a field was harvested. Ruth happened to find herself in the field of Boaz, a close relative of Elimelech. Boaz was very interested to know to whom she belonged. (See Chapter 2 of Ruth).

The Reward

In Chapter 3, Naomi wanted Ruth to be married and find rest (Ru. 3:1). Under Levitical law, when a man died childless, his brother or a close relative was to marry the widow to raise up children so that the name of the deceased brother would continue (cf. Deut. 25:5-10). Naomi gave complete instructions to Ruth; and Boaz performed the duties and married Ruth (Chapter 4).

Humble, hard working, and loyal, Ruth became the wife of Boaz, the near kinsman of Elimelech. Their son was Obed; and Obed's son was Jesse, the father of King David. Thus, Ruth came into the Messianic line. God rewards faithfulness. The hallmark of those who are the closest to the Lord in heaven is this: “They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth” (Rev.14:4, Ru.1:16,17).

THE BOOKS OF I–II SAMUEL

These two books were originally one scroll. Although named after Samuel, he was not the author but only *a contributor* to part of the book. The majority of events took place after Samuel's death (1 Sam. 25:1). There were several recording prophets who lived at this time. 1 Chronicles 29:29 mentions “the chronicles of Samuel the seer, the chronicles of Nathan the prophet, and the chronicles of Gad the seer.” It is conjectured that after David's death (some time after 2 Samuel 24), some inspired prophet of God took the writings and accounts of these other men (such as Samuel, Nathan, and Gad), and compiled them altogether into one book and named the book in honor of Samuel. The Books of I–II Samuel cover primarily the lives of three main characters:

General Outline for I – II Samuel

1. The Life of Samuel 1 - 25
2. The Life of Saul 9 - 31
3. The Life of David 16 - 2 Samuel 24

Theme and Summary

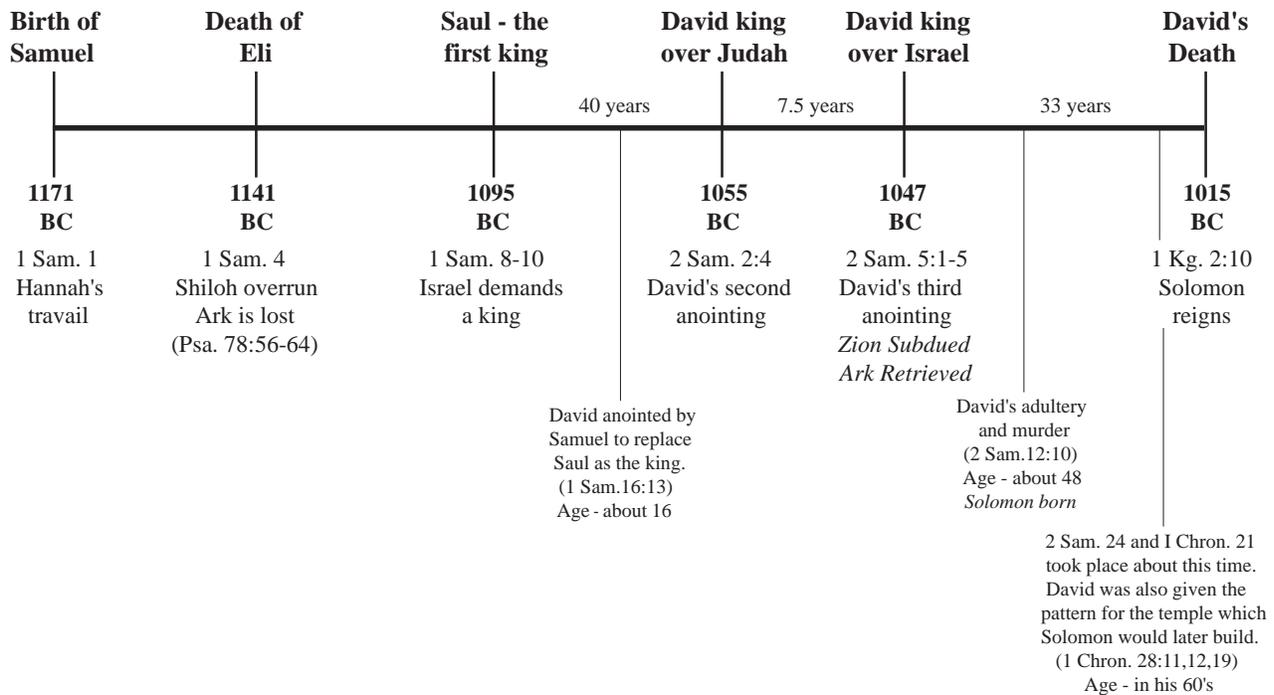
Israel had entered the land of inheritance several hundred years earlier. They had encountered a major civil war, and right up to the time of Samuel the enemies of the land were still oppressing them. Through neglect, compromise, and numerous rebellions, Israel had not yet come into rest or reached the destination of their journey. The ark of the covenant was still in Shiloh, but the final resting place was to be at Mount Zion in Jerusalem. This was to be the dwelling place of God. Having been ruled by judges for many years, Israel now demanded a king to rule them, just like all the other nations. But having a king was not the remedy for their troubles. The Lord had been their king from the beginning, yet they had never submitted to His rulership. Nonetheless, God gave Israel their request for a king, a new regime which proved to be a miserable disaster.

After God removed the first king, Saul, He raised up David to be their king. Being “a man after God's own heart,” David brought Israel into rest, unto their final destination at Mount Zion. This little hill of Zion became the holiest place in all of Israel because God localized His presence here. For over forty years during the Old Testament, the ark of the covenant rested in a tabernacle without a veil, where everyone who had clean hands and a pure heart could enter. David wrote many Psalms about the holy hill of Zion, and indeed became the priest / king who reigned upon Mount Zion. He was *a figure* of the coming Christ who would rend the veil in the temple and beckon all the redeemed to enter the fullness of His presence.

Types, shadows, and figures are limited. They are not precise. Although we see David as a type of Christ in many aspects, he later fell into adultery and then murder. Thus, his foreshadowing of Christ stops here! Types are only intended to give *an outline* of something else. This is another important rule of hermeneutics. After David's adultery and act of murder in 2 Samuel 11, we see about fifteen judgments upon his life. In fact, these judgments upon him and his household continued until his death. Therefore, from 2 Samuel chapter 11 until the end of the book, we see severe punishments in the life of David. Nevertheless, out of his grievous downfall David wrote many of his beautiful Psalms of repentance and restoration.

Chronology for I-II Samuel

This book opens with the birth of Samuel. The era of the rule of the Judges was coming to an end, and the beginning of the reign of kings was about to begin. Eli the high priest was old and backslidden, indicative of the spiritual condition of the nation. Eli died upon hearing that the tabernacle in Shiloh had been destroyed and that the ark of God was confiscated by the Philistines. Meanwhile, Samuel continued to grow into a mighty prophet. After Samuel led Israel to repentance, God delivered the nation from the Philistines. Later, Israel pleaded for a king and God gave them Saul for 40 years. During Saul's infamous reign, David was anointed to replace Saul, and for about 13 years Saul attempted to kill David. After Saul's death, David was anointed a second time and became king over Judah only. Seven years later he became king of the whole nation after being anointed a third time. Then David subdued Zion and brought Israel into rest. After numerous successes, David grew lax and fell into adultery and then murder. For this treacherous sin, the sword of God judged his house virtually until the day of his death. Yet, with his repentance, he had restoration and victory.



Brief Overview of I–II Samuel

Hannah: Chapter 1

- Hannah was barren, but Peninnah had many children who were insignificant.
- God allowed Hannah to be barren a long time to bring about a total commitment in her life.
- Before opening her womb, He wanted Hannah to vow to give her son completely to God.
- Even Eli the priest misjudged Hannah as she prayed and assumed she was drunken with wine.
- Instead of being *offended*, she accepted a word from God through this imperfect shepherd.
- Therefore, faith entered her heart and she went home and conceived Samuel.
- Peninnah's children have no honorable mention, but Hannah's fruit [Samuel] abides forever.
- In her song of praise to God (1 Sa. 2:1-10) the theme is—"The underdogs have risen to the top."
- Often those who have quick success (and "mushroom" overnight) do not last very long.

Eli: Chapters 1–4

- Eli and his sons were priests; the tabernacle was at Shiloh, but Eli's sons were evil (1:3, 2:12).
- Eli's sons were immoral; he reproved them but took no action to remove them (2:22-25).
- God rebuked Eli for “honoring his sons above Him” (2:29), something we must never do.
- Judgment would fall upon Eli, his sons, and his future descendents (2:27-36, 3:14).
- Meanwhile, young Samuel was being trained by Eli in an ungodly atmosphere (2:18,26, 3:1).
- Eli's eyesight was dim. God's light was going out, an indication of the nation's state (3:1-3).
- The Philistines destroyed Shiloh's tabernacle, took the ark, and killed Eli's sons (4:1-22).
- Eli had been the spiritual leader of Israel forty years, from age 58 to 98 (4:15-18).
- The ark of God was lost, and the glory of God had departed from Israel (4:21,22).
- A backslidden ministry always produces a backslidden nation that is ripened for judgment.

Samuel: Chapters 1–25

- Samuel was born as a result of a barren but devout mother who made a vow to God.
- As a young boy, God trained him to hear His voice (3:1-10). God can speak to children.
- Samuel faithfully declared everything God said to him, thus, he grew and prospered (3:11-21). (If we are not faithful to what God shows us, He will not show us any more) (cf. Mk. 4:24,25).
- Samuel developed into a national prophet and was highly respected for his accuracy (3:18-20).
- The prophet Samuel led Israel to repentance, and then God fought for them (7:3-14).
- The hand of the Lord was against the Philistines *all the days of Samuel* (7:13).
- Even though Samuel was godly, his sons were not (8:1-3). Everyone has a choice to make.
- Israel hated living by faith; they wanted a king they could *see* (8:5-7). God was insulted for He was their king, but Israel had rejected Him. Samuel was jealous for God and was also displeased.
- In His wrath, God gave Israel a king (Hos.13:9-11). He gives us the desires of our hearts too. This is the reason we must have pure hearts because God will give us what we want.
- Samuel was a turning point in Israel's history. Not only did he mark the beginning of the reign of kings, he also raised up many prophets. When Samuel was a boy, the word of the Lord was very precious [or scarce] (3:1); but when he was old, there were many prophets in the land (19:20).
- He is the beginning of the long line of writing prophets (See Acts 3:24, Heb.11:32).
- Samuel was a prophet, priest, intercessor, kingmaker, and one God listened to (Psa. 99:6).

Saul: Chapters 9–31

- Saul was the people's choice, not God's. He was replacing God as king (8:7).
- He looked good to the flesh, being “head and shoulders” above the others (9:2).
- Even when God warned them of the coming misery, still they wanted a king (8:9-22).
- The demand for a king fulfills Deuteronomy 17:14, foretold hundreds of years earlier.
- Virtually every denomination or Christian institute eventually wants to become like the world.
- Saul was “turned into another man” when he was anointed (10:6,9). But he “received the grace of God in vain” because later he was overtaken with an evil spirit (see 2 Cor. 6:1).
- Every leader is tested to see if he will *continue* in his ministry and position (13:8-14). v13,14 Saul failed by intruding into the priest's office. To *maintain* our blessings, we must be obedient.
- Saul only performed *part* of God's will. For his incomplete obedience, he bargained with God by offering sacrifices, but God would not accept it (ch.15). God said, “To obey is better than sacrifice” (15:22). Saul, having rejected God's Word, God rejects Saul from being king (15:26).
- God anointed David to replace Saul, and an evil spirit troubled Saul (16:13-14, 18:10). That evil spirit was *the spirit of jealousy*, which is God's curse upon a backslider.
- From henceforth, God would use jealous Saul to *refine* David. Young David was now hunted by Saul, until Saul's death (Chapters 18-31).

David: 1 Samuel 16 – 2 Samuel 24

- David, the man after God's own heart, is first mentioned in 1 Samuel 16. He was about age 16.
- Samuel was to anoint one of Jesse's sons, but he selected by “outward appearance” (16:6-13).
- God was still teaching Samuel lessons, even in his old age. Actually, we never stop learning.
- Samuel's anointing enabled David to slay a giant (16:13, 17:48-50).
- The slaying of Goliath made the entire Philistine army flee in terror before Israel (17:51-54).
- David's instant success made Saul jealous (18:6-18). Saul soon became David's worst enemy.
- God was going to use backslidden Saul to refine and prepare David to be the next king. From chapters 18 to 31, Saul is seeking to destroy David, but God is using this very thing to develop godliness, holy dependence, and kingly qualities in David's life. David's life is a pattern for us. We are also called to be “made into kings and priests” (Rev.1:6, 5:10, 20:6; cf 1 Pet. 2:9).

- After Saul's death David was anointed a second time, becoming king of Judah only (2 Sam. 2:4). It is one thing to be *called* to an office, but another thing to be *installed* into that office. David was anointed by Samuel to be king at age 16, but he was *not* the king until age 30.
- After reigning as king over Judah for seven years, David is now anointed a third time. At this point he became the king over the whole nation of Israel (2 Sam. 5:1-5).
- This third anointing gave him power over all his enemies (2 Sam. 7:1, 7:9). First of all he subdued Mount Zion, the final stronghold (2 Sam. 5:6-12). Then he moved the capital city from Hebron to Jerusalem, wherein was Mount Zion. David then brought the ark of the covenant and placed it in a tent [tabernacle] upon Zion's hill. This became the holiest place in all of Israel (2 Sam. 6:12-17, 1 Chron.15:25-29, 16:1). David brought Israel into rest and glory at Mount Zion where God had localized His presence.

- Then David had a terrible fall when he was 48 years old. He fell into adultery and tried to cover his sin by having Bathsheba's husband killed in battle (2 Sam.11). Then David took Bathsheba for his wife. The baby conceived in their adulterous relationship died, and later *Solomon* was born. 15 judgments followed this crime. The sword would never depart from his house (2 Sam.12:10).
- There are a number of reasons David fell into sin:
 - Adultery was in his ancestors, in his bloodline - Rahab and Judah (Gen. 38) are examples.
 - He had been violating God's command not to multiply wives (Deut.17:14-20). v17.
 - David had so many successes that he became overconfident. His spiritual senses became dulled.
 - He had grown lax. He was relaxing when he should have been in battle (2 Sam.11:1,2).
 - A state of mind had come upon him whereby he took whatever he desired (cf. Ecc.2:10).
 - There is a *risk* involved whenever a person has unusual gifts or extraordinary power.
 - Anyone with great power needs the cup of pain or they will soon be overwhelmed with pride.

- From 2 Samuel 12 to 24, David had 15 judgments in his life. First, Bathsheba's baby died. (See 2 Sam.12:24). Then one son (Amnon) molested a half-sister (Tamar), and her brother Absalom murdered him (2 Sam.13). Then Absalom, David's favorite son, led an insurrection and usurped the throne. David was forced to leave Jerusalem, fleeing from his own son (2 Sam.15–18).

- David had accepted God's punishment for his sin and still maintained a victorious life. He wrote many Psalms of repentance and restoration after this, such as Psalm 4, 32, 38, 39, 40, 41, 51, and 103. God had “restored unto him the joy of his salvation.” We will consider this more when we come to the Book of Psalms.

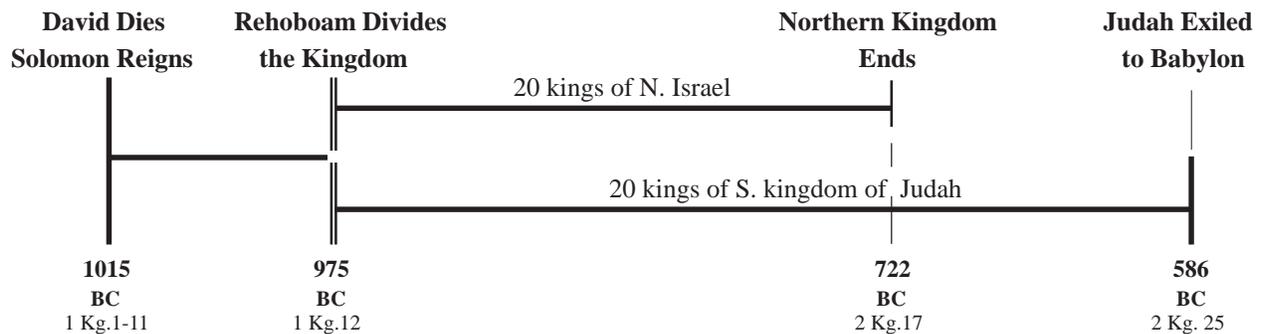
THE BOOKS OF I–II KINGS

Like I-II Samuel, these two books were originally one unit. Internal evidence leads us to believe that there were two authors. Most of the book was written before the Babylonian captivity, with the first author stating that the presence of the ark remained in Solomon's temple “unto this day” (1 Kgs. 8:8)—hardly a statement to make in exile. Jewish tradition says the author was Jeremiah. This is a possibility, but it is not certain. There seems to be another author who completed the book while in Babylonian exile. From 2 Kings 23:25b to the end of the book, these closing chapters are believed to have been written in Babylon (from a viewpoint of looking back). A prophet in Babylon probably completed the book (someone like Ezekiel). These two authors collected their information from a number of other anointed scribes and prophets, and from official records and court annals.

General Outline

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1.) Chapters 1–2 - David's Last Words /
Solomon Becomes King</p> <p>2.) Chapters 3–10 - Reign of Solomon</p> <p>3.) Chapters 11–12 - Division of the Kingdom</p> <p>4.) Chapters 13 on - a. Reigns of 20 kings of N. Israel
b. Reigns of 20 kings of Judah
c. Lives of Elijah and Elisha</p> | <p>See Pages 46-47
for Chronology
and Bar Chart</p> |
|---|---|

Chronology for I–II Kings



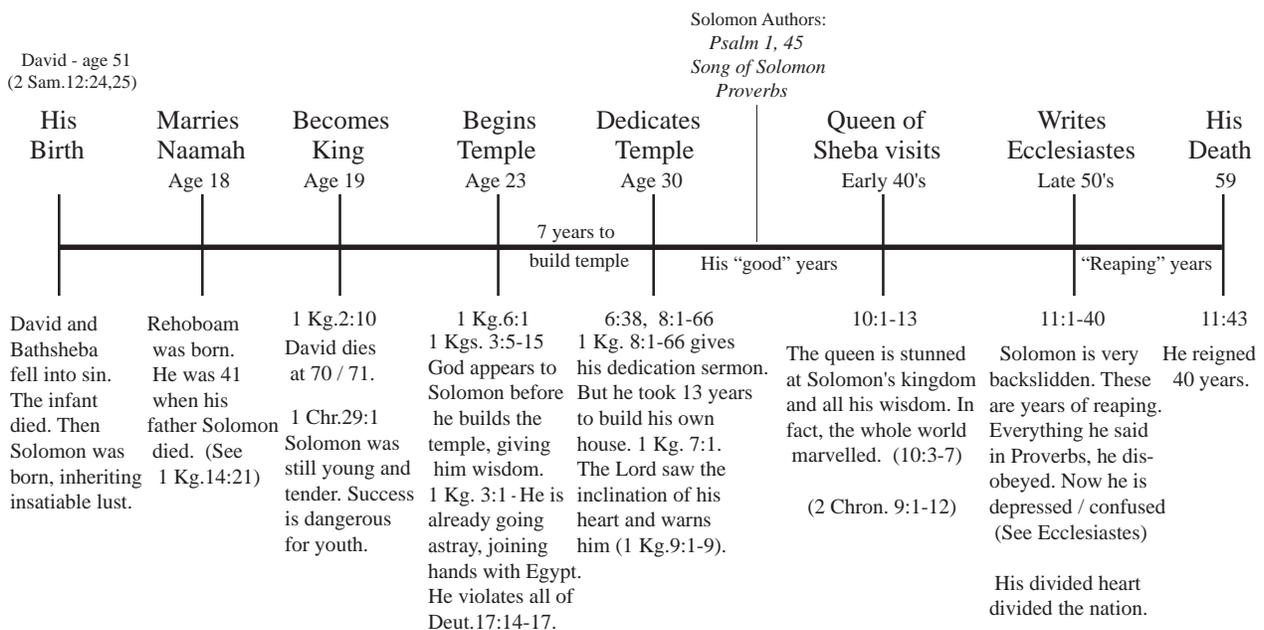
The Reign of Solomon (1 Kings 2–11)

After David’s death (1 Kg. 2:10,11), Solomon became king and reigned forty years (2:12 - 11:43). Solomon is one of the greatest paradoxes in Scripture, for he violated everything he taught. Solomon was born to David and Bathsheba several years after an infamous affair that led to the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba’s first husband (2 Sam.12:24,25). Thus, Solomon received their adulterous nature.

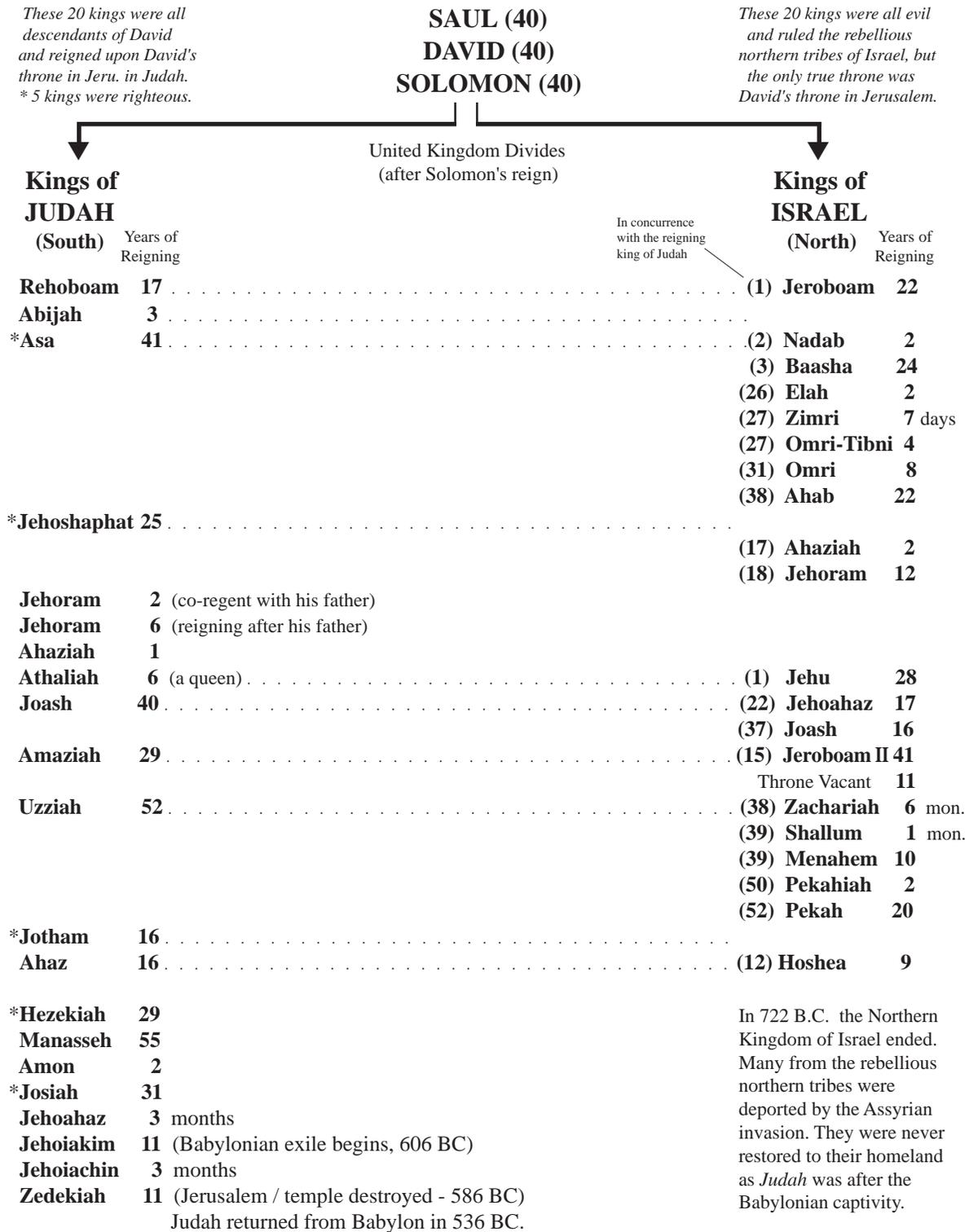
Solomon assumed the throne at age 19, having had little preparation. He would fulfill his own proverb that “an inheritance gained hastily at the beginning is not blessed in the end” (Prov. 20:21). His reign portrayed the glorious rule of Christ in the Millennial Age, for he built the temple and reigned gloriously in Jerusalem during an era of great peace and splendor. On the other hand, Solomon was so double-minded that he actually prefigured the coming Antichrist, for we find the number 666 associated with Solomon's reign (1 Kg.10:14).

Solomon loved the Lord (1 Kg. 3:3), but he also loved many strange women (1 Kgs.11:1). He experimented with everything “under the sun,” an expression he uses 29 times in Ecclesiastes. Solomon was a definite *seeker*. He set himself to acquire all the insight he could in philosophy, mathematics, husbandry, forestry, commerce, mechanics, the history of former ages, the present state of other kingdoms, their laws, customs and policies, and the different temperaments and capacities of human nature. He had a navy and imported exotic birds and animals. He was an architect, building a magnificent temple, palaces, buildings, and aqueducts. He constructed fortresses, stone cities, and chariot towns. He designed and planted huge orchards and gardens and parks. He was a rancher with great herds of sheep, oxen, and horses. His ships brought home gold, ivory, and silver. He was a king, politician, statesmen, diplomat, song writer, musician, prolific writer, proverb maker, and preacher. Yet he was profoundly empty, for the Scripture says, “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways” (Jas.1:8). In addition to all of this, he was married 1,000 times. A man with divided affections would result in a divided nation. For when Solomon died, Israel became divided into two kingdoms—north against south. (See 1 Kings 11:9; 11:30-36; 12:1-19).

Summary of Solomon's Life



From a positive point of view, Solomon typifies the reign of Christ upon earth during the Millennium. He also represents the Church of the last days, for when he took the ark of the covenant from Mount Zion and placed it in the temple he had built, the glory of the Lord filled the temple (1 Kg. 8:1-11). The glory in David's tabernacle represented the Early Church. James confirms this (Ac.15:13-17). But bringing the ark into a much larger temple, a temple where God's wisdom was made known to the whole world, speaks of the end-time Church. Yet the type stops here, for Solomon was also very double minded; and this brought idolatry into the nation that ultimately divided it. Let us now have an overview of the United Kingdom that was broken into North and South after Solomon's reign.



Understanding the Books of I – II Kings

- The time period of the Book of Kings revolves around Solomon's temple. Kings opens with the building and dedication of Solomon's temple, and ends with its destruction in 586 B.C. Thus, Kings covers an era of approximately 400 years. With the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem, the rule of kings came to an end, with Zedekiah being the last king (2 Kg. 25).
- After Solomon's 40 year reign, the United Kingdom of Israel split into North and South. This was a major turning point in Israel's history. From this time on, the northern ten tribes rebelled against the house of Judah. Thus, they separated themselves from the temple, true worship, and the throne of David. They set up their own idolatrous worship and priesthood and turned to gross immorality.
- * ISRAEL was the name of the Northern Kingdom (It was also referred to as Samaria, because that was the capital city; and sometimes it was called "Ephraim" because Ephraim was the chief tribe).
- * JUDAH was the name of the Southern Kingdom. The tribe of Benjamin remained with Judah, as well as the Levites, who were expelled from the rebellious North (1 Kg.12:31, 2 Chr.11:12-15).
- Most of the writing prophets had their ministry during the reign of the kings. For example, Jeremiah had his ministry during the reign of the last five kings of Judah (cf. Jer.1:1-3). Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isa.1:1). The prophet Amos, although he was from Judah, spoke primarily to Northern Israel (Amos 7:10-13). You should read the prophets in conjunction with the reign of the kings. This is critical for interpretation. The Bible is like a puzzle. We need all the pieces of the puzzle to get the whole picture. We will learn far more by studying them side by side. Know which kingdom (north or south, or both) the prophet is speaking to, and know who is reigning on the throne as well as the circumstances surrounding the prophet's message.
- The key to the reign of each king is generally found in the introductory verses, or sometimes when his life is being summed up at the end. "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him." (See 1 Kg.16:30-31, 21:25). "Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him" (1 Kg.12:2, and 2 Chron. 24:2, 24:17-22). Jehoash (or Joash) did right when he was under the influence of a godly counsellor, but when his mentor died, quickly he went astray. Integrity was not in his heart. Uzziah (Azariah) "sought God in the days of Zechariah ... and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper." "But when he was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God..." (2 Kg.14:21, 2 Chron. 26:3-5,16).
- In every one of the lives of the kings we find that there came a test, a "pressure point." During these times of intense pressure, they made mistakes and wrong decisions. Often they turned to the wrong source for help, instead of turning to the Lord. What we do when we are under pressure will determine our character and our destiny. When these tests come, we must drop everything and seek God to be sure we make the right decisions and actions. The purpose for these pressure points is to enable the Lord to show Himself strong on behalf of those who put all their trust in Him (2 Chr.16:9).

The real issue is—Whom do we rely on when we are under pressure? It is very hard to trust the Lord when the pressures come, but real character comes from holding steady and trusting God. Sometimes we are under pressure for years. King Asa was a very good man, but when an enemy came against him, he panicked and turned to a heathen king for help instead of the Lord (2 Chr.16:1-14). Most sins are related to the *fear* of other people. All these things are "written for our learning" as it says in Romans 15:4. Let us avoid much heartache by heeding these invaluable lessons in Kings.

THE BOOKS OF I – II CHRONICLES

First and Second Chronicles were one scroll originally; and the authorship is attributed to Ezra the Scribe. He compiled the Chronicles during the Restoration Period, when the “remnant” had returned from Babylon to Judaea, under Ezra and Zerubbabel. This is made absolutely certain by statements and references in the Chronicles themselves. Ezra's heart burned for purity in the priesthood and for the restoration of worship and the Law of God. Since Ezra was a priest, Chronicles was written from a priestly point of view, whereas Kings is written from a prophet's point of view. Ezra lays great emphasis on the structure of the temple (1 Chron. 22), and upon Israel's ark, and Levites and singers (1 Chron. 13, 15, 16). The thrust of both I and II Chronicles is the prominence given to *the temple* and matters connected with it.

Only the reigns of the kings of Judah are recorded, not the kings of the rebellious Northern kingdom who had drifted into idolatry and false worship. Chronicles gives special notice to the religious revivals under various godly kings like Hezekiah and Josiah. As is natural to a scribe, Ezra frequently acknowledges his sources of reference: (1 Chron. 24:29; 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 24:27; 26:22; 27:7; 32:32; 33:19).

General Outline

FIRST CHRONICLES:

Chapters 1 - 9 The Genealogies

Chapters 10 - 29 The Kingdom of David

SECOND CHRONICLES:

Chapters 1 - 9 Glorious Reign of Solomon

Chapters 10 - 36 The History of Judah
(emphasis on moral revival)

The Theme is The Temple

While much that is contained in Samuel and Kings is repeated or restated in the Chronicles, the Chronicles supply *many omitted details* with respect to the temple. Chapters 11–29 are occupied with the reign of David. But in these nineteen chapters of First Chronicles there is no repeating of David's adventures or of his reign in Hebron, his sin with Bathsheba, or the revolt of Absalom. Instead we are given with great detail—David's abundant preparation of material for the future temple (ch. 22); his preparatory numbering and distributing of the Levites and the priests (ch. 23-24); and his appointment of singers, players and porters (ch. 25-26), all in anticipation of the temple Solomon would later build.

This emphasis on the temple continues in Second Chronicles. Six of the first nine chapters are dedicated to the temple. From chapters 10 to 36, which marks the division of the nation, the northern ten-tribed nation is ignored throughout, as being founded upon apostasy from the nation's true worship as well as from the house of David. It is solely with Judah and Jerusalem that the Chronicles are concerned, because it is that kingdom and city which hold the *temple*. The reigns of Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah are given prominence because of the religious reforms and temple restorations associated with them. Chronicles ends with the decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple after it had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

THE BOOK OF EZRA

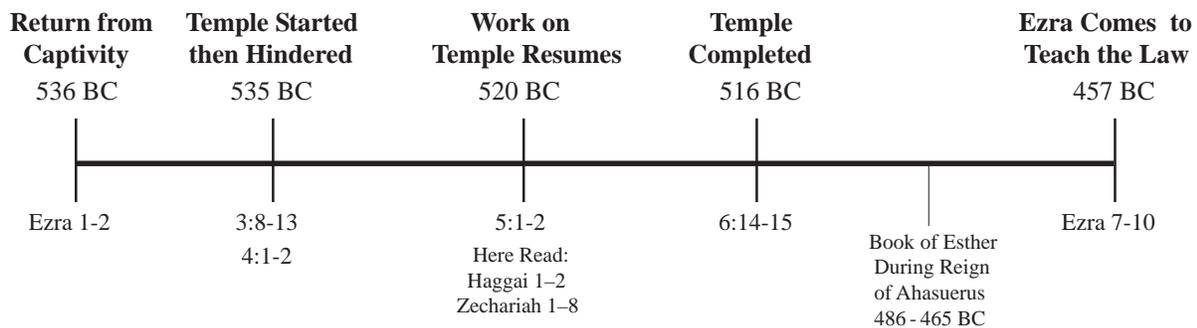
The theme of the Book of Ezra is — “The Rebuilding of the Temple.” Judah had been exiled to Babylon as a punishment for their sins, and Jerusalem and the temple lay in ruins. While they were in captivity, God promised to purge them from idolatry and “give them a heart to know him,” but He also promised to bring them back to the homeland again (Jer. 24:5-7). At the end of seventy years (starting from 606 B.C.), the captives of Zion were now returning and they were coming to rebuild the temple (536 B.C.). It is here that the Book of Ezra begins.

Three groups returned from Babylon to their homeland:

- 1.) Group 1 536 B.C. - To rebuild the temple— Headed by Zerubbabel and Joshua.
- 2.) Group 2 457 B.C. - To teach and restore the law—Headed by Ezra the scribe.
- 3.) Group 3 444 B.C. - To rebuild the walls of Jerusalem—Headed by Nehemiah.

General Outline

536 BC	Chapter 1-2 . . . The Return of the Remnant
535 BC	Chapter 3-4 . . . Temple Rebuilding Started / Halted (15 years)
520 BC	Chapter 5 Haggai / Zechariah Prophecy - Work Resumes
516 BC	Chapter 6 Temple is Finished
	Between chapter 6 - 7 is a gap of 59 years / Book of Esther took place at this time
457 BC	Chapter 7-10 . . The Ministry of Ezra / His Arrival at Jerusalem
	Chapter 9-10 . . The Remnant Purified / Mixed Marriages Settled



The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah form the basis of restoration, but it is only a sample of a future restoration which is far greater. When Christ comes again, God will restore the nation of Israel to its former glory, and exceed it. All the prophets prophesied of Israel’s restoration. In Ezra and Nehemiah we are looking at the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple, but we must understand that this also applies to the Church. The fact that the temple was rebuilt means that the Church (the living temple) will be rebuilt and restored in these last days. All the promises made to natural Israel apply to the Church. The restoration of the temple, the walls and gates of Jerusalem, and the Law of the Lord all have a fulfillment to the Church of the last days. But the opposition was great, even as it will be in our times, for after the foundation of the temple was laid, Satan attacked them. Satan is not afraid of foundational truths, but when we proceed further he is very threatened (see 3:8-13, 4:1-24).

Chapter 1 - 1:1-4 (cf. 2 Chron. 36:22,23). Cyrus the Persian king had subdued Babylon. Then he released the Jewish captives and sent them home from Babylon to rebuild their temple. Prophecy had been given 176 years earlier about Cyrus and his actions, long before his birth and long before Judah had been taken into exile (cf. Isa. 44:26-28; 45:1-5).

Chapter 2 - This chapter records the genealogies of the returning remnant. Altogether, there were around 50,000 in this group (2:64-65). Genealogies were the proof of one's call. God gave the priesthood to the family of Aaron of the tribe of Levi. A person had to be of Aaron's line to be a priest. Some were put out of the priesthood because they could not prove their genealogy (2:61-62). Spiritually it means that some do not have the divine call and the true ministry. Today there are many "voices." By grace, let us discern who has the true genealogy—the true call (cf. Heb. 5:4).

Chapter 3 - In 3:1-3, the altar and worship were quickly set up. True worship must be restored in the Living Temple. There are too many sounds and lyrics of "Babylon" in today's worship. Then they laid the foundation of the temple (3:8-13). There were mixed emotions as the foundation was laid. The older generation who had seen Solomon's glorious temple wept because this temple was nothing compared to Solomon's (cf. Hag. 2:3). The younger generation shouted for joy. Many people get excited over a "foundation" or basic truths (Heb. 6:1-3), and are content to stay at this level.

Chapter 4 - Satan began to attack them when they started to advance past the foundation stage. In verse 5, their jealous enemies hired lawyers to thwart the work. The surrounding nations took political action and filed grievous complaints to the authorities back in Persia / Babylon. Thus, the work was halted for around 15 years (4:23-24). We can see, therefore, that the battle is spiritual.

Chapter 5 - The rebuilding of God's house had been stopped for several years. Then the prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied and commanded them to resume building (5:1-2). At this point we need to read Haggai 1–2 and Zechariah 1–8. Haggai told the remnant that they had accepted a defeatist attitude and that they were concerned more about their own interests than God's house (Hag.1:1-11). Zechariah told them that the battle was spiritual. It would not be "by might or by power" (not by military might or larger numbers), but by God's Spirit that the mountain (or the authorities back in Babylon / Persia) would be removed (Zech. 4:6-10). God told Zerubbabel that the temple he started he would also finish, and that when he laid the final headstone, he would cry out that it was grace and grace alone that had caused him to finish the work (4:7).

Chapter 6 - As the remnant rededicated themselves to the Lord and made their priorities right, God began to deal with the authorities back in Persia / Babylon. The evil decrees against the rebuilding of the temple were reversed, the people went back to work, and the temple was finished (v15).

Chapters 7–10 - In 457 BC, Ezra and his companions came to Jerusalem (7:8-9) after a journey of four months. Ezra was a man of extraordinary character. He had applied his heart unto the study of wisdom from God's Word. He was determined to practice the truth in his personal life and then teach it to others (7:10). Ezra is so highly revered that in the Jewish writings they reckoned unto him the title of "The Second Moses," putting Ezra next to Moses in his knowledge of the Law. Ezra compiled the books of I–II Chronicles, Ezra / Nehemiah; and he is the one most responsible for getting all the books of the Old Testament in order. We need teachers like Ezra today who can set all the issues in order. In Chapters 9–10, Ezra demanded marital purity. Many of those who returned from Babylon had married heathen wives, and the children were a mixture of the godly and the world. Although we would not handle the situation in the same way Ezra did in the Old Testament, when marriage issues were put right, there was a "great rain," symbolizing the outpouring of the Spirit (cf. Ezra 10:9).

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

The theme of the Book of Nehemiah is “The Rebuilding of the City.” The temple had already been rebuilt under the leadership of Zerubbabel in 516 BC. Worship and sacrifices had been restored. Ezra came later to Jerusalem to teach the Law and restore separation from the world in 457 BC. However, the city itself was still in a deplorable condition. Then in 444 BC, after much intercession, Nehemiah was granted permission by King Artaxerxes to go and rebuild the city. We can see, then, that restoration came about gradually and in stages.

General Outline

- 1–2 - Nehemiah's Burden for and Mission to Jerusalem
- 3–6 - Jerusalem's Walls Rebuilt / Opposition Overcome
- 7–13 - Jerusalem Is Set in Order / Other Reforms

Jerusalem Represents the Bride

Earthly Jerusalem is a symbol of Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9-27). New Jerusalem is the habitation of the Bride, and in a sense the City and the Bride are one. A bride's personality and character are woven into her home, her place of dwelling. Thus, the heavenly city and its inhabitants have the same characteristics. Just as the city is filled with the glory of God, has divine holy light, and is clear as crystal and transparent as glass—so are its inhabitants. They are without distortion.

Therefore, when we approach Nehemiah we are not looking at the renovating of Jerusalem as an urban renewal project, or an improving of the inner city. Instead, we are looking at the fortifying of the Bride, the building up of spiritual walls around her, the clearing away of rubble in her life, and the beautifying of her character. And we are preparing her gates for the entrance of the King of Glory. Yes, we are looking at a literal city in Nehemiah's time, but more importantly, we are looking at the spiritual message it represents. Ezekiel chapter 16 also likens Jerusalem to the Lord's Bride.

A Divine Mission is Birthed in Nehemiah

When Nehemiah learned that Jerusalem's walls and gates still lay in ruins, he was apprehended by God with a burden to go and rebuild the city. Therefore, Nehemiah wept and mourned and fasted and prayed (1:1-11). These are evidences of a divine call coming to birth in a man's heart.

Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer. This was a position of loyalty, for a cupbearer was willing to lay down his life for the king. He tested all drinks first, filtering out any assassination plots. When the king asked Nehemiah why he was sad, he explained his sorrow over the state of Jerusalem. Then the king granted him permission to go to rebuild Jerusalem, and he also supplied the building material. This was because of “the good hand of God that was upon Nehemiah” (2:1-8). (See Prov. 21:1).

When the governors on the western side of the Euphrates River heard that Nehemiah was coming to favor Jerusalem, they were exceedingly grieved. Such is the age-old hatred for Israel by her neighbors. Restoration of God's holy city is absolutely hated by Satan and his friends (2:9-10, 2:19-20). Thus, there will be great opposition against the restoration of the Church in our times.

In chapters 3-6, the walls and gates of the city were rebuilt, but with tremendous opposition. First, let us consider what the walls and gates represent. A city without walls meant the people were unprotected and vulnerable to the attacks of enemies. Isaiah 60:18 declares; “Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.” Walls represent salvation. They are for protection. When a person becomes a Christian, immediately God puts a wall of salvation around him. These walls are maintained by an obedient life, and wisdom. Isaiah 33:6 says that wisdom and knowledge are the strength of our salvation. Disobedience and turning away from God breaks down the walls of salvation, and many demons and former weaknesses come rushing back in. O, the seriousness of backsliding!

Walls of Salvation

The Broken Hedge of Protection: (Broken down through sin, neglect, and laziness.)

- Isaiah 5:1-7 Israel is God's vineyard. For disobedience He broke down their hedge of protection.
- 2 Chronicles 36:11-21 - With walls broken down because of rebellion, they were overrun by enemies.
- Psalm 80:12-13 - By a broken hedge, the wild boar (uncleanness) comes in and devours our hearts.
- Proverbs 24:30-34 - Slothfulness, hearts overgrown with thorns, walls broken down, brings poverty.
- Proverbs 25:28 - With no rule over one's spirit (alcohol, drugs, immorality), walls are broken down.
- Ecclesiastes 10:8 - By breaking down the hedge (through disobedience), one is bitten by the serpent.
- Job 1:10 - In this case, God removed the hedge to test Job. It was not for disobedience.

Let us build up the walls of salvation around God's people. Let us strengthen their salvation by fortifying their defenses against evil and teaching them how to close the door to Satan. God is removing the hedge of protection from America because of its disobedience and backslidden condition. The answer is not by electing conservative candidates, but by one thing alone—a national repentance and returning to God with a whole heart. This is our only hope! For more information on closing the door to Satan and strengthening the walls of our salvation, see our book: *Victory Over Self*.

Restoring the Gates

According to Isaiah 61:18, gates represent praise. A life of praise and a life of obedience maintains the strength of our walls. Gates have hinges, which speak of our will. We have the power of choice to open or close our gates. Let us close our gates to evil, and only open our gates to the Lord. As we open the gates of our hearts to God, “the King of Glory will come in” (Psa. 24:7-10).

Gates also speak of *ministries*. New Jerusalem has 12 gates, and therefore 12 entrances. Each gate is named after one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Each tribe had its own characteristics, call, emphasis, and prophetic promises. Each “tribe” therefore has its own particular message and ministry.

- 3:1 - Sheep gate - The message of salvation by Jesus alone. “I am the door of the sheep.” There is no other way.
- 3:3 - Fish gate - The message of soul winning. Being “fishers of men.”
- 3:6 - Old gate - The message being established in the fundamental tried and true doctrines of the Word (Jer. 6:16).
- 3:13 - Valley gate - The message of humility (the effect of good doctrine), and a willingness to see and admit our needs.
- 3:14 - Dung gate - The message of getting the rubbish out of our lives, having no trust in past attainments (Phil. 3:7-9).
- 3:15 - Fountain gate - The message of having a fresh flow of the Spirit, after the rubbish in our life is taken out.
- 3:26 - Water gate - The message of the teaching ministry, of washing others with the Word, having cleansed motives.
- 3:28 - Horse gate - The message of the overcomer. New breakthroughs, going forth conquering, and to conquer.
- 3:29 - East gate - The message of the resurrection power and glory coming into our lives. Christ comes from the east.
- 3:31 - Ephraim gate - The message of the double portion (Gen. 48). Ephraim also speaks of the ministry of restoration.
- 8:18 - Gate of Miphkad - The message of rewards—present rewards, and eternal rewards (Rev. 22:12; Mt. 6:4, 6:6).
- 12:39 - Prison gate - The message of restriction, which requires tremendous maturity, as Paul, the prisoner of the Lord.

* These gates are progressive: Keep a life of *praise* in order to move on in your walk. Do not be stalled by bitterness or hardness.

The Restoration is Opposed Seven Ways (from outside and inside)

Nehemiah was a man of constant prayer. Many times his prayers are silent and within himself. Observe the numerous times he prays, “Remember me O God.” Nehemiah would give God no rest until He made Jerusalem a praise in the earth (cf. Isa. 62:7). We are looking at the restoration of Jerusalem *as a type or symbol* of the restoration of the Church. Restoration is viciously opposed by our spiritual foes. Daniel 9:25, spoken 92 years earlier, predicted that the walls would be rebuilt *in troublous times*. Below are seven ways Nehemiah and the restoration were opposed:

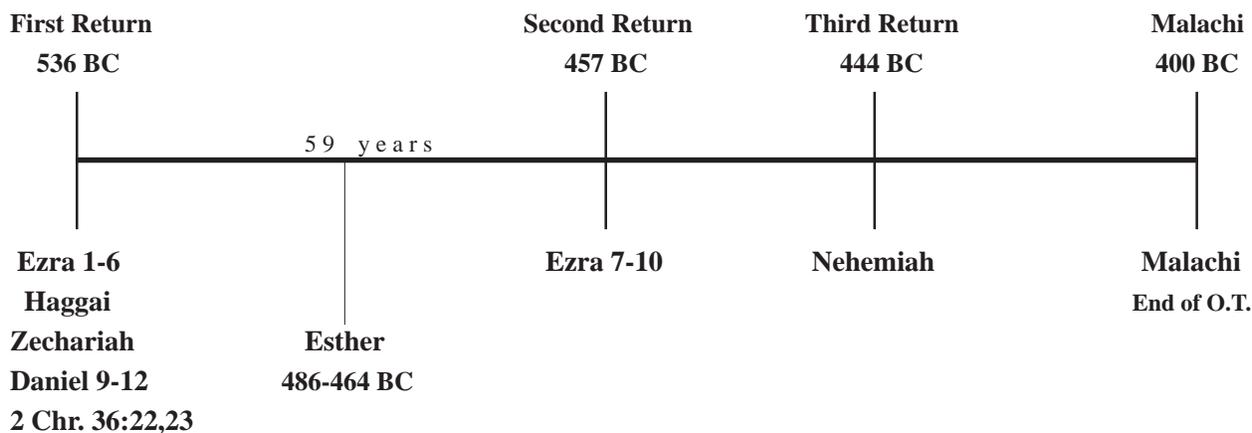
1. 4:1-3 - By ridicule. Satan works and speaks through people (mocking, wrath, insults, sarcasm). We should temper Nehemiah's prayer (4:4-5) with the New Testament prayer of Luke 6:27-28. Our prayer is not for vengeance against enemies as much as the satanic forces that drive them.
2. 4:7-9 - By threats / anger. When the “breaches” were stopped, Satan was angry. He fears unity. Satan knows that when God's people become unified, he will be destroyed. Intimidations and terrorism are chief tactics of the devil, especially for our times (Rev. 2:10, Mt. 24:6, Lk.12:4,5).
3. 4:10-23 - By discouraged brethren. The brethren were saying, “There is so much rubble we just cannot do it” (4:10). There was a feeling of being overwhelmed with the problems. Sometimes people are so discouraged when they look at the rubbish in their lives that they want to give up. “Our adversaries said...” They also made the mistake of rehearsing what the enemy was saying. Do not repeat Satan's threats. He said, “There will be a surprise attack at any moment” (v11-12).
4. 5:1-13 - By greed and heartlessness. There was carnality among God's people. Food was scarce and the poor had to sell their land to the rich just to survive. Nehemiah demanded that the rich not make a profit of their brethren. His unselfish example added to his authority to enforce this, for although he had been governor for twelve years, yet he required no special treatment (v14-19).
5. 6:1-9 - By letters with false accusations. Satan comes from every angle. “There is a rumor that you have set yourself up as king and appointed prophets to preach of your greatness.” They tried to exasperate Nehemiah to urge him to come outside the city so that they could assassinate him. Discernment saved him. “You made up the story yourself,” he told them.
6. 6:10-14 - By false prophecies. These false prophecies were intended to inspire fear to weaken the leader of the restoration. They wanted Nehemiah to “hide” to make the other people afraid and to damage his testimony (cf Lk.11:53-54). He replies—“Should such a man as I flee?” (v11). The wall was finished; the enemies were very discouraged (6:15,16). Satan gets discouraged too.
7. 6:17-19 - By friends and in-laws of Tobiah. The enemy of restoration, Tobiah, had married into a Jewish family. Tobiah mingled himself amongst the Jews and had made many friendships. Friends and relatives of Tobiah were telling Nehemiah that Tobiah was a very good man. Instead of siding with Nehemiah, many of the Jews unwittingly became supporters of the enemy.

In Chapter 8, we find Ezra in Jerusalem at the same time as Nehemiah. Ezra and the Levites caused the people to understand the Law (8:1-13). This resulted in great joy, which brought strength. Chapter 9-10 is a confession of sins and *a written commitment*: to keep all the commandments of God: only marry a believer, not an outsider; pay tithes; and not neglect the house of the Lord. In Chapter 11, one person out of ten was to dwell in Jerusalem, and nine out of ten were to dwell in all the other cities of Judah and Benjamin. In Chapter 12 the walls were dedicated and Israel's joy was heard afar off (v42,43). Chapter 13 deals again with mixed marriages, the besetting sin of the restoration time, and of ours.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER

The Restoration Period was at the close of the Old Testament. Six books of the Bible cover this time—Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, Esther, Nehemiah, and Malachi. The last part of the Book of Daniel, notably chapters 9-12, mark the beginning of the Restoration Period. Daniel was in Babylon when it fell to the Persians. Persia then ruled the world during the entire Restoration Era.

The Restoration Period



Between chapter 6 and 7 of Ezra, a lapse of 59 years, is the story of Esther. The events of this book took place during the reign of Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), who reigned on the Persian throne from 486 to 464 BC. Esther covers about 9 or 10 years—from the 3rd to the 12th year of Ahasuerus. During that same time in history two prominent world figures died—Buddha (563-483), a religious leader in India, and Confucius (551-471), the Chinese philosopher and teacher.

Summary of Esther

The theme of Esther is—“The hidden hand of God.” It seems ironic that God's name is not mentioned once in this book, yet His mysterious workings and presence are evident in every page. The scene opens with a rebellion that takes place at the very throne. The queen refused to appear when the king beckoned her. This insolence was highly embarrassing, not only to the king, it was indeed a disgrace to the whole kingdom. Her example was teaching all women to disrespect their husbands. Thus, the queen was to be deposed and replaced by someone worthy of that position. Many fair virgins were sought, but only one was to be chosen to be the queen. Truly the Persian court foreshadows the kingdom of God, for there has been a rebellion at the heavenly throne under Lucifer, who infected one third of the angels. Therefore, today a bride (that is composed of many choice saints) is being tried and proven in order to *replace* and execute judgment upon the fallen inhabitants of heaven.

Esther, the lovely bride who was chosen to replace the expelled queen, was called to an important mission as well. She had been called to the kingdom “for such a time as this” to preserve the chosen people, and to bring judgment upon the wicked who sought their demise. In this book we will find God's hidden hand orchestrating and engineering a plan to bring this about. Every plot that was fashioned against the righteous was *reversed* and returned upon the heads of the wicked. But the key instrument God used was a woman with a meek and quiet spirit who had found favor with the king. Esther, therefore, portrays a profound type of Christ's Bride.

General Outline

1–2 - Esther Brought to the Kingdom

3–7 - Esther's Great Mission

8–10 - Feast of Purim Instituted

Chapter 1 - The Persian Empire comprised over half of the known world. The king's court fore-shadows God's kingdom in several ways. The “many diverse vessels” in v7-8 represent men, for each of us is termed a “vessel” (cf. Ac. 9:15, 2 Tim. 2:20-21). These vessels were of different sizes and capacities. People were allowed to drink *as little or as much* of the king's wine as they desired. Spiritually, some desire to drink more of the Spirit than others. The fact that the laws of the kingdom could not be altered means that God's laws cannot be changed either, and they are the same for every nation and language (1:19,22). God's Gospel is the same for each nation.

Chapter 2 - Fair virgins were sought throughout the kingdom to replace Vashti, the unworthy queen. This is a very important truth—There are *many* “virgins” in the kingdom of God, in the sense that they are washed in the blood of Jesus, but there is only *one* queen. The Bride of Christ is a much smaller group of people who are chosen from amongst the many millions of believers (Rev. 2:26; 3:21). Not every believer will rule and reign with Christ on His throne. This privilege is only for those who *overcome*. Esther was preferred above all the other virgins and became queen (2:17). Let us make ourselves attractive to God (Rev.19:7b) or we may not be chosen to be part of His Bride.

Esther was raised by her older cousin, Mordecai (2:5-7), who held an important position next to the king. Mordecai had charged young Esther not to disclose her nationality (2:10). Mordecai uncovered an assassination plot against the king and saved the life of the king (2:21-23). Yet God caused the king to overlook the incident for the present; but it was kept on record (until 6:1-3).

Chapter 3 - After these things, the king promoted Haman, an evil man, and placed him in a position above all the other princes. The position produced terrible pride in his heart, but God had a plan. Everyone bowed to Haman, except Mordecai. This act so infuriated Haman that he conspired to exterminate the entire Jewish race—because one man did not show him obeisance. Then Haman introduced a petition to the king. Defaming the Jews as contrary (and a liability) to his kingdom, Haman promised that he could bring billions of dollars into the king's revenue after destroying these people and confiscating their goods. Having drawn *a date of execution* for all the Jews, the king not being aware of the details, hastily signed the petition.

Chapters 4–7 - Mordecai, Esther, and the Jews cried out to God for help. Then Esther, after much prayer, fasting, and waiting for God's time, approached the king about the matter. Having prepared the king a good dinner, and providing a pleasant evening for him and preparing his heart, she then disclosed her petition. No other woman in Scripture excels Esther for her ability to reason with a husband, especially one who was making a disastrous decision without knowing the ramifications. Thus, Esther changed the king's mind and reversed the edict. The king also remembered Mordecai's act of valor when he stopped an assassination attempt; and he made Haman honor Mordecai publicly. Haman ended up being hung on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.

Chapters 8–10 - Another mountain had become a plain, and it was “by my Spirit saith the Lord.” The same day that the Jews were to be executed, the Jews executed their enemies. A yearly holiday was instituted by the Jews; and they call it Purim [or lot], because Haman had cast lots to determine a date to destroy the Jews, but God had reversed the curse and turned it into a blessing. Christ's death on the cross appeared to be the greatest defeat, but it turned out to be the greatest triumph.

THE BOOK OF JOB

“What is man that thou shouldest ... set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?” (Job 7:17,18)

Man was born to be tested, and this test involves our affections. God is searching for hearts that love *Him* above all else (2 Chr.16:9). Lucifer the archangel was gifted with extraordinary wisdom and musical abilities, but he loved his position and prestige *more* than God. He only served God for his own selfish interests. If we are going to dethrone and replace Satan and the fallen inhabitants of heaven, we must pass the tests they failed. Therefore, Satan has a great controversy with man.

In 1:9-11, Satan accuses Job of the very thing he had violated—Satan charges that Job was serving God only for the benefits, that Job is no better than Satan himself, and that if Job's blessings were removed he would “curse God to his face.” God then replies to the accuser of the brethren (Rev.12:10), “You have my permission to test him.” Thus, we have the onset of the test of a righteous man.

This trial was not the result of any evil in Job's life, for God had said, “there is none like him in the earth, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” God wanted to “have an answer” for the adversary's charge (Prov. 27:11). Job's right response (after he had lost everything in one day) provided the Lord with a substantial answer to give to the Accuser—“Here is a man who loves me more than wealth, family, and earthly honors. He is not serving Me just for the benefits.” Job had passed the test that Lucifer failed, and he had overcome the accuser by the word of his testimony (Job 1:20-22, Rev.12:11).

However, trials have the singular ability of bringing hidden needs of the heart to the surface. God purposed to make this righteous man *even more righteous*; and He intended to give him a double blessing at the end of his trial. But there was an issue in Job's heart of which he was totally oblivious. Although Job had responded admirably at first to his calamities, as the months went by, his testimony degenerated and he ended up criticizing God. This is the theme of the book—“Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker?” (Job 4:17). Although Job was very righteous, when he afterwards found fault with God but no fault with himself, he was guilty of being self-righteous. For this God rebuked Job. The lesson for Job and all of mankind is this: *In spite of any calamity or trouble, God can never be charged with irresponsibility.* God is always just and we must never point our finger at God and find fault with Him (Isa. 45:9). God provides sufficient grace for our pressures, and He always makes all things beautiful in His time, if we do not reject His grace.

From chapters 3-31, Job's three friends try to console him, and “lead him to repentance.” But Job had committed nothing to bring this trial upon himself. Therefore, these chapters are filled with arguments and philosophical debates. In chapters 32-37, a fourth silent listener, Elihu, explains that the trial is not because of sin in Job's life, but that during the trial Job was finding fault with God and no fault with himself—this was where Job was erring. Finally in chapters 38-42, the Lord appears and asks Job 80 questions about the mysteries of the universe, none of which he could answer. God wanted Job to see how foolish it is to assert one's wisdom above God's. When we “question” God, we make ourselves wiser and more righteous than He is. We can outline the book using four main sections:

1. Chapters 1–2 - Tragedy Strikes Job (God uses Satan to test a righteous man.)
2. Chapters 3–31 - Job and His Three Friends (They misunderstood Job and his trial.)
3. Chapters 32–37 - Elihu's Counsel to Job (A fourth friend intervenes with heavenly perspective.)
4. Chapters 38–42 - Job Before the Lord (Upon seeing himself in God's light, he is purged and healed.)

The Divine Purpose of Trouble

God has set His heart upon man and is testing us every moment. The passing or failing of our tests will determine our eternal position in heaven. Often we do not know when we are being tested. Therefore, we should be more conscious of the fact that we are being watched. We are a spectacle before angels and of men (1 Cor. 4:9, Heb.12:1). We are under the scrutiny of principalities and powers and the world, but most of all—of the Lord Himself.

God Tests us:

- To see what we are made of.
- To see what our motives are, and what our needs are.
- To see if God is *number one* in our lives (Gen. 22:1-2, Job 1:8-12, Deut.13:1-3).
- To see if we are worthy of the promises of God, and loyal to the truths He has entrusted to us.
- To see if we are able to receive the power we have asked of God. (The greater the power we want to receive from God, the greater will be our tests.)
- To see if we are worthy to take the positions Satan and his followers have forfeited.
- To see if we qualify to be His Bride, and to be at the marriage feast (Rev.19:9).
- To see if we qualify to be in the first resurrection, to judge angels, and to reign with Christ.
- To see if we are only serving God for blessings and prestige, or because we love *Him*.
- To make us more righteous and holy.
- To bring a greater revelation of the Lord to our lives.
- To bless our latter end, to exalt us, and give us an eternal name.
- To bring new grace into our lives by being in a new low place. (Grace is given to the *lowly*.)
- To *give God an answer* which He may in turn give to His adversaries (Prov. 27:11, Psa.119:42).

The Church Has a Wrong Concept of Life and of Trouble

We were created for God. God was not created for us. Instead of telling God what *we* want, we should ask God what He wants. Much of today's Gospel is a "something for nothing" proposition. "What is in this *for me*? How much can I get out of this *for myself*? What is the minimum amount of sacrifice necessary in order to receive the maximum return *for myself*?" These attitudes are produced when only *parts* of the truth are presented. Paul preached the whole counsel of God.

The Quickest Way Out of My Troubles / But Little Desire for a Changed Life

Today, a "Popular" Gospel is preached from many pulpits. It *uses* God as a means of getting one's needs and wants met, while producing little concern for doing the will of God and having the heart changed. It offers free pardon (freedom from guilt), free medical benefits (divine healing), free provision (freedom from financial pressure), and freedom from depression and sorrow. And let there be no mistake about it, God *loves* to generously bestow all of these gifts upon His people to encourage them and to help them along life's difficult pathway. Yet all of these, though they are benefits of the Gospel, are not *ultimates*. We were created to bring Him pleasure (Rev. 4:11), and as we bring Him pleasure and delight, we will *find* fulfillment and pleasure and delight.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Introduction

Psalms is the music section of the Bible. When we think of the Psalms, David the sweet psalmist of Israel comes to mind, for he wrote at least half of them (75 or more). In every new move of God, there is a noticeable upgrade in the music. (We can observe that when the Church is at a low ebb, the music has no anointing.) David introduced a new song to Israel when he took the ark onto Mt. Zion. These Psalms of Zion all centered around the literal presence of God and the qualifications for coming into His presence. Virtually every form of worship and praise to God is found in the Psalms—clapping, shouting, singing, dancing, leaping, rejoicing, bowing, lying prostrate, and more.

Musical Use of the Psalms

Each Psalm was set to music, and each one had a particular mood. Some were triumphant; others were solemn, meditative, and reflective. Some were accompanied with strings, others with perforated wind instruments. Psalm 46 was pitched high for the treble or soprano voices of the Hebrew virgins, whereas Psalms 6 and 12 encouraged the use of an eight-stringed lyre, perhaps signifying the lowest note was sung by men's voices. The title at the top of each Psalm was instructional as to what type of choirs, what mood, and which musical instruments were to be used. All the Psalms were chanted, prayed, or sung to music. But more importantly, they are prophetic and Messianic; and they speak directly to our hearts today.

Scriptural Use of the Psalms

The Psalms were written during a period of well over a thousand years—from Moses to the Restoration Period. Most, however, were written during David's era. In the New Testament, the Psalms are quoted more than any other book of the Old Testament. Psalm 110:1 is quoted or alluded to at least twenty times, a reference to the Lord being “at the right hand of God.” All truth has to agree with the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (cf. Lk. 24:44); and all of these testify of Jesus. One could preach virtually any truth from the Psalms; you could expound on the creation, heaven, hell, the life of Christ, healing, the history of Israel, the second coming, the Church, and the Millennium.

Categories of Psalms

The Psalms are the hymn book of the Hebrews, and their songs may be classified as follows:

Messianic - 16 21 22 24 40 45 49 68 89 118

Penitential - 6 32 38 39 51 102 130 143

Hallelujah - 103 106 108 111 112 113 115 117 135 138 146-150

Teaching - 1 5 7 15 17 24 25 43 50 73 77 82 90 94 101 119

Pilgrim - 88 120-134

Prayer - 17 66 86 90 102 141 142

Regal - 9 10 29 46 47 75 76 92-100

Devotional - 3 16 27 28 41 42 54 59 61 62 63 65 67 70 84 87 91 122 144

Morning - 3-5 19 57 63 108

Evening - 4 8 143

Meditation - 16 19 23 26 48 49 56 60 139

Trouble - 4 5 10-12 14 18 20 28 30-37 41 44 52-59 64 71 74 109 120 140 143

Prophetic - 2 16 22 40 45 68 69 72 97 110 118

Historical - 60 78-81 83 89 105 106 107 114 136 137

Practicality of the Psalms

Without getting bogged down with technical details about the Psalms, the main thing we should remember is that every Psalm is Messianic. We will find the life of Christ everywhere in the Psalms. Just from reading the Gospels, we cannot really know what Jesus was thinking when He walked this earth. Neither can we know what He was praying when He went up to the mountain to pray. But the Psalms heard His prayers, and the Psalms tell us what He was thinking too. Jesus had tremendous emotional upheavals that only the Psalms reveal, such as—“My God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me?” He did not cry that out loud, but that was in His mind.

Interpreting the Psalms

To interpret a psalm, we should consider at least four things:

- The authorship
- The time it was written - to know the background
- The theme
- The key verse

Fulfillment of the Psalms:

- It had a literal fulfillment in the author - it sprang from the writer's own experience.
- Often it had a fulfillment in (and was prophetic of) the life of Christ.
- It could have several fulfillments in history.
- It can be applied to our lives.

Since the Book of Psalms contains 150 independent compositions, each Psalm has to be analyzed separately. However, there are several measures we can take to put these Psalms under headings. For example, David's 75 or more Psalms were written during the *four* segments of his life:

1. Age 17-30 Period after slaying Goliath / fleeing from Saul in the wilderness (Preparation years)
2. Age 30-37 Period after becoming king over Judah and reigning there for over seven years
3. Age 38-48 Period after subduing Mount Zion and writing numerous Psalms about Zion
David did not subdue Zion until age 37; Psalms written about Zion had to be after this.
3. Age 48-70 Period after he sinned with Bathsheba and was being judged by God for his sin
During this time, he wrote many Psalms of repentance and restoration.

Interpreting Psalm 2—a Sample of How to Interpret

This psalm was written in the third segment of David's life, after he had captured Mount Zion. Historically it was written during the events of 2 Samuel 7–8. David, being the Lord's anointed, was reigning as king on Mount Zion. Enemy nations [Philistines, Moabites and Syrians - 2 Sam. 8:1-6] plotted to overthrow him, but they were soundly defeated. David was that king on Zion's hill, but the psalm looks forward to the King of kings when He comes again. The nations of the earth who come against Christ shall be utterly destroyed (Rev.19:11-21). This will also be repeated at the end of the Millennium (cf. Rev. 20:7-9). Thus, we see that prophecy can have double and even triple fulfillments. Psalm 2 had a fulfillment when Christ came the first time (cf. Acts 4:23-31), for He was opposed by Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the nation of Israel who rejected Him—but He rose from the dead. This Psalm was also used in prayer by the Christians to appeal for divine assistance.

Summary of Psalm 2:

- * It had a literal fulfillment in the author, David, during the events of 2 Samuel chapters 7–8.
- * It was fulfilled when Christ came and was opposed by the Gentiles and Israel (Ac. 4:25-28).
- * It will be fulfilled at Armageddon when the nations will come against Christ (Rev.19:11-21).
- * It will have another fulfillment at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-9).
- * It is a psalm that the Christians prayed when appealing for God's help and boldness (Ac. 4:24-31).

The purpose of this little summary of the Psalms is not to dissect or explain each psalm. We are only offering a few guidelines on how to interpret the Psalms. For an in-depth study, please read: *The Psalms*, by the honourable Brian J. Bailey.

Knowing the background of a Psalm and the circumstances under which it was written will greatly enrich its meaning. Remember, the Bible is like a large puzzle—we need all the pieces to get the full picture. Therefore, anointed teachers and good study resources are highly recommended to help us put all the pieces of the puzzle together.

Psalms of Restoration

David wrote many Psalms after his sin—Psalm 4, 32, 38, 39, 40, 41, 51, 103, and others. In Psalm 4:7, he had a restoration of joy. Psalm 32 was written after Nathan the prophet rebuked David for his sin. In verses 1-5, he had no rest until he confessed his sin which he had sought to hide. In Psalm 38 he was under God's stroke and was smitten with sickness until he confessed his sin. Psalm 40:1-2 describes the horrible pit of adultery he had fallen into. His restoration was slow and painful and he had to wait patiently for the Lord. Psalm 51 was David's prayer of repentance. He asked God to give him wisdom in the inward parts of his heart because in the area of morals he had been very foolish. In Psalm 103, he exclaims that God has forgiven [every single one of] our iniquities, and healed [every single one of] our diseases. In verse 10, he declares that God has not given us the judgment we deserve. This was his own testimony.

In Psalm 110, David himself is that priest / king upon Zion. Under the Law, no one could be a priest and a king simultaneously. However, God allowed David to function in both offices to prefigure the coming Christ who would combine both offices. Today, we are called to a new priesthood after Melchisedec's order in which we are “made unto our God kings and priests.”

The Psalms were written by a number of authors, some of whom are anonymous. Chronologically, Moses wrote the first psalm, Psalm 90. Psalm 126 was written at the end of the Babylonian captivity.

Moses - wrote one — Psalm 90 (the oldest psalm)

David - a total of 75: 2–41, 51–65, 68–70, 86, 95, 101, 103, 108–110, 122, 124,131,133, 138–145

Asaph - wrote twelve: 50, 73–83 He was a prophet and a Levite on Mt. Zion (1 Chr.16:4-7, 37).

Solomon - (four): two were written *by* him: Psalm 1, 45; and Psalm 72, 127 were written *about* him.

Sons of Korah - wrote nine: 42, 44, 45, 47–49, 84, 85, 87

Heman the Ezrahite - wrote one: Psalm 88

Ethan the Ezrahite - wrote one: Psalm 89

Ezra - wrote one: Possibly Psalm 119

The other Psalms are uncertain and their authorship can only be conjectural.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Proverbs was written by a king, to a king, to produce regal qualities and virtues in one who would rule upon the throne. In actual fact we are called to be “kings and priests unto God” and to reign upon the earth (Rev.1:6, 5:10, 20:4-6). Therefore, the theme of the Book of Proverbs is “Wisdom” and “The Making of a King.” *Wisdom* and *Folly* are contrasted throughout Proverbs. They are symbolized by two women: the virtuous woman (wisdom) and the strange woman (folly). Everyone will embrace one or the other, and take on the characteristics of the one they embrace. Actually, there are only two kinds of people in the world—the wise and the unwise. It is only the wise who go to heaven, for a wise man will “hear” and obey the Gospel. The others are “the children of disobedience.”

In Chapters 1–9, Solomon reiterates the cautions and exhortations of his father and his mother (1:8; 4:3; 6:20). Fifteen times the words “my son” are found. David and Bathsheba had passed on their adulterous nature to Solomon. Therefore, Solomon repeats the special warnings they had given him against lust and adultery. Wisdom is directly associated with the fear of the Lord and sexual purity. Obedience to the Word of God is the hallmark of wisdom (cf. Mt. 7:24-28). For the moment let us look at the central themes of Proverbs, the virtues that go into the making of a king:

The Making of a King—Preparing Ourselves to Reign with Christ

Themes in Proverbs

- Disciplining a child (The making of a king starts at birth): 3:11, 13:24, 19:18, 22:6,15, 23:13,14, 29:15-17
- Inner cleansing / right motives / not despising God's chastenings: 3:12, 6:23, 13:1, 16:6, 20:30, 28:13
- Having the right friends / warnings not to envy the wicked: 1:10, 3:31, 13:20, 23:17, 24:1, 24:19
- Giving God our hearts (our affections) (All decisions spring from our hearts): 4:23, 23:26
- Guarding against vice, anger (the need for moderation and self control): 16:32, 25:16, 25:28, 29:22
- Watching for the snare of flattery (Deflect all glory to God and to others): 5:3, 26:24-25, 29:5
- Cautions against rash commitments, vows, and sinning with the lips: 6:2, 14:29, 21:23
- Importance of “hearing” (retaining and obeying what we hear): 1:5, 4:20-21, (Heb. 2:1, Mk. 4:24,25)
- Power of the mouth (It releases spiritual power, good or evil): 10:11,21. 18:21, Mt.12:36,37, Jas. 3
- Proper perspective on money: 1:13-19, 16:16, 17:23, 1 Sam.12:3 (Bribes bring spiritual blindness.)
- Against waste (time, opportunities, and substance): 6:6-11, 24:30-33
- Diligence rewarded / Slothfulness condemned: 10:4, 12:24,27, 13:4, 21:5, 22:29, 31:27, 18:19
- Perils of pride and arrogance (especially for those with power): 8:13, 16:18, 29:23, 1 Pet. 5:6
- Exaltation of humility (before honor is humility): 15:33, 18:12
- Against greed / a defining of the true riches: 22:1, 28:20
- Right treatment of the poor / against oppression of any kind: 3:27-28
- Comparing the traits of good and evil women: 4:5-9, 5:3-5, 6:24,25, 7:5,11,13,21, 14:1, 31:10-31
- Moral purity / the stain of infidelity / how to be spared: 6:23-25, Eccl. 7:26 - by pleasing God.
- Praying for (and pursuing) wisdom relentlessly: 2:1-5, 4:7, 23:23,
- Warnings against scorning (disrespect, disdain) and its consequences: 15:12, 1:22-29
- Repentance (to change our mind and *appreciate* reproof): 1:23, 10:17, 12:1, 13:18, 15:5, 15:23, 29:15

- Equality / Justice / No partiality: 21:3, 18:5, 24:23, 31:5
- Hating simplicity (not being satisfied with the surface, the obvious, and the elementary): 1:20-23
- Good meditations (meditations – where words and actions are conceived) 6:18, 23:7, Acts 5:4
- No reliance on our natural mind: 3:5-6, 23:4, 28:26
- Not being offended: 18:19, 19:11 “It is to a man’s glory to overlook an offense”.
- Right attitudes toward enemies: 24:17-18, 24:29, 25:21 not “getting even”.
- Respecting parents (at any age): 23:22
- Against boasting: 25:27, 27:1, cf. Jas. 4:13
- Paths (paths are beliefs, doctrines): These take us somewhere. 2:13,19,20, 3:6, 4:11, 4:18, 4:26
- Add your own observations from Proverbs of the *actions* and *words* characteristic of a king.

Wisdom Has Many Features

Wisdom has many facets. Wisdom is ability, skill, enlightenment, prudence, depth, foresight, insight, discernment, judgment, and much more. Wisdom penetrates the surface of a matter to find the source. “Wisdom is the principal thing” in life (Prov. 4:7).

Wisdom Has a Nature

Wisdom also has a nature, a personality. This is described in James 3:17—Divine wisdom produces purity of motives; it will produce peace, and make peace. Gentleness is also part of the nature of wisdom. Someone who is hard or harsh has not been filled with God's wisdom. Wisdom is the opposite of rigidity and stubbornness. A man of wisdom has a sweet reasonableness, and he is easy to flow with. Wisdom knows when to be firm and when it is best to “drop the subject.” Wisdom is “full of mercy and good fruits.” Mercy starts in the thoughts and has no “I told you so” attitude. Wisdom is without partiality, and has no hypocrisy or pretence. Wisdom therefore is a *fruit* of the Spirit, and it is also an anointing, a *gift* of the Spirit (Isa.11:2).

Two Kinds of Wisdom

According to James 3:14-18, there are two kinds of wisdom—the wisdom of the world, and divine wisdom. Worldly wisdom has a nature too. It produces bitter envying, strife, and competition. The world uses intelligence to promote “self,” but the promotion of self is devilish. A person can use his mind to achieve great attainments in business, education, medicine, and entertainment. In the eyes of the world, he might appear to be the epitome of success. But when a person has not made the Lord his refuge, if he has not invested in the eternal kingdom, he is utterly a failure (Lk.12:16-21).

Obedience—The Highest Characteristic of Wisdom

Although wisdom is the supreme answer, if one does not *obey* wisdom, everything is to no avail. This is perhaps the most important lesson in the life of Solomon. This man wrote 3000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (1 Kgs. 4:29-34), but he did not walk in the light of his own message. His path grew darker and darker, instead of brighter and brighter (Prov. 4:18). He did not guard his heart with all diligence, as he exhorts others to do (Prov. 4:23). The man he describes in Proverbs 24:30-34 was prophetic of himself, for he had neglected the vineyard of his own heart. His own walls were broken down, and his inner life was overgrown with the thorns and nettles of the flesh.

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Introduction

After feasting on the glorious treasures of Proverbs, we are now looking at Ecclesiastes, a sermon written by the same author toward the end of his life. But this time we see a man who is disillusioned and depressed, who views everything as “*vanity*” or meaningless, an expression he uses thirty-three times. Solomon, now in his senior years, is reaping the consequences of his many years of disobedience, for he had violated virtually everything he preached in Proverbs. Ecclesiastes is a very wonderful book. It is puzzling, however, unless we understand that he is trying to find himself. If we read the book in this context, I think we will grasp what he is trying to say. It is interesting that he calls himself “the preacher” first before the king (1:12). He must have been conscious of his spiritual condition, and groping his way back to God.

Substitutes for Happiness that Never Work

Ecclesiastes is a *sermon*; it is a personal testimony of Solomon and his experiences. When a man's experiences are bizarre, his conclusions about life are bizarre as well. Preaching reveals the heart; it is the outrushing of one's soul. Solomon constantly speaks in the first person: “I said in my heart;” “I made me great works;” “I gave my heart to know;” and “I find more bitter than death.” Solomon was a seeker (1:13). *Seekers* have great emptiness because they are pursuing the wrong things, and after they get these things, they are terribly disillusioned. All they find is “vanity and vexation of spirit” (1:13-14). In actual fact, the only thing the human heart is looking for is *happiness*; yet happiness can only be found in full surrender to Christ (Psa.16:11). Solomon had tried everything under the sun to find happiness after he had drifted away from the Lover of his soul, the Beloved he had written about in the Song of Solomon. Therefore, he tried to fill that void with every conceivable device, including comedy. “I said of laughter, it is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?” (2:2). Comedians are often sad and have their problems too. The preacher even resorted to drinking (2:3). In 2:4-11, Solomon tells of all his other ventures to find joy, but in the end it was all “vanity and vexation of spirit.”

Disobedience / Loss of God's Presence

It is one thing to preach that “Jesus satisfies,” but does Jesus satisfy when we are off the platform? Is Ecclesiastes inspired Scripture?—Indeed it is! God wanted every succeeding generation to see the inner life of this backslidden preacher, and to realize how Solomon came to this state in his personal life. He was ambitious, disobedient, and self-willed from his youth. At the end of Ecclesiastes, he warns young people not to follow his example (11:9-10; 12:1). “Go ahead,” he says; “Do what you want to do. Walk in the sight of your eyes, and yield to every impulse of your heart. But God will bring you into judgment for all these things.” Therefore, remember your Creator when you are young. Make the right choices in your youth. Plant the right seeds in your earlier years, because in your older years you will reap what you have sown. In spite of the terrible mixture in Solomon's life, there was still a great measure of divine wisdom that remained (2:9, 12:13-14).

Solomon's ruin was a *lack of discipline*. He took whatever he wanted, including a thousand wives. As he grew older, his heart was turned away from the Lord (See 1 Kings 11:1-40). He is a perfect example of Matthew 7:26-28. He was that foolish man who heard [and even wrote] the Word of God, but he did not obey it. This is like a man who built his house upon the sand. When the storms and tests of life come, this man's life and works collapse. Solomon was the preacher who looked so successful outwardly, but in reality he was headed for a major fall (Jas.1:22-24; Eze. 33:31).

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

A Book of Relationship

In 1 Kings 4:32 we are told that Solomon wrote 1005 songs, but this one exceeds them all (1:1). This song revolves around Solomon and his relationship with a lovely Shulamite bride. More importantly, it is an allegory of the love relationship between Christ and His Church. Solomon composed this masterpiece when he was young. It had both a natural and spiritual fulfillment in his personal life:

1. Solomon was a *bridegroom* to a choice lovely bride—the Shulamite.
2. Solomon was a *bride* to a majestic and loving Bridegroom—the Lord Himself.

As a young man Solomon had heard the voice of his Beloved and experienced special encounters with Him (cf. 1 Kgs. 3:5-14). He had eaten of the spiritual food of God's wisdom, and had partaken of the spiritual drink of the joy of the Lord. Solomon had sat under His banner of love; he sat under His shadow with great delight. Solomon had felt the right hand of Christ under his head and felt His endearing embrace. In his younger years, Solomon had panted as a roe and young hart after the Lord, and had heard the voice of the Beloved calling him to "Come away."

Relationship Should Lead to Service

Although the Song shows the *progressive steps of growth* in our relationship with Christ, this relationship should lead to divine service. There is a two-fold path laid out for us here in this book. First there is the emphasis on the condition of our heart (our relationship with God); and out of that relationship should flow our service for the King. These two themes run throughout the Song of Songs. Some people emphasize service (preaching, witnessing, evangelizing), while others emphasize personal holiness and a separated life. Both aspects are essential, but relationship comes first. The Song of Songs was a favorite of two great missionaries — C.T. Studd and Hudson Taylor. Both were devout men with a close relationship with God, but out of that relationship they became men of great *service*.

Three major stages of growth are seen in the Bride:

- 2:16 - "My beloved is mine, and I am his." (He is *mine*—a bit possessive and self-centered.)
- 6:3 - "I am my beloved's, and my beloved's is mine." (Now there is more emphasis on Him.)
- 7:10 - "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me." (Total initiative is attributed to Him.)

After the bride passes through the wilderness and many other experiences, a quality and depth of love and maturity can be seen in her life. She then attributes *all* to her Lord—"I love Him because He first loved me. Everything I have is because of Him. I live by His faith, not my own. It is not because I have sought Him, but because He has sought me and *drawn* me unto Himself."

1:1-3 - The Song starts out "Thy love is better than wine." This is what the love of Christ does. No emotion can compare to His love. When you are in His presence you feel that beautiful warming in your heart. The name of Jesus is an ointment that heals and calms. When we are troubled, we should breathe the name of Jesus softly.

1:4 "Draw me, we will run after thee." This book is for those who are pressing on to know the Lord. Many are *satisfied* with their present experience. As a pastor, you will not get the congregation running after the Lord unless you are; therefore it says, "Draw me, *we* will run after thee." As you pray, "Draw me," the Lord will draw you to Himself, and the others will be drawn as well.

1:5-6 - “I am black.” Every time we have a new meeting with God there is a fresh understanding of our own needs (Isa. 6:1-5). “Look not upon me,” she cries out. “When you come into His presence, the last thing you want is those Eyes to see everything,” says Dr. Brian Bailey. The reason she was black is that she did not take care of her own vineyard. She was too busy caring for everyone else's vineyard. Many pastors, evangelists, and Christian workers grow cold and burned out because they are trying to take care of everyone else's problems while they neglect their own hearts and homes.

1:7 - She asks the Good Shepherd a question—“Where do you feed?” Why should I feed with my companions? She desired to be fed by the Lord Himself. We too should seek our messages directly from the Shepherd. But unless He *draws* us we can spend hours studying and accomplish nothing.

In verse 8, she is called the “fairest among women.” There are different degrees of Christians. Many are content to remain as they are, but this one is exceedingly beautiful to the Lord because her heart is totally set on pursuing and knowing Him intimately. The Lord does not look at what we are, but at what we desire to become *in Him*.

1:9-11 - Then the Bridegroom speaks, “I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.” These horses were highly disciplined. The Lord must bring us to a place in our lives where we are submissive and only move when He commands. A horse that is untrained and has no relationship of trust with his trainer is basically valueless. Thus, the Lord highly commends her for the capacity and willingness to be disciplined and trained. Throughout this Song there is a continual conversation between Christ and the bride.

2:14 - “Let me see thy countenance; let me hear thy voice: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.” We must never forget our own personal devotional time with the Lord. The whole purpose for being created is to bring Him pleasure (Rev. 4:11). If we accomplish everything else and miss God, we have missed the whole purpose for our creation. This is exactly where Solomon failed. He was in the Lord's work—he built the temple, he was a statesman, preacher, song writer and author; but he failed to spend time with the Beloved. We have to pay particular attention to our own message, because it is often prophetic to *ourselves* and a warning to us.

2:15 - “The little foxes destroy the vine.” The Vine is the life of Christ within us. It is the little foxes (or works of the flesh) that eat away at the roots of our hearts and rob us of the life of Christ. Little foxes grow into big ones. Many have made shipwreck in their Christian lives because when a little fox (or lust of the flesh) was revealed, they did not kill it but allowed it to grow and grow until it devoured their inner life.

3:1-5 “I sought him, but I found him not.” The Lord withdrew His presence for a season so she would seek him further. There is a progression in our spiritual life. We must move on to where He is, and not look for Him in the old places. She had to go farther than the watchmen (the ministers who settled on a lower level) to find the Lord again (3:3). We need specific, ongoing meetings with the Lord. In these passages she met the Lord, and this changed her life.

3:7-8 “They all hold swords, being expert in war.” The Lord is called a Man of war. We must be soldiers! This aspect of His character must be developed in us. The Sword is the Word of God, and we need to know how to use it skillfully. The Word of God will *reveal* and *destroy* our enemy. A child does not know how to use the Sword. This skill must be developed through use and study.

In 4:1-15, the Bridegroom lavishes the bride with affection and compliments. He says to her in verse 7: “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.” The Lord views us as “perfect” as we continue to walk in the light, even though we are still in the process of being made perfect. Then in verse 12, He likens His bride to a beautiful enclosed garden. The nine herbs in her garden (v13,14) are analogous to the nine fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22,23). It requires the cold north winds of adversity and the warm south winds of blessing to develop this beautiful fruit in our hearts (4:16).

In Chapter 5:1, the Lord makes *a new entrance* into her garden. Having a delightful time in His garden, He then wants to share the beautiful fruits of her garden with others. But after this mountain-top experience with her Beloved, she grows lax and sanctimonious. She has become more involved with the beauty of the Lord and holiness in her life than with the Lord Himself. “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them” (5:3). Some women are *more in love* with their elegance, perfume, and beautiful clothes than they are with their husband. Thus, the Lord was grieved and withdrew Himself so that she would seek Him again (5:4-6).

5:7 - The watchmen are ministers. They were jealous of her relationship with the Shepherd. Thus, they wounded her and took away her veil. The veil speaks of her “reputation.” Every new revival is opposed by ministers who have not moved on with God. They will wound and attack those who are moving on with God by slander and by writing untruths about them. God uses this to keep the godly humble. In 5:9-16, the bride describes the beauty and majesty of the Bridegroom.

6:1 - “Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee?” In the end, if we will follow the Lord wholeheartedly, others will also follow. If we continue to seek the Lord and walk honorably with Him, then the others will run after Him with us. 6:2,3 - Having found the presence of the Lord again, she has learned an important lesson. While she was concentrating on the beauty of the Lord *in her life* but ignoring the Lord Himself, the Lord had withdrawn His presence. She had learned never to settle for past experiences. She was to *ever* pursue His presence and have *an ongoing experience* with Him; she was not to major in *anything* but the will of God. Thus, we must never settle or be satisfied on any plane.

6:10-13 - Having learned her lesson never to settle for a past experience, she has had a deep work done in her heart. Now she is “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” The moon is only a reflection of the glory of the sun. She is a full reflection of the Lord Jesus Christ and His glory, and now nothing can stand before her. She is marching forward with victory after victory because she has become “terrible as an army with banners.”

In 7:1-9, The Bridegroom again lavishes the bride with compliments on her extraordinary beauty. But the thing that makes her so beautiful is her love for Him and perception of Him. Her beauty is seen in 7:10 - “I am my Beloved's and his desire is toward me.” Here is mature love—not that we loved Him, but that He first loved us. Out of this mature relationship of love, they are working together to take in a harvest (7:11-13). Paul said, “We are laborers together with Christ” (cf. 1 Cor. 3:5-9). We must always remember that we are not working *for* God, but *with* Him. And we must do things His way!

8:5 - Now the Bridegroom speaks of His beloved bride who has learned in the wilderness to “lean upon her Beloved”. In verses 6-7, jealousy is mentioned as being perhaps one of the most powerful passions of both God and man, male and female. Jealousy is the demand to be number one. May we share our *greatest* affections with no one else but the Lord Himself! We were made for Him.

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

We are now entering the section of the Bible known as *The Prophets*. This section comprises the four major prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel—and the twelve minor prophets. The twelve minor prophets are termed “minor” because they are considerably smaller in content.

Isaiah had a long ministry, prophesying during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (1:1). See p.119 for the chart on the kings. The events in Isaiah cover a period of 62 years. Isaiah is not an easy book. It is necessary to first have a basic knowledge of Israel's history and of God's purposes; you have to put yourself in Isaiah's situation to understand his writings. Also, the book is not in chronological order. It jumps from Isaiah's time to our time, and then it returns.

Background

Much of Isaiah revolves around the Assyrian Period. God had raised up the Assyrians to punish Northern Israel for their sins and take them into exile. Then the Assyrians continued south and took city after city in Judah until they surrounded Jerusalem. Chapters 1-39 deal with this period. The slaying of 185,000 Assyrians (37:36) *prefigures* the last days when Israel will be surrounded by hordes of enemies, but at Christ's coming, the Deliverer will save them. Amidst the warnings by Isaiah of the coming judgments, he also foretold Israel's deliverance and restoration. With the Assyrian Empire diminished, chapters 40-66 emphasize *the coming Messiah* and the blessings to the redeemed.

General Outline

- I. Chapters 1 – 35 - Prophetic Chapters
- II. Chapters 36 – 39 - Historical Events
- III. Chapters 40 – 66 - Messianic Chapters

Chapters 1–2 - A Capsule of the Entire Book of Isaiah

Chapters 1–2 are the basis for the rest of the book of Isaiah. The entire book of Isaiah will fit into these first two chapters. It is a summation of God's plan for Israel.

In 1:2, God has rebellious children, even though He is a perfect father. They had lost common sense and natural instinct (1:3). God graciously chastised His children to bring them to their senses (1:5-6). They were reduced to almost nothing (1:8-9); many were given over to sodomy (1:10). Even though they were evil, they were still *religious* (1:11-15). God's message to the people was this: “Wash and be clean” (1:16-18). A choice was presented to each backslider—“If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land, but if you rebel, you will be devoured by the sword” (1:19-20). God's people had sunk very low (1:21-24). Therefore, Zion would be redeemed with *judgment* (1:25-27). Then they would be ashamed of their idols which they carved out of oaks (1:29). Those who *remained* in Zion were holy (4:3). This had a fulfillment in Isaiah's time, and it has a future fulfillment.

Chapter 2 is a picture of Israel in the Millennial Age after many fierce judgments are executed upon the nations at Christ's Coming. In a very real sense, the events of chapters 1-2 had a fulfillment in Isaiah's time when God judged the 185,000 Assyrians. Then all the nations came and brought gifts to King Hezekiah and paid homage at Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:22-23). But this event foreshadows Israel's deliverance when Christ comes and Israel is blessed and exalted during the Millennium.

Old Testament Passages Have an Application to the Church

2:2 - “It shall come to pass in the last days.” The *last days* or *latter days* is an expression found in numerous passages of Scripture. Here is another rule of interpretation—

When “last days” refers to a blessing for Israel - it is in the Millennium.

When “last days” refers to a judgment for Israel - it is at the end of the Church Age.

Remember, all these Old Testament passages have an application to the Church. In 2:2-3, God will exalt His House in the last days. This is not only a reference to Israel's temple in the Millennium, it is also referring to the Church of the end times. God will exalt His Church in our times, and many nations will come to us and say, “Teach us the ways of God; we will walk in his paths.” In 2:6, the prophet momentarily swings back to his time when people were relying on the soothsayers for guidance. The expression “day of the Lord” in 2:12 is always a reference to *judgment* (cf. Amos 5:18), but it has a special connotation concerning the awesome judgments at Christ's Second Coming.

A Rudderless Generation — No Leadership

3:4 - God gives bad leadership to rebellious people. Children and babes were to rule over them. In 3:12, women were their leaders. A lack of leadership can be *a judgment*; however, this is not always the case. 3:8 - Jerusalem was in a deplorable condition because of their words and doings.

Promise of Cleansing by Judgment

Chapter 4 has a fulfillment for Israel in the Millennium but it also had a fulfillment in Isaiah's time. Jerusalem was whittled down to almost nothing, but the remnant who were left were holy. God would purge Jerusalem by the Assyrians, and “by the spirit of judgment and burning” (4:3,4). Remember, these passages have a meaning for us as well.

Israel Is Like a Vineyard That Produced “Wild Grapes”

Chapter 5:1-7 - Israel is like a vineyard. God did everything He could to care for his vineyard, but it produced wild grapes. Therefore, He would take away the hedge of protection. When a believer constantly disobeys, God Himself breaks down the wall of protection, and that person is overrun with evil spirits (Psa. 80:12). This happened to Germany in Hitler's time. Isaiah 5:8-30 is a series of six woes upon Israel.

Isaiah Has a New Encounter with God

In Chapter 6, Isaiah is taken to the very throne. He visibly sees the Lord, and in the light of the Lord he sees himself. God's light reveals our hidden needs, our real needs; psychology does not. Isaiah had a surprise—his speech needed to be cleansed! Before Isaiah could “feel good about himself” he had to see his true condition in God's light. But God never shows us a problem in our life without giving us a remedy. Thus, Isaiah's lips were purged, and he was freshly commissioned for his task. This experience happened the year King Uzziah died; thus, it was at the beginning of Isaiah's ministry (6:1).

Isaiah was going to be sent to people who would *not* respond to his message. Many would “hear, but not understand” (6:8-10). Isaiah is a profound type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Most of Israel rejected Jesus and His message as well. Success cannot be measured by how well you are received. If you do the will of God for your life, in God's eyes you are an eternal success.

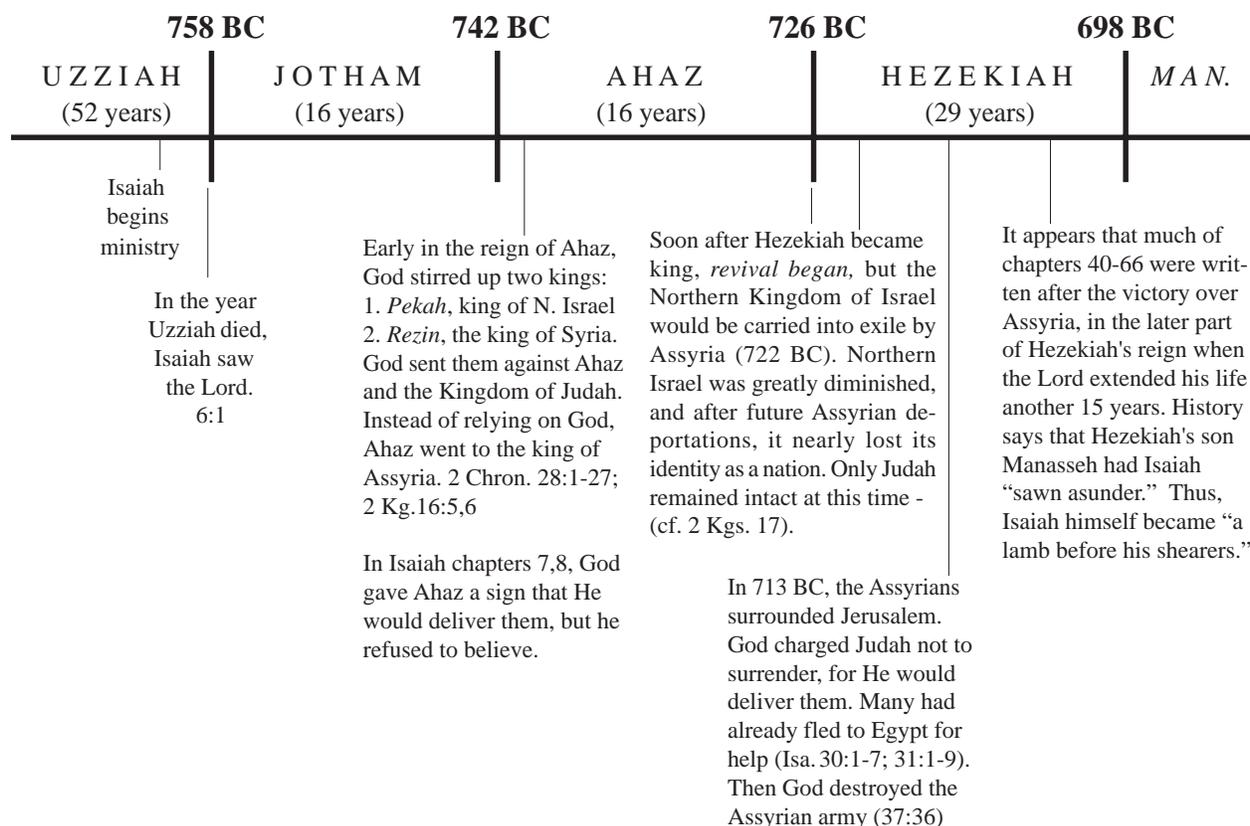
The Book of Emmanuel – Chapters 7 - 12

Although Chapters 7-12 are filled with judgments and various invasions, they are also interspersed with wonderful truths of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and visions of the coming Millennium. Thus, we can see that the spirit of prophecy repeatedly jumps ahead to the future and then comes back to the time of the prophet. First, let us look at the times of Isaiah.

Chronology for the Book of Isaiah

Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1)

*Our chronology is by Ussher. These dates are approximate but close.



The Virgin Birth Foretold

Chapters 7-8 create a prophetic setting for the birth of Christ. Early in the reign of Ahaz, the king of Syria (Rezin) and the king of Northern Israel (Pekah) had joined together to make war against Judah (7:1-2). God told Ahaz not to fear, for He would soon judge both kings (7:3-9). To encourage Ahaz, he offered him a "sign," but evil Ahaz refused. Therefore, God Himself would give them a sign (7:10-16); and this sign involved the birth of a son from a virgin. Before this child was two years of age, both these kings would be removed. (Both were assassinated - 2 Kgs. 15:30, 16:9). Before this child knew the difference between good and evil (7:16), and before this child could talk and say "my father and my mother" (8:4), God would judge both Syria and Samaria (N. Israel).

In Scripture, *virgin* has a limited meaning of "pure" (cf Rev.14:4). In that sense Isaiah's wife was a "virgin" (8:3); all of his children were for signs (8:18). When Isaiah's wife conceived a son for a sign, it foreshadowed another "virgin" who would bring forth a Son, and this Son's name would be called *Immanuel* (God with us). He is the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest sign of all.

One child was born in the time of Ahaz. The virgin was Isaiah's wife, but this looked ahead to the virgin Mary. The other child was Christ Himself. *Immanuel* could only be the Lord Jesus Christ:
1. Time of Ahaz - The virgin was Isaiah's wife. The son's name was Maher-shalal-hash-baz - 8:1,3
2. Time of Christ - The virgin was Mary. The Son's name was Immanuel (God with us) 7:14

God to Be Born — “A Son is Given”

9:6-7 - “Unto us a child is born, unto us is a son given ... his name shall be called ... the mighty God”. This child “Immanuel” was not an ordinary child. He was entitled *The Mighty God*. He did not have his beginning at birth, for “a Son was given.” The Father gave His Son and this Son was the Co-Creator of the universe, who existed long before the creation.

9:1-2 - Northern Israel (presently being judged in Isaiah's time) would later see a great light. That Light was Christ Himself, who performed over seventy percent of his miracles in the area of Galilee, which is Northern Israel (in Naphtali and Zebulun.) (See Mt. 4:15,16).

10:5-6 - “O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger ... I will send him against an hypocritical nation.” A hypocritical nation is a nation that knows the ways of God but does not obey them. God would use Assyria *as a rod in His hand* to chastise Samaria (Northern Israel), and then Jerusalem and Judah (See 10:11,12). God declared that after He was finished using Assyria to judge Israel and Judah, He would then punish Assyria (10:12-19). In 10:27, God would break the yoke of Assyria “by the anointing.” This is a reference to the slaughter of the army of 185,000 Assyrians who would later surround Jerusalem (37:36-38). Remember, God can also break every yoke in our lives by the anointing. All of these truths have a spiritual application to our lives. God might allow an oppressor to be in our lives until something is changed or accomplished. Then He delivers us.

Christ to Bring Justice and Peace to the Earth

11:1-16 - This again is a reference to the coming Christ, who would be anointed with the seven spirits of the Lord (11:1-2). He will rule the nations and execute justice during the Millennium. Some of the curse of Genesis 3:14-19 will be removed. In the animal world, the instinct to kill will be taken away (11:5-9). Chapter 12 is also the Millennial Age, with a special emphasis on “drawing water out of the wells of salvation” (12:3). Jesus Himself is called the “Fountain of Living Waters” (Jer. 2:13). Christ puts “a well” into every person who receives salvation (Jn. 4:14).

Prophecies Against Foreign Nations – 13:1 - 23:18

Chapters 13-14 - These judgments were pronounced against Babylon and the king of Babylon, while Babylon was only a colony of Assyria, before it had even risen to prominence. Isaiah had an amazing ability to predict the destinies of nations. In the midst of all the judgments in the earth, God is able to refine and “make a man more precious than fine gold” (13:12).

13:17-19 - Long before Babylon became a world power, Isaiah even foretells the nation that would judge Babylon, and that is the Medes. He proclaims the name of the king (Cyrus) who will help the Medes subdue Babylon (Isa. 44:28, 45:1-3). This was 176 years before it happened, and long before Cyrus was born. Then he pronounces judgment upon the king of Babylon, who is a type of the Antichrist (14:4). In 14:12-14, the spirit of prophecy goes back before time began, to the fall of Satan. These verses deal with Satan who indwells both the king of Babylon and the Antichrist.

Self-will and self-exaltation were Satan's downfall (14:12-14). Since Satan is the prince of this world, the spirit of this world emphasizes *ambition* and a striving to be number one (Mk.10:42-45). Therefore, Satan inhabits arrogant and ambitious men like the king of Babylon and the Antichrist, because their hearts are just like the heart of Satan. Satan will find a perfect resting place in the coming Antichrist, for he “magnifies himself above every god” (Dan.11:36,37, 2 Thes. 2:4). Satan does not dwell in a heart of humility and meekness. He wants attention, control, and worship.

Prophecy Can Have Double and Triple Fulfillments

Chapters 13 to 23 are prophecies against many foreign nations. Some of these prophecies came to pass during Isaiah's time or in the centuries that followed, but some of the prophecies still have a fulfillment in our times. Prophecy can have double and even triple fulfillments throughout history. This is another law of interpretation. I highly recommend that you read Dr. Brian J. Bailey's book on Isaiah. He will give you a profound verse by verse explanation of all these mysteries in Isaiah.

God's Universal Judgment in the Last Days

Chapter 24 stands by itself. This is not judgment upon *individual* nations, but a *universal* judgment upon the whole earth for its sinfulness. These judgments are just prior to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when the earth will become exceedingly wicked as it was in the days of Noah.

v5-6 - “*The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.*” This is referring to the judgments of the book of Revelation. When mankind discards the ten commandments, the result is AIDS, theft, bloodshed, and a breakdown of the home and of society. Most of the world will welcome the Antichrist when he comes, because he will justify sin and bewitch people with the lies they love to hear. The wicked will hate the righteous and slay them as Cain did Abel; but God will give them blood to drink for their judgment (Rev.16:5-7). The chapter ends with Christ's coming, the resurrection, and glorious reign of the saints on earth (v22,23).

The Book of Songs — Chapters 25–27

Chapters 25–27 are songs of the redeemed as they ponder God's righteous judgments upon the wicked in the end times; then it looks ahead to the Millennial age. 25:7-9 - The veil (or evil spiritual covering) that is spread over the nations will be removed. The Lord will come and save Israel and His people. “Death being swallowed up in victory” is a reference to the resurrection. 26:19 also mentions the resurrection. 26:20-21 is an exhortation to God's people to *remain steady* during the tribulation, “until the indignation be past.” Then in 27:1 is the binding of Satan (Rev. 20:1-3). Israel will blossom and bud and fill the earth with beautiful spiritual fruit in the Millennium (27:6).

The Book of Woes — Chapters 28–33 (except 32)

Chapters 28–33 are woes pronounced upon Israel for their sins. When God pronounces a “woe,” it is a sign of impending judgment after repeated warnings. Many of the woes in these chapters revolve around the coming Assyrian invasion. The main lesson we should learn is that God's patience and longsuffering has *limits* (cf. Gen. 6:3). We must never *presume* upon God's mercies. Remember, God destroyed His own nation, city, temple, and people after repeated unheeded calls to repentance.

A King Shall Reign in Righteousness

Chapter 32 is not a chapter of woe. It is a promise that “a king shall reign in righteousness.” This king, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ when He comes again. In previous chapters, Isaiah was predicting the coming judgments of the Assyrians, but now he moves into the Millennial Age. For a moment, let us consider the effects of a righteous leader. When you have a righteous leader like Hezekiah or Josiah, it changes society: v4 - The heart of the rash understand knowledge, the stammerers speak plainly; v5 - A vile person is no longer called noble. When the leader is righteous, everything is black and white, and there is no mixture. Evil is seen to be evil, and good is seen to be good. When the leader is righteous, people get on one side of the fence or the other, and everyone starts speaking clearly and distinctly. Verse 9 onwards comes back to the Assyrian period, to a time of judgment. v15 - “Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.” The way to stop judgment and the downward slide is to have the Spirit poured out upon us. Sometimes nothing can be done about a bad situation in a church (or nation) until God moves. Meanwhile you have to spend time with God and implore Him to pour out His Spirit; and when He does, everything changes.

Judgment on Edom / Blessings on Israel — Chapters 34–35

Edom is the land of Esau, and Bozrah is an important city there. Edom is also known as Idumea. In chapter 34, Isaiah was shown the judgment that shall befall the descendants of Esau when Christ returns. Esau has harbored a perpetual hatred against Israel his younger brother, and for this reason, God has kept a perpetual grudge against Edom. This message is repeated time after time throughout the prophets. Edom (also known as Mount Seir) is characterized by unforgiveness (Ezek. 35). Jesus taught us that our salvation depends on forgiving others (see Mt. 6:14,15). The slaughter of the Edomites [or Idumea] is awesome when Christ returns. See Isaiah 34, the entire chapter.

Jacob and Esau were reconciled as brothers (Gen. 33:5-12), but what about the evil wives of Esau (Gen. 26:34,35)? What did they sow into the hearts of the children? When New York was attacked by terrorists in 2001, women in the Middle East were seen dancing for joy! What have these mothers planted in the hearts of their children that has perpetrated such hatred for nearly 4,000 years?

Chapter 35 - In contrast to the devastation upon Edom (Esau), Israel will be blossoming like a rose. While Edom is burning, Israel will be flourishing. Edom is the area of Trans-Jordania, just east and south of Israel. Unforgiveness will make us “most desolate” and destroy our soul (Ezek. 35:3).

The Assyrian Siege of Jerusalem — Chapters 36–39

Chapters 36–37 are the siege of Zion and the victory God granted over the Assyrians. Hezekiah's reign started with a great revival (2 Chron. 29–31), a fact not recorded by Isaiah. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had already been invaded by the Assyrians about ten years earlier, but some of the remnant who were left came south to Jerusalem to partake of the revival (2 Chron. 30:10,11).

Revival Precedes Judgment

A principle that is substantiated throughout Scripture is that the Lord *first* allows His people to experience His goodness and His invitations of mercy and reconciliation. He allows them to see His power *before* He begins to deal seriously in their lives. A great revival took place in Judah when Hezekiah came to the throne, but a period of tribulation followed fourteen years later (Isa. 36:1).

Two Purposes for Revival

Revival gives people an opportunity to have their hearts changed. But often revival is to prepare people for difficult times ahead. Although Hezekiah's revival was extraordinary (2 Chr. 30:25,26), it was superficial for many. Afterwards, when the Assyrian invasion came, many were *rebellious* and fled to Egypt for refuge instead of to the Lord (Isa. 30:1,2,7,15; 31:1). Egypt represents the world; and in times of trouble, so many turn to the world for help instead of turning to the Lord.

The Foretelling of the Siege / Sufficient Time to Make Their Choice

For years Isaiah had been prophesying about the coming Assyrian invasion. Early in his ministry he said that Zion would be “left as a cottage in a vineyard ... as a besieged city” (1:8). He described Assyria as “the rod of God's anger” to punish a hypocritical nation (10:5,6); but after God had accomplished his full work on Zion, He would punish Assyria (10:12). All the surrounding nations had succumbed to the ravaging forces of the Assyrians. The Northern Kingdom of Israel (the ten tribes) had fallen ten years earlier, and now all of the cities of Judah were overrun. Basically, the old fortress of Zion was the last remaining stronghold. Judah saw this coming from afar, encroaching slowly like a forest fire. But most of the people did not prepare their hearts for the coming test. When revival comes to America, it will be an opportunity to be cleansed and transformed, but after that will follow tremendous judgment upon America to purge it of all vanity. Those who have not prepared themselves will not be “hidden in the day of the Lord's anger” (Zeph. 2:1-3). But just as it was in Isaiah's time, those who make it through the siege will be called “holy” (Isa. 4:3).

Hezekiah Healed / But Later Goes Off Course — Chapters 38–39

In Chapter 38, God told Hezekiah that he was going to die. When God says that, you should ask Him if it is your time to die—“Lord, have I completed my course in life?” Hezekiah did not carefully enquire of the Lord for His perfect will; he only wept and lamented and asked God for a longer life. God granted Hezekiah his request and extended to him another fifteen years. But in Chapter 39, the king became proud during those fifteen years and revealed all of Judah's military secrets to the Babylonians. (See 2 Kings 20:8-21; 2 Chronicles 32:22-31). Up to this point, Hezekiah's life had been unblemished. But God saw the future—He knew that Hezekiah was about to go off course and chose to terminate his days on earth at this time. This was an act of God's tremendous goodness to Hezekiah. Isaiah later wrote about this very subject, stating that God takes a righteous man to spare him from evil to come (Isa. 57:1). The prophet (in 39:6,7) now predicts Judah's captivity by the Babylonians—an event that came to pass more than a hundred years later. Among the captives would be some of Hezekiah's descendants. One of them was the prophet Daniel, a eunuch (Dan.1:1-8).

The Messianic Division — Chapters 40–66

Chapters 40 to 66 are sometimes called “The New Testament of Isaiah.” This is the Messianic section, since much of the content emphasizes the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the blessings of His redeemed. This division of Isaiah could be broken up into three sections:

- 1.) The Book of Consolation - Chapters 40 - 48
- 2.) The Deliverer (Jesus Christ) - Chapters 49 - 57
- 3.) The Delivered (The Redeemed) - Chapters 58 - 66

The Book of Consolation — Chapters 40–48

- Prophecy 1 - Chapter 40:1-31 - The Ministry of John the Baptist Foretold
- Prophecy 2 - Chapter 41:1-29 - The Righteous Man From the East (Cyrus)
- Prophecy 3 - Chapter 42:1 - 43:13 - The Lord as the Servant of God
- Prophecy 4 - Chapter 43:14 - 44:5 - The Promise of the Father (promise of the Holy Spirit)
- Prophecy 5 - Chapter 44:6-23 - The Graven Images of the Heathen Condemned
- Prophecy 6 - Chapter 44:24 - 45:25 - The Conquests of Cyrus Foretold
- Prophecy 7 - Chapter 46:1-13 - The Gods Who Are Carried vs The God Who Carries His People
- Prophecy 8 - Chapter 47:1-15 - The Fall of Babylon
- Prophecy 9 - Chapter 48:1-22 - The Purifying Furnace of Affliction

The Deliverer (Jesus Christ) — Chapters 49–57

- Prophecy 1 - Chapter 49:1-26 - The Polished Shaft
- Prophecy 2 - Chapter 50:1-11 - The Obedient Servant (Christ)
- Prophecy 3 - Chapter 51:1-23 - The Call to Hearken and Awake
- Prophecy 4 - Chapter 52:1-12 - Promised Deliverance from Babylon
- Prophecy 5 - Chapter 52:13 - 53:12 - The Suffering Servant
- Prophecy 6 - Chapter 54:1-17 - The Song of the Barren
- Prophecy 7 - Chapter 55:1-13 - The Sure Mercies of David
- Prophecy 8 - Chapter 56:1-8 - The Promise to the Eunuch and the Stranger
- Prophecy 9 - Chapter 56:9 - 57:21 - The Reproving of the Blind Shepherds

The Delivered (The Redeemed) — Chapters 58–66

- Prophecy 1 - Chapter 58:1-14 - The True Fast of the Lord
- Prophecy 2 - Chapter 59:1-21 - The Iniquities That Separate Us from God
- Prophecy 3 - Chapter 60:1-22 - The Promised Glory for the Last Day Church
- Prophecy 4 - Chapter 61:1-11 - The Anointed Messenger
- Prophecy 5 - Chapter 62:1-12 - Beulah Land
- Prophecy 6 - Chapter 63:1-6 - More Judgments upon Edom
- Prophecy 7 - Chapter 63:7 - 64:12 - Isaiah's Intercession for Israel
- Prophecy 8 - Chapter 65:1-25 - The Peculiar Nation That Will Replace Israel
- Prophecy 9 - Chapter 66:1-24 - The Birthing of Zion

The Assyrian Invasion Foretold:

- The Siege of Jerusalem - Isaiah 1:8,9
- Deliverance Promised - Isaiah 10:24-27
- Deliverance Fulfilled - Isaiah 37:34-38

The Babylonian Era Forefold:

- The Babylonian Siege - Isaiah 47:5,6
- The Fall of Babylon - Isaiah 44:27
- Release from Babylon - Isaiah 48:20
- Jerusalem to be Rebuilt - Isaiah 44:28

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

Introduction

Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of the last five kings of Judah (see pg.119). The prophets Zephaniah and Habakkuk also prophesied at the same time in Judah. During the latter part of Jeremiah's forty year ministry in Judah, Ezekiel and Daniel started their ministries in Babylon to the captives there in exile. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel all lived and ministered at the same time.

Man of the Heart

Jeremiah, known as “The Weeping Prophet,” is a type of the Man of Sorrows. Jeremiah preached repentance and a personal heart relationship with God. He was a man with a very tender heart, who speaks about “the heart” seventy times. After stating that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (17:9), Jeremiah prophesied of the coming new covenant that would give believers the possibility of having a new heart and a new spirit (31:31-34).

Jeremiah's Call

Jeremiah was called at a very young age (perhaps he was under twenty-one.) He was “of the priests in Anathoth” (1:1). Anathoth was an obscure little town several miles northeast of Jerusalem. God sometimes calls people from very ordinary places. He was called and ordained of God to be a prophet “before he was formed in the womb.” This is a profound theological statement. God knows all about us before we are born; therefore, He plans our life and vocation beforehand. The Lord “analyzes” us from every angle and chooses the vocation for us that we are exactly suited for.

1:9 - “And the Lord said to me, Behold I have put my words in thy mouth.” Jeremiah was set apart from other ordinary preachers when the Lord “touched his mouth.” The prophetic words in the mouth of Jeremiah gave him authority over nations and kingdoms, to root out and pull down, to build and to plant. Such is the power of the prophetic voice (1:10)! The young prophet is warned not to be unnerved by the frowns and “looks” of the people (1:8,17). With *one instant touch*, God transformed Jeremiah and made him “a defenced city, an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land...against the kings, princes, priests, and the people” (1:18). He would be greatly opposed.

The Times of Jeremiah — Revival, Then Judgment

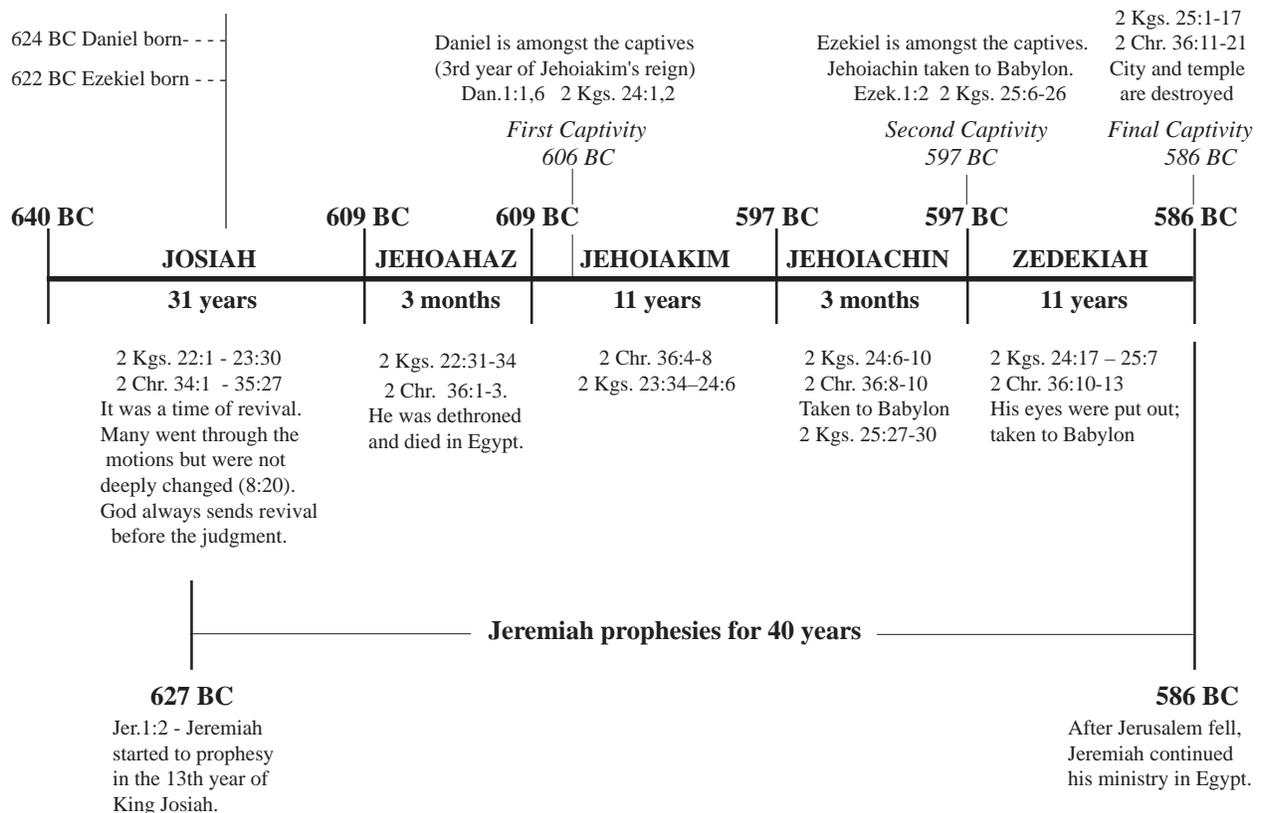
1:2-3 Jeremiah began his ministry “in the thirteenth year” of Josiah, king of Judah. This is very significant because the greatest revival in Israel's history had just started the year before “in the twelfth year of Josiah” (2 Chron. 34:1-3). This revival was even greater than the one in Hezekiah's time, a hundred years earlier (2 Chron. 35:18). Unfortunately, after Josiah's death, his sons who sat upon the throne in Jerusalem brought the nation into divine judgment because of their evil ways.

Just like the days of Hezekiah, there was revival first and then judgment that followed. This is a divine principle. God first gives revival to protect and prepare His people before He judges. The final years of the kingdom of Judah may prove to be a profound pattern for *our times* before Christ returns. For there will be the most extraordinary revival that mankind has ever seen, followed by the great “falling away” and the appearance of the two great imposters—the Antichrist and the False Prophet (2 Thes. 2:1-12). Then, *many* Christians will be “offended” and fall away (cf. Mt. 24:9-13).

General Outline for Jeremiah

- Chapter 1 - Call and Commission of Jeremiah
- Chapter 2-20 - Warnings, Exhortations, and Calls to Repentance
- Chapter 21-22 - Judgments upon the Last Four Kings of Judah
- Chapter 23 - Against the Pastors, Priests, and Prophets / Promise of Israel's Restoration
- Chapter 24-29 - Commands to Submit to Captivity
- Chapter 30-33 - Promise of a New Covenant / Promise of Restoration of All Israel
- Chapter 34-38 - Miscellaneous Messages to the Jews
- Chapter 39-44 - Fall of Jerusalem and the Escape of the Remnant into Egypt
- Chapter 45 - God's Message to Baruch, Jeremiah's Scribe
- Chapter 46-51 - Pronouncements of Judgment on Various Nations
- Chapter 52 - Historical Notes on the Capture of Jerusalem

Chronology For Jeremiah's Ministry (During the last 5 kings of Judah, and beyond)



Jeremiah prophesied during the last forty years of Judah before it fell to the Babylonians. The book is not in chronological order, but we can get dates from the years the kings reigned. For example: chapter 32:1 says: "in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah." This is approximately 587 BC. In the early years of Jeremiah's ministry there was revival, but then judgment fell upon the nation. There were three separate invasions (606, 597, and the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC).

Warnings, Exhortations and Calls to Repentance Chapters 2–20

1:11-16 - From the beginning of his call, Jeremiah knew that a gigantic invasion from the north was coming, and it was coming in his times. The Lord is saying, “Even as the leaves of the almond tree blossom and expand in January while the other trees sleep, even so will judgment from the north come forth hastily. Jerusalem was like a boiling caldron tilted toward the north. The Babylonian armies who would descend from the north would issue such intense judgments that Jerusalem's inhabitants would evaporate and the city would be purged by fire of all its filth and scum. Such would be the fiery judgments upon God's city. Jeremiah uses picturesque speech and many vivid illustrations to deliver his messages to the people. Below are a few examples:

- 2:3 - Love that once was young and fervent has long grown cold.
- 2:5 - In following vanity [or idols], they had become vain. We become *like* the thing we follow.
- 2:13 - The Lord who is the Fountain of Living Waters was *exchanged* for empty broken cisterns.
- 2:32 - A bride can never forget her attire, yet God's people have long forgotten Him.
- 3:3 - They had the forehead of a whore; They had no shame and could no longer blush at sin.
- 3:10 - During Josiah's revival they had not really returned to the Lord; it was *feigned* or pretended.
- 3:13 - God is *married* to His people, and wants His adulterous people to return to Him (3:20).
- 4:3 - They were as *fallow ground* (once productive but neglected and now covered with thorns).
- 4:4 - The people were uncircumcised in heart and spirit, though circumcised in flesh (6:10).
- 4:14 - Vain thoughts lodged in the minds of the people (9:14).
- 5:1-3 - Jerusalem was repeatedly chastised but refused correction; their hearts were hard like rock.
- 5:15 - Therefore, God would send upon them an evil nation (Babylon) to punish them.
- 5:30-31 - The people *loved* to hear lies like “God loves you unconditionally no matter how you live!”
- 6:13 - The whole problem is the ministry and those who lead the people (cf. 8:10,11 12:10).
- 6:13,14 - For bigger offerings (or covetousness), the teachers and prophets preached — “Prosperity.”
- 6:19 - Our thoughts produce fruit. Thoughts produce *actions* that put us on a course.
- 7:1-7 - They trusted in the temple (v4) and in traditions to save them. Only righteousness saves us.
- 7:8 - They “trusted in a lie.” Many trusted in false hopes, just like today.
- 7:12 - God said, “Remember, I destroyed Shiloh, the first tabernacle.” (Do not trust in the temple.)
- 7:22,23 - The real sacrifice is obedience. Nothing can be a *substitute* for obedience (11:4, 11:7).
- 8:20 - Revival was *harvest time*, but they missed the opportunity to repent and reap a heart change.
- 9:2 - All the people were adulterers (7:9; 13:27; 23:10; 23:14). The ministers were adulterers too.
- 9:23,24 - Exhortation not to glory in their minds, might, or money, but only to glory in the Lord.
- 10:23 - “It is not in man to direct his ways.” Man cannot understand himself or control tomorrow.
- 12:1,2 - “Lord, why do you prosper the wicked?” Jeremiah is frustrated and perhaps confused.
- 13:1-9 - The girdle buried by Euphrates is ruined. God will ruin Judah's pride in Babylonian captivity.
- 13:16 - When man is not thankful for the light, God gives darkness so that man cannot find his way.
- 13:23 - As a leopard cannot change spots nor an Ethiopian his skin, man cannot change his nature.
- 15:1 - Even if Moses and Samuel were there to intercede, God will still punish Judah for her sins.
- 15:10,11 - Jeremiah's reproach for standing for right. God promises to protect him when trouble comes.
- 16:14,15 - The emphasis will change from “The Lord is my Savior” to “The Lord is my Restorer.”
- 17:1,9 - Sin is firmly imbedded in the heart of man. His heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.
- 18:1-6 - God is the Potter; He is able to reshape a marred vessel. He breaks *hardened* vessels (19:11).
- 20:1-6 - Pashur strikes Jeremiah for prophesying judgment. This minister was prophesying blessing.

Judgments upon the Last Four Kings of Judah **Chapters 21–22**

The last four kings of Judah were evil and brought judgment upon the nation. God is the one who determines who will be the ruler of a nation, and that ruler is indicative of the general state of the people of that nation. God gives bad leadership to a country that forgets Him. The indictments against these four kings are not in chronological order.

21:1-14 - Against Zedekiah, the last king. He was commanded to submit to Nebuchadnezzar (v7). If he refused to submit, he would cause the city to be burned; no pity would be shown to the people. Zedekiah rebelled and brought total destruction to Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 24:18-20; 2 Chr. 36:11-21).

22:1-9, 13-19 - Against Jehoiakim (Eliakim). He would be “buried with the burial of an ass,” which means no burial at all (v19). He is the only king of Judah whose burial is not recorded.

22:10-12 - Against Shallum (Jehoahaz). He was taken as a prisoner into Egypt and would never return to his homeland, but would die in Egypt. See 2 Kings 23:31-34.

22:20-30 - Against Jehoiachin (Coniah, Jeconiah). He and his mother would be exiled into another country (Babylon) and be buried there (v26). None of his seven sons sat upon the throne (v30).

Against the Pastors, Priests, Prophets / Promise of Israel's Restoration **(Chapter 23)**

This chapter is an indictment against the spiritual leaders, whereas chapters 21-22 were against the political leaders. While verses 3-8 are promises of Israel's restoration during the Millennium, the rest of the chapter reveals the deplorable condition of the backslidden ministers. v1 - “Woe be unto the pastors.” v11 - “Both prophet and priest are profane.” v13 - “They caused the people to err.” v14 - The prophets were all adulterers. v16-17 - They were speaking a vision “from their own heart” and not from the Lord, and were prophesying under a false anointing (v25-27, 30-40). Verse 18 suggests that you must spend much time seeking God and live right *to have the true message*.

v17 - The false prophets and teachers were all saying: “peace and prosperity; no evil shall come.” This is a great problem in the Church today. In order to gain wider acceptance and larger churches, ministers only preach the blessings and never mention the curses for disobedience. Thus, people can remain comfortable in their sins. When ministers live in adultery, a stupor comes over their minds. They drift into a false anointing, and their message leads people *away* from the Lord.

Commands to Submit to Captivity **(Chapters 24–29)**

These chapters are commands to submit to captivity. Captivity is for the purpose of cleansing and purging. Then God promised a return to normalcy. The inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem were to surrender and go to Babylon as captives. In captivity, God would “give them a heart to know Him” (Jer. 24:5-7). Those who refused captivity would die. This is a very up-to-date message. Captivity speaks of trials and foreign circumstances that God uses to refine His people. If we submit to them, God will change us and give us a heart to know him, as Job. Job's trial was termed a captivity (cf. Job 42:10). Many of Jeremiah's fellow-ministers mightily opposed the message to submit to captivity. They preached that the people should resist all trouble, even as many do today, labeling all trouble as coming from the devil. But as in Jeremiah's time, so often it is God sending the enemy (27:6-8).

Healing *Slightly* the Wound of the People—By False Hope

8:11 - “For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying Peace, peace; when there is no peace.” The backslidden ministers gave false hope to the people by telling them God would bless and protect them. Never did they uncover the real needs and sins of the people so that they could be truly healed. Sad to say, people love to live in a fantasy world and be told “things are going to get better” without any repentance (Jer. 5:30-31). Being assured that they would have peace brought temporary relief from the obvious, encroaching judgment. Thus, it healed them *slightly*, but it never dealt with the “cancer” of sin that was going to destroy them. It is better to face the light of truth and be healed. The *lottery* and *adultery* are other examples of false hopes and dream worlds.

28:5-9 - Jeremiah makes it clear that God never raises up prophets to tell people that everything is going to be all right. Quite to the contrary, God raises up prophets to warn of coming judgment. Hananiah, a fellow-prophet, was “teaching rebellion against the Lord” and causing the people to “trust in a lie” by contradicting Jeremiah's message (28:12-17). God was against all the prophets who “stole his words” (23:30). To contradict the true message was to *steal His words*. Then the people did not know who to listen to.

Promise of Restoration of All Israel / And a New Covenant Chapters 30–33

30:1-4 - This return from captivity involves all of *Israel and Judah*; thus, it is a reference to 1948. The return from Babylonian captivity only included Judah. The succeeding verses affirm that it is speaking of our time. In verses 5-7, “Jacob's trouble” is referring to the great tribulation—the last 3 1/2 years of the Church Age. v30 is the return of Christ, who breaks the powers of Israel's enemies who are surrounding them. The expression “no more” is associated with the Millennium. v9 - The Lord Jesus Christ Himself will be in Jerusalem; and David, too, will be resurrected and be there.

Chapter 31:31-34 is the promise of a new covenant. At a time in history when the old covenant had utterly failed, God was promising a new covenant. The old covenant had little ability to change the heart. The Law was good, but offered no power to obey it. The new covenant gives believers the possibility of having a new heart and a new spirit, as they continue to yield to its workings. The whole problem of the human heart is “hardness” and rebellion. We all need a new heart.

31:35-37 - Israel's restoration is sure. Some teach that God has divorced Israel and married the Church, but this cannot be substantiated with Scripture. God was “a husband unto them” in the old covenant (31:32). He seeks a better relationship by means of the new covenant that offers a heart of flesh. The Lord never divorced Israel, but said: “If you can measure the heavens above, so will I cast off all the seed of Israel” (v37). We cannot measure heaven, neither will the ordinances of the sun, moon, and stars cease. Israel, as a nation, will be restored during the Millennium and will never cease from being a nation before the Lord (31:35,36). Even today, a remnant of Jews are believers.

32:1-15 - Jeremiah was in prison just before Jerusalem fell. Here he is instructed to buy a parcel of land as a sign that houses, fields, vineyards, and lands will still be possessed in Judah, though for the present, the inhabitants were going to be exiled. However, they would return in the future. Jeremiah prays in 32:16-25, and God answers him in 32:26-44. God would restore the exiles back to their homeland. This had a *partial fulfillment* when they returned from Babylon after the 70 years captivity, but has its *complete fulfillment* at the Second Coming of Christ. Much of verses 37-44 is the Millennial Age (as well as Chapter 33.)

Miscellaneous Messages to the Jews **Chapters 34–38**

- Chapter 34 - The Message to Zedekiah Concerning the Coming Captivity
- Chapter 35 - The Obedience of the Rechabites
- Chapter 36 - Jeremiah's Written Message Read to the People
- Chapter 37 - Jeremiah's Message to King Zedekiah / Jeremiah Accused of Treason
- Chapter 38 - Jeremiah Put in the Dungeon / Interceded for by the Ethiopian

Fall of Jerusalem and Escape of the Remnant into Egypt **Chapters 39–44**

- Chapter 39 - Fall of Jerusalem / Zedekiah and Princes Judged / God's Promise to the Ethiopian
- Chapter 40 - Jeremiah Released / Assassination Plot Against Gedaliah
- Chapter 41 - Gedaliah Assassinated Because He Did Not Heed a Warning
- Chapter 42 - Jeremiah's Warning to the Remnant Not to Flee to Egypt for Refuge
- Chapter 43 - The Remnant Flees to Egypt / Jeremiah Taken with Them
- Chapter 44 - Jeremiah's Message to the Jews in Egypt—God Will Judge Them
- Chapter 45 - God's Message to Baruch, Jeremiah's Scribe*

Judgments on Various Nations Pronounced **Chapters 46–51**

- Chapter 46:1-28 - Against Egypt
- Chapter 47:1-7 - Against the Philistines
- Chapter 48:1-47 - Against Moab
- Chapter 49:1-6 - Against the Ammonites
- Chapter 49:7-22 - Against Edom (compare with Obadiah)
- Chapter 49:23-27 - Against Damascus
- Chapter 49:28-33 - Against Kedar and Hazor
- Chapter 49:34-39 - Against Elam (area of Persia “Iran”)
- Chapter 50 - 51 - Against Babylon
- Chapter 52 - Historical Notes*

Judgments against these nations had a fulfillment in Jeremiah's era, but many of them will have a fulfillment in our time. God will judge Egypt, Syria, Trans-Jordania, Elam (Iran), and Babylon (Iraq).

The life of Jeremiah was very similar to that of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, some thought that Jesus was Jeremiah risen from the dead (Mt.16:14, Lk.9:19). Both were greatly opposed by the theologians of their day, and both prophesied of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple (which occurred in 586 BC and 70 A.D.). Both men suffered loneliness, rejection, and the contradiction of sinners. Jeremiah lived in an age that is very similar to ours, where sin abounds and the love of many is turning cold, a time when leaders are more and more willing to compromise and give false hope to the hearers. But he refused to be unfaithful to God, his audiences, and himself. Jeremiah, perhaps more than any of the prophets, was the most open and transparent in his personal life, confessions, and struggles. He is surely one of the greatest men in history.

THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

Lamentations was written by Jeremiah after Jerusalem's destruction in 586 BC. It is a disclosure of the love and sorrow of God for the very people whom He is chastening, a sorrow wrought by the Spirit in the heart of Jeremiah. In five separate poems, the prophet "laments" as he surveys the ruins of the temple and Jerusalem after the devastation of the Babylonians.

1:1 - Jeremiah looks back at the prosperous days before Jerusalem was destroyed. The city that was full of people and great among the nations is now solitary like a widow, and subservient to her enemies. 1:2 - All her lovers [she was adulterous with heathen gods] have turned against her and forsaken her. 1:3 - She has gone into captivity. 1:5 - Her enemies prosper, but that is because the Lord Himself hath afflicted her. 1:6 - All her beauty is departed. She had used her beauty and blessings from God to glorify herself and live for herself. 1:7 - God removed all her blessings so that His adulterous people would remember where the blessings came from. 1:8 - Because of her great sin, people saw her nakedness and lost all respect for her. 1:9 - Jeremiah identifies himself with Jerusalem and her affliction and asks God to look upon their misery and have mercy. 1:17 - Again it is the Lord who has given Jerusalem into the hands of her enemies. 1:20 - Jeremiah, taking the iniquity of Judah upon himself, confesses—"I have grievously rebelled." 1:21,22 - Now that the surrounding nations and enemies are rejoicing at Jerusalem's calamity, Jeremiah asks God to remember the iniquity of the enemies and mete out the recompense they justly deserve.

2:5-10 - The Lord has abhorred his own inheritance and sanctuary and caused the solemn feasts to stop. The city is broken down; her king and princes are in exile. 2:14 - "Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity..." Here is the reason God's people were destroyed and taken into captivity. The prophets did not preach the true message and reveal the real needs of the hearts. Instead, they saw vain and foolish things. This is a sign of our times as well. 2:17 - "The Lord hath ... fulfilled his word that he commanded in the days of old." Jeremiah recognized that Moses had predicted these judgments and the captivity many years before; and now it has finally come to pass (cf. Deut. 28:36,49; Lev. 26:14-46).

3:1-20 - Many of these verses are direct quotes from Job. Jeremiah is feeling the judgment (vicariously) that God's people were under. 3:19,20 - We will be brought into miserable experiences to cause us to see our absolute dependence upon God, and to work out humility. "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me." 3:21-38 - Bitter experiences are actually the mercy of God to purify us, so that He may exalt us in due time. 3:27 - Jeremiah himself bore the yoke from his youth. He learned to be a hard-working servant and to bear reproach as a boy. He submitted to captivity in his personal life and became his message; and when he prophesied "captivity," he found himself in prison as well.

3:33 - God does not "willingly afflict the children of men." God hates to bring judgment, but sometimes He must. 4:6 - Jerusalem's punishment was greater than Sodom's. Sodom was judged in a moment, but God's people pined away for their sins, for they had greater light (cf. 4:13).

Let us remember that there is hope for the downtrodden of God's people. 3:32 - "But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of her mercies" (see 3:21-25). For those who are passing through fiery trials, let us remember that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:5). The Lord is a God of all consolation and restoration. Surely He will bind up the wounds of those who approach Him with a broken and contrite spirit.

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

Introduction

Ezekiel was born around 622 BC, soon after Daniel (624 BC). In their youth, both men were exposed to the godly example and ministry of Jeremiah. Ezekiel was taken to Babylon in the second invasion (597 BC), when he was 25 years of age. After being in Babylon five years (age 30), he began his ministry to the captives there (1:1,2).

Although Ezekiel was stationed in Babylon, time after time God would take him in visions to Jerusalem and show him the conditions there, especially the time just prior to the final destruction. Ezekiel had a better transportation system than we have today. He was *instantly* in Jerusalem and then back in Babylon. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel was a priest as well as a prophet. He attributes Judah's terrible state and captivity to the backslidden priesthood (22:26, 44:9-16).

Ezekiel lived with the Jewish captives by the river Chebar (1:1 1:3 3:15), which was an irrigation canal that connected the Tigris River with the Euphrates somewhat north of the city of Babylon. Daniel (who went into captivity in the first invasion in 606 BC) lived in the city, even in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel became an advisor to a number of the kings of Babylon and Persia. Ezekiel knew Daniel and makes mention of him several times (14:14, 14:20, 28:3). We know little about the prophet's personal life except that he was married; but later his wife died.

Ezekiel was given extraordinary visions, comparable perhaps only to John's Revelation. He saw the throne of God, the cherubim, the Millennial age, and much more. He also used allegory and symbolic actions to convey his messages. The Book of Ezekiel covers about 22 years—from the commencement of his ministry in 592 BC (1:1,2) to 570 BC (29:17).

Common Expressions in Ezekiel

- 1.) *Son of Man* - (87 times). God addressed Ezekiel as Son of Man, depicting his humanness, dependance upon God, and complete identification with man. He is a type of Jesus Christ.
- 2.) *"And they shall know that I am the Lord"* - (60 times). When God moves by His Spirit in judgment or other ways, it is to cause people to know just who He is. He is sovereign.
- 3.) *"The word of the Lord came unto me"* - (45 times). A sign of the prophetic office is when the word of the Lord comes repeatedly. It represents an intimate communion with God, a sharing of God's heart and concerns with man.
- 4.) *"The hand of the Lord was upon me"* - (7 times). This is the thought of empowerment and preservation. God's hand upon us is our defense.

General Outline

Chapter 1 – 24 - Denunciation of Judah and Israel (592 - 588 BC)

Chapter 25 – 32 - Prophecies Against Foreign Nations (586 - 570 BC)

Chapter 33 – 48 - The Future Restoration of Israel (Millennium) (585 - 572 BC)

Ezekiel's Ministry—Before, During, and After Jerusalem's Destruction

- 1.) Before the Destruction of Jerusalem (592 - 588 BC) His message to the captives in Babylon was that Jerusalem would fall, and that the reason it would fall was its gross iniquity. False prophets among the exiles were saying that God would save Jerusalem and bring the captives home soon.
- 2.) During the Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem (588 - 586 BC) During the *two years* the city was under siege, the prophet became “dumb.” The day he announced the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, his wife died. He seems to have remained dumb until the fall of the city (24:1,2,18,26,27).
- 3.) After the Destruction of Jerusalem (585 - 570 BC) After the prophet hears of the fall of Jerusalem, the Lord opened his mouth again. His message now becomes one of comfort and restoration. Much of chapters 33-48 concerns the Millennial age.

Call and Commission of Ezekiel

Ezekiel's call and commission was very similar to Christ's. At the age of thirty, as he was by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God (1:1-3). In like manner, when Jesus was thirty, standing in the river Jordan, the heavens were opened and the Father anointed and commissioned Christ to begin his ministry. The name “Ezekiel” means *God Strengthens*. Ezekiel testified that “the hand of the Lord was strong upon me” and that God had made his face “strong against their faces” (3:7,8,14). Ezekiel was God's voice to the exiles in Babylon who were very rebellious and hard-hearted; and the prophet would need the strength of God to faithfully deliver the message to them. God had made him “a watchman to the house of Israel.”

The Throne of God Borne by the Four Living Creatures

1:4 on - Ezekiel sees four living creatures coming out of the north, carrying the throne of God. Therefore, this vision is sometimes called, “The Chariot Throne of God.” These four creatures surround the throne of God and have tremendous power to execute God's government. They are mentioned in Revelation 4,5,6,15:7. The four living creatures announce the first four seals in Revelation chapter six (Rev. 6:1,3,5,7). They are “full of eyes” (1:18; 2 Chron.16:9) and nothing can be hidden from these eyes. It would appear that these four creatures brought the throne of God down to earth, and then the Lord who sat upon the throne began to speak to Ezekiel: “And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak to thee” (2:1). The prophet is now commissioned to a stiffhearted, impudent, and rebellious people. Ezekiel would be in the midst of scorpions (evil spirits), and briars and thorns (works of the flesh) (2:3-7).

Ezekiel's Call to be a Watchman

The prophet is first commanded to imbibe a “scroll” (3:1-3). This means we have to thoroughly digest our message and get it into every cell of our being before we can deliver God's message with authority. Ezekiel is made a “watchman” to the house of Israel (3:17). He was to protect, guard, and warn God's people of danger and judgment. His warnings in particular are to *the righteous* (3:20-21, 18:24-26, 33:12-13,18). Ezekiel saw so many start out well, even among his fellow priests and prophets, but then they turned away from God. The Lord makes it very clear that we cannot rely on our past good works to save us. We have to endure to the end to be saved, as our Lord taught us in Matthew 24:12-13. It is very serious to teach that God's favor can never be lost. As God's watchman, Ezekiel would forfeit his own life if he did not sound the alarm faithfully and exactly as the Lord commanded him (3:18-20, 33:1-9). “His blood will I require at thy hand.”

Ezekiel Predicts Jerusalem's Destruction Using Symbolic Acts (Chapters 4–7)

In Babylon among the exiles, Ezekiel warns that Jerusalem will fall. He does so using symbolism. First, he lays siege to a replica of the city (4:1-8). Then, he rations food and water (4:9-17). In 5:1-17, Ezekiel shaves his head, burning 1/3 of the hair, smiting 1/3 with a knife, and scattering the other 1/3 into the wind. However, he hides *a few hairs* in his skirts. By these actions he was showing that 1/3 of Jerusalem would die of famine in the city, 1/3 would die by the sword, and the other 1/3 would be scattered to the winds (among the nations). However, God would preserve *a remnant*.

6:11 - “Smite with thine hand and stamp with thy foot...and say, Alas for all the evil abominations.” It was as though the Lord was demonstrating through the prophet with these gestures and saying, “That’s final! That is as far as you are going. Grace has run out for you”! See also 44:12 - “I have lifted up my hand against them.” Study some of the other gestures of the Lord in Scripture.

7:2 - “The end is come.” When judgment comes — “All hands shall be feeble and all knees shall be weak as water— “They will cast their silver and gold into the streets” (7:17-19). Silver and gold cannot save us on the day of judgment. Only righteousness and humility preserve us in the day of judgment (Zeph. 2:1-3). Do not stock up with food, silver and gold coins, and such. Preservation comes from the Lord, by pleasing Him.

Ezekiel Now Taken to Jerusalem in a Vision (Chapters 8–11)

In chapters 8–11, the prophet is taken from Babylon to Jerusalem in a vision. God can take us to other places in spirit or even bodily. We should believe God for these things in the last days. Elijah and Philip were transported bodily. Ezekiel and Paul were taken in spirit to other places and sometimes to different centuries (1 Cor. 5:4, Col. 2:5). Paul was in Rome, yet he was beholding the order and conduct of the congregation in Colosse.

8:1-4 - Ezekiel suddenly “passes out” before the elders, and the Spirit brought him to Jerusalem. God was so patient with His people. For years they had provoked him to jealousy by their idols, but now God was going to withdraw His presence and “go far off from his sanctuary” (9:6). Ezekiel’s spirit is travelling throughout the city and sanctuary and seeing all the hidden sins and abominations of the people. v10 - They were worshipping “every form of creeping thing and beast.” Animal worship was part of Egyptian worship. v13-14 - Tammaz was a fertility god. v16 - They worshipped the sun in the temple court. v18 - When judgment fell - “Though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.” In hell people will cry with a loud voice, but God will not hear, nor will He remember them anymore. God will not remember this earth and the lost, forever (Isa.65:17).

9:1-7 - The Lord commands six men (who were probably angels) to pass through Jerusalem and slay utterly old and young, maids and little children, but to spare all those who were marked with a special mark. This mark upon the foreheads was not visible to natural eyes, but it was placed upon all the righteous, those who “sighed and cried for all the abominations” of the land (9:4 cf. Mt. 5:4). A pious life is to key to being preserved when judgment falls. The judgment was “to begin at God’s sanctuary.” This is the reason for the holocaust in Europe during World War II (9:9,10). The sin of the Jews was exceedingly great.

10:1 - Again Ezekiel sees God's throne with the four living creatures around the throne. v2 - An angel (a "man clothed in linen") is told to take coals of fire and scatter them over the city. This signifies judgment. In Chapter 11, Ezekiel is still in Jerusalem in spirit. Now he is taken to the east gate of the Lord's house. He sees twenty-five men standing there, among whom were two princes (Jaazaniah and Pelatiah) who were very influential and were giving Jerusalem evil counsel. It appears that they were responsible for the shedding of much innocent blood in the city. Ezekiel is told to prophesy against these men; and as he is prophesying, Pelatiah falls down dead (10:13). In 11:23, Ezekiel beholds the glory of God (which had been manifested in the holy of holies) leave the temple and city. God was abandoning his apostate people, temple, and city. (In 43:3-5, the fullness of the glory of the Lord returns, in the Millennium). 11:24-24 - At that moment, Ezekiel returned in spirit to Babylon.

Symbolic Actions and Sermons Predicting Jerusalem's Fall (Chapters 12–24)

- 12:1-7 - Ezekiel enacts the departure of the remaining Jews (and Zedekiah) into exile from Jeru.
- 13:1-23 - The message comes against the false prophets. There were "prophets" in Babylon and in Jerusalem saying that the captivity would end soon. (See Jeremiah 28, 29).
- 14:1-11 - Ezekiel speaks against idols in the heart. (God will tell us what we want to hear if we are not honest.) When people love a lie, God gives them deception (2 Thes. 2:10-12).
v12-23 Only righteousness can save us; we cannot live off the righteousness of parents.
- 15:1-8 - Jerusalem is like a vine. If a vine does not bear good fruit, it is worthless. It is not even good for firewood. God was going to burn up the "vine." It was useless and had no fruit.
- 16:1-63 - Jerusalem is likened to an unfaithful wife. She became like a harlot, worse than Sodom.
v28-29 - The Jews were *insatiable*. Spirits of lust cannot be satisfied, but cast out.
- 17:1-10 - The parable of the great eagle. Verses 11-21 give the interpretation (cf. 2 Kg. 24:6–25:7).
- 18:1-32 - The individual's responsibility before God. The condition of our parents, good or bad, is not relevant. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; and the father shall not bear the iniquity of the son. Ultimately, everyone will answer for himself (v20).
- 19:1-14 - Lamentation is made for the two princes of Judah. The lioness is a mother - Hamatul. Her two whelps (sons)—Jehoahaz and Zedekiah. This ambitious mother lost both sons.
- Chapters 20–24 are continual indictments against Judah.
- 20:1-32 - Israel never had the idols of Egypt purged from them. Egypt represents the world.
v33-44 is future judgment and the regathering of scattered Israel.
- 21:1-7 - Parable of the sighing prophet, and (v8-17) the Parable of the Sword of God
v18-32 - After Zedekiah there will be no more kings until the Messiah comes (v27).
- 22:1-16 - The sins of Israel are enumerated. v17-22 - The parable of the dross in a furnace.
v23-31 - The sins of the priests, princes, prophets, and the people.
- 23:1-49 - The parable of the two daughters—Aholah and Aholibah. The two sisters represent: *Northern Israel* is Aholah; *Judah* is Aholibah. Neither had been cleansed of lust when they came out of Egypt. Both became very immoral. The younger sister (Judah) learned nothing from the misery and captivity of her older sister, but went out and did worse.
- 24:1-2 - The beginning of the final siege of Jerusalem. v1-14 give the parable of the boiling pot. In v15-27, Ezekiel is again made a sign unto Israel. In v18, Ezekiel's wife dies. He is not to mourn or weep, for Jerusalem and the sanctuary would be destroyed and the sons and daughters slain, yet there would be no mourning or weeping. They would pine away for their iniquities, and be "numb" from the famine and all the other judgments.

Prophets Were Signs

All of the prophets were for signs, not only for their time, but some were signs for our time as well. When God's hand is upon your life, it touches your ministry, personal life, and marriage as well:

Isaiah, his wife, and his children were for signs (Isa. 7:14, 8:3,18).

Jeremiah was told not to marry (Jer.16:1-4).

Ezekiel's wife died as a sign, and the prophet was not to mourn (Ezek. 24:15-19)

Daniel was a eunuch in the king's palace (Dan.1:3,4).

Hosea married a woman who became an adulteress; his children had bad names too (Hos.1:2-10).

Jesus gave the discourse on the Second Coming upon the Mount of Olives, the very place where He ascended and returns. *Where* a prophet is when he prophesies is important. Jeremiah was told to go to the potter's house, and *there* the Lord would cause him to hear His words (Jer.18:1). God instructed him to bury a linen cloth by Euphrates. After many days he dug it up, and the linen was destroyed. In the same way God would mar the great pride of Jerusalem (Jer.13:1-9). The fact that it was done by the Euphrates River meant that it was *in Babylon* where the pride would be ruined.

Prophecies Against Foreign Nations (Chapters 25–32)

Chapter 25 - Judgments against the Ammonites, Moab, Edom, and Philistia.

Chapter 26 - Coming judgment upon Tyre. Tyre is in modern Lebanon. Do not make everything as being fulfilled in the past. God can quicken these verses today. These prophecies can have historic and present fulfillments.

Chapter 27 - Lamentation for Tyre. Tyre was Satan's city, a type of another city in our times. See Revelation 18:1-24. At the time just prior to the Babylonian supremacy, Tyre was at its zenith. It was the centre of trade and commerce, a very powerful trading port. The strain of her resistance to Babylon and damage to her commerce brought it to poverty.

Chapter 28 - Rebuke of the King of Tyre. (v1-19). There are three individuals in these verses:

- a. Ithobal II - the earthly prince of Tyre.
- b. Satan, who worked through the man Ithobal II.
- c. The coming Antichrist, of whom Ithobal II is a type.

28:3 Refers directly to the spirit that was in Ithobal II, which is Satan.

28:4-6 - Satan loves commerce and worked through the ambitious king of Tyre to get, silver, gold and treasures. Satan controls the economy in order to control man.

28:11-16 go beyond the king of Tyre to Satan himself.

Chapter 29–32 are all against Egypt. Chapters 29–30 is a prophecy against Egypt. It had a historic fulfillment, and it has a future fulfillment. Chapter 31 is a prophecy against Pharaoh. 32:1-15 is a lamentation for Pharaoh. Nebuchadnezzar was going to judge Egypt (v11). v17-32 is a lamentation for Egypt. Egypt represents the world, the unredeemed. The prophet wails for the unsaved because they were going to hell. Hell is in "the nether parts of the earth" (v18). The more wicked a person, the lower down he is in the earth.

The Future Restoration of All Israel

(Chapters 33–48)

Mostly Millennium

Chapter 33 - A minister is *a watchman* who warns people of danger and coming judgments. This is a life and death situation—it involves the eternal soul. God is not concerned about our past (how good or bad we were in the past), He is interested in what we are today. It is our *end* that counts. When a righteous man turns from God he will die and be cut off from God. All his righteousness will be forgotten. When a wicked man turns to God, all his wickedness will be forgotten. v30-33 - It is not the hearers of the word but the *doers* who are justified. See Romans 2:13 and James 1:22.

Chapter 34 - This is a message to the unfaithful shepherds. v1-10 - God is against shepherds who are only in the ministry for what they can get out of the people. v11-31 - The Lord will gather all His scattered sheep (i. e. Israelites scattered throughout all nations). This is the Millennium; and it is a reference to Israelites who have found favor with God. King David will be resurrected (v23) and be a shepherd to Israel. Like David's, our call and ministry is also *eternal* (cf. Ps. 78:70-71).

Chapter 35 - This is a prophecy against Mount Seir (or Edom). Esau holds a perpetual grudge and hatred toward his brother Israel, therefore God holds an eternal grudge against Esau. The land of Edom will be “most desolate” during the Millennium, and forever (v3,15). The Edomites were delighted when Israel was judged [then and now]; and God will recompense such hatred. Remember, our salvation depends on forgiving others (Mt. 6:14-15).

Chapter 36 - Israel who had been made very desolate will have multitudes of people inhabiting its mountains again (v10). v16-38 are the past sins of Israel and its future conversion and restoration. At Christ's Coming, Israel will embrace the new covenant (v24-29). During the Church Age, Israel as a nation has rejected Christ and the new covenant, but a national conversion is coming.

Chapter 37 - The Valley of Dry Bones has a literal and a spiritual meaning. There will be a literal resurrection of some of the Israelites in the Millennium, and they will be brought into the land of Israel (v12-14). For the Church, it has a spiritual meaning: the Church will “come together,” bone to his bone, and stand up “an exceeding great army.” All the pieces will come together in unity. In verses 15-24, Northern Israel and Judah will be united once again—the two sticks becoming one, and King David will be there with them, reigning in Israel (v24-25).

Chapter 38-39 - Judgment upon Gog and Magog (ancient names for the Russia / Turkey area). This actually has two fulfillments: 1.) *At Armageddon*, just prior to and during the Second Coming of Christ (Rev.16:16, 19:17-21). At that time only 1/6 of Gog and Magog and other nations will be left. It will take seven months to bury the dead, and seven years to burn up all their weaponry. This is during the Millennium. Then Israel will rebuild their temple. 2.) *At the end of the Millennium* this will be repeated (Rev. 20:7-10), but this time, everyone who comes against Jerusalem will be utterly devoured. Then comes the eternal judgment of Satan and the great white throne judgment. And then there is a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1).

Chapters 40-48 - Jerusalem had been lying in ruins for 14 years (40:1-2). The temple was destroyed and the walls of the city were broken down; both Northern Israel and Judah had been exiled. Then the Spirit of the Lord lifts up Ezekiel and brings him to Jerusalem again, but this time it is in another age; this is centuries later, during the Millennium. He sees all 12 tribes restored to their land, with a magnificent Jerusalem and a glorious temple. King David is there, as well as Christ and all the saints.

Chapters 40-43 - This is the great Millennial Temple. These four chapters describe the temple and its measurements. There has never been a temple like this. The measurements are different from Solomon's temple and any other temple. It is a literal temple in Jerusalem in the Millennium, with a literal river flowing out. However, it has a spiritual meaning as well, for Jesus taught us that "out of our belly would flow rivers of living waters" (Jn. 7:38). Thus, we are a temple.

Jesus literally is in Jerusalem (43:7). "The Lord is There" (48:35). He will be visibly present, and the earth will be filled with His glory. Ezekiel is told to show the house of Israel the new pattern and dimensions for the temple (43:10). The measurements have spiritual meanings to us, the Church. Centuries earlier, David was given the pattern for Solomon's temple (1 Chron. 28:11,12,19). Moses was given the pattern and measurements for the tabernacle.

Chapter 44 - In the middle of this extraordinary vision of the Millennial age, God has a message for Ezekiel's backslidden colleagues and fellow priests. Certainly it can apply to any generation. The unfaithful priests who were responsible for the nation's going into idolatry would be banned from touching or seeing any of the holy things. They would *never* "come near to God to perform the office of a priest." They would "bear their iniquity" (v10). They will be governed by Matthew 5:19: For "He who breaks the least of the commandments and teaches men so shall be called the least [important] in the kingdom of heaven." There is an eternal penalty placed on a lax priesthood that changes God's laws and lowers His standards, thus holding people short of God's mark for their lives. But for the faithful family of priests, the "sons of Zadok"—they would be welcomed into God's presence and given the privilege of ministering unto Him (v15-16).

True ministers possess divine light and discernment. They are able to teach God's people "the difference between the holy and profane, and to discern between the clean and unclean" (44:23) (compare with 22:26). Today the Church is filled with compromise; leaders have lowered God's moral standards. There is little difference made today between holy and profane, clean and unclean.

Chapters 45-46 - Not for any redemptive purposes whatsoever, the Israelites return somewhat to sacrifices during the Millennium. It is *a memorial*, and it does not involve the Church. Holy days, new moons, and sabbaths are not to be observed by the Church, nor are they for the Church age. They are a "shadow of things to come" (Col. 2:16,17). These are for the Israelite nation and not for us, during the Millennial Age. Nothing, of course, can be added to the blood of Jesus.

Chapter 47 - This is the river of life flowing out from the sanctuary. This is literal, and it transforms the land of Israel. We also are "temples," and there is to be a mighty river pouring forth from us.

Chapter 48 - These are the territorial boundaries of the 12 tribes of Israel during the Millennium. Chapters 40 to 48 are a revelation of Jerusalem in the Millennial Age; but Revelation 21-22 is New Jerusalem, which is in the new earth. You should not confuse the two cities, although they are similar. The holy city *in the Millennium* is actually *a type* of a greater city to come in the new earth.

Ezekiel 40 - 48 — speaks of Jerusalem in the Millennium, on this earth.

Revelation 21 - 22 — speaks of New Jerusalem in the new earth.

For further study, I highly recommend Dr. Brian J. Bailey's books on:
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The Book of Daniel records the personal life of Daniel and his occupation in high governmental posts in Babylon and Persia. During his lengthy career of 73 years as a prophet, he was a senior advisor to world leaders—Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus.

As a prophet, Daniel had remarkable prophetic insight into the rise and fall of future world empires and nations. He foresaw the fall of Babylon and the rise of Media / Persia. Then he saw Greece overtake Media / Persia. Then he saw the rise of the Roman empire, the empire that ruled at the time of Christ. Jerusalem would reject and “cut off the Messiah” (9:26), thus, the city and sanctuary would be destroyed (70 AD), and unto the end [of the Church Age] wars and desolations would be determined upon the holy land. Then Daniel saw the old Roman Empire revive again around the Mediterranean area, in our times. He saw ten kings, and then he saw the Antichrist emerge from among them. After a reign of 3 1/2 years (a time, times, and half a time), he saw the “beast” destroyed and given to the fiery flame of eternal judgment. A Stone made without hands (Christ and His kingdom) crushed the ten kings and the other kingdoms of this world; and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom. Thus, Daniel saw the Millennium and the resurrection too.

General Outline

Historical — Chapters 1–6

A. In the Reign of Nebuchadnezzar:

Chapter 1 - Daniel's Early Life / Preparation for Government

Chapter 2 - Nebuchadnezzar's Dream / Daniel's Interpretation

Chapter 3 - The Golden Image / The Fiery Furnace / The Deliverance

Chapter 4 - Nebuchadnezzar's Testimony / Tree Cut Down That Grew Back

B. In the Reign of Belshazzar:

Chapter 5 - Belshazzar's Feast / The Fall of Babylon

C. In the Reign of Darius:

Chapter 6 - Daniel's Envied Position / Deliverance From the Lion's Den

Futuristic — Chapters 7–12

A. In the Reign of Belshazzar:

Chapter 7 - Vision of the Four Beasts / The Four World Empires

Chapter 8 - Vision of the Two Beasts / Media-Persia and Greece

B. In the Reign of Darius:

Chapter 9 - Daniel's Supplication / Gabriel's Revelation of 70 Weeks

C. In the Reign of Cyrus:

Chapter 10 - Warfare in the Heavens

Chapter 11 - History From Cyrus to Antiochus Epiphanes IV

Chapter 12 - The Great Tribulation / The Resurrection

Daniel and Friends Taken to Babylon

Chapter 1 - (606 - 603 BC) Daniel was taken to Babylon in the first invasion (606). He was there for all seventy years, and then for a while. Daniel and his friends were amongst the eunuchs, and maintained a good testimony. When a king invaded territory he took the brightest of the young people and trained them in the ways of his kingdom to be part of the government. These were “children in whom was no blemish, well favoured, skillful in knowledge, understanding science, and the ability to stand in the king’s palace.” Also, they had to learn the language of the Chaldeans. Daniel purposed “not to defile himself” (1:8). This is the first verse which applies to the Book of Revelation (cf. Rev.14:4-5). In all matters of wisdom and understanding...they were *ten times better* than the magicians and astrologers. As ministers, we will be brought into positions where hard questions will be asked us. We should be able to answer these hard questions by the spirit of understanding, by the anointing.

The Divine Dream / The Divine Interpretation

Chapter 2 - (603 BC). Nebuchadnezzar had a dream from God. No one could interpret it; and therefore everyone was to be killed, including Daniel and his friends (v13). Daniel asked for time in verse 16, and was confident God would show him the interpretation. After he and his three friends prayed mightily to God, the Lord revealed the secret during the night (v19). This dream is important because it shows ...“what shall be in the latter times;” therefore, it applies to us (v28).

Nebuchadnezzar saw an image, but in five parts. The head was of gold, the breast was of silver, the loins and thighs were of brass, the legs were of iron, and the toes were a mixture of iron and clay. This dream needs to be interpreted alongside chapter 7, because they reinforce each other. This is the interpretation: (chapter 7 confirms this)

- The head of gold was Babylon (v37-38) (606 - 536 BC)
 - The breast of silver was Media-Persia (v39) (536-330 BC)
 - The loins and thighs of brass was Greece (v39) (330-146 BC)
 - The two legs of iron was Rome (east / west) (v40) (146 BC - 476 AD)
- *The ten toes are ten kings in the last days (in the area of the old Roman Empire).

These ten kings have not yet reigned but we find them in Revelation 17:12-13.

The Antichrist will emerge among these kings in the Mediterranean area in our times.

All these kingdoms are in the Mediterranean region.

The Stone which crushed the 10 toes and brought down the entire image is Christ and His kingdom when He comes to rule (v44-45). All of these other ancient kingdoms are stirring again today—Babylon (Iraq), Persia (Iran), Greece, and Rome. When Christ crushes these ten toes (kingdom of the Antichrist), all of these other world empires and systems will collapse also. Christ’s kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. (See Rev.11:15).

The Fiery Furnace

Chapter 3 (580 BC approx). Over twenty years later Nebuchadnezzar erected an image, probably of himself, and commanded worship. In Revelation 13:15, we see again the worship of an image, but this time it is commanded by the Antichrist. Daniel and Revelation coincide so often. Anyone who refused to worship the image was cast into a fiery furnace. There is coming a time in our generation when a refusal to worship the image of the beast could cost us our life (Rev.13:15, 15:2, 20:4). It will cost us something to be a real Christian in these last days. Let’s get deeply committed.

The three Hebrews refused to bow to the image as the music played. Music is an integral part of the worship of Satan; and Satan is conditioning the world for his coming by infiltrating the music world. “Our God is able to deliver us...but if not, we will not...worship the golden image” (3:17-18). Their attitude was: “Even though our God is well able to deliver, it is not always His will to deliver.” There will be many martyrs in the Church of the last days. In this case, they were preserved and came out without a singed hair or the smell of smoke on their clothes. The only thing the fire burned was their bondages (3:27). God’s purpose for tribulation is to free us from the bondages of the Fall (Rev. 7:14).

Nebuchadnezzar—The Tree That Was Cut Down and Grew Back

Chapter 4 - (570 - 562 BC). This is a personal testimony of Nebuchadnezzar. It is one of the greatest conversions in human history. Who could have ever known that Nebuchadnezzar, who had destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and had shown no pity to young or old, was a man ordained unto eternal life. God had been dealing with this man for many years. First, God showed him grace when Daniel interpreted his dream thirty years earlier. Then he saw three men walking in a fiery furnace, and a fourth Man, who was the Son of God. He was affected, but still his heart was not humbled.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and saw a tree (4:5-18). This tall proud tree was cut down, but the stump and roots remained. After seven years, the tree grew back again. In 4:19-27, Daniel interprets the dream—the king was that tree. He would be cut down and pass through a seven year period of confusion in his life. He would actually be turned into an animal, *until he knew* that the Most High was God, and not he himself. God places people in very difficult situations until they are *convinced* of certain things in their hearts. Sometimes this takes a long time.

It took great courage on the part of Daniel to rebuke a world ruler. Daniel counsels the king to “break off his sins and to show mercy to the poor” (v27). One year later the dream came to pass (v28-37). After being greatly humbled, the king’s sanity returns (v34-37). Then Nebuchadnezzar praises and blesses and extols the God of heaven. The Lord then restored the kingdom of Babylon to him. This eight year episode in his life is dated approximately 570 to 562 BC. He died one year later, in 561 BC.

The Fall of Babylon / Preceded by Belshazzar’s Feast

Chapter 5 - (539 / 536 BC). Belshazzar, grandson of Nebuchadnezzar made a great feast. Although there was a strong army outside, Babylon seemed impregnable. The ancient city was foursquare; each side was 15 miles, a total of 60 miles around. The walls were 350 feet high, and 87 feet thick. The Euphrates river ran diagonally through the city, dividing it into two equal parts. The population was one million. But God had declared 176 years earlier by Isaiah that the city would fall, and how it would fall—“I will dry up thy rivers” (Isa. 44:26-28, 45:1-3). Also, the Lord mentioned the name of the man who would conquer it—Cyrus. King Cyrus of Persia had a strategy. He divided his army into three parts. One part was up the river and out of sight, waiting for the appropriate time to divert the Euphrates River. Suddenly, under the cover of night, the river went down. The other third of the army marched under the gates where the river entered, and the other third went under the gates where the river exited the city. Both armies met in the midst of Babylon and captured it. All this time, King Belshazzar and his lords were in a drunken stupor. Daniel interpreted the handwriting on the wall and told the king he had learned nothing from his forefather Nebuchadnezzar (v22), that he was “weighed in the balances and found wanting, and that his kingdom was divided and given to the Medes and Persians” (v26-28). Persia followed Babylon as the next kingdom which ruled the known world of that day. The fall of Babylon depicts another Babylon that will fall in our time (Rev.17:16-18).

Daniel Delivered From the Lions

Chapter 6 - (536 BC). Daniel was preferred above all the other princes in the new kingdom under Darius the Mede, because “an excellent spirit was in him.” It is important what kind of spirit exudes from us. It is not so much what we say, but it is *how* we say it. Unfortunately, the god of this world and the spirit of this world is *ambition*; therefore, envy and jealousy motivate many men and women. The 120 princes, envious of Daniel’s position, drew up a petition that trapped the king into throwing Daniel to the lions. v14-16 - Daniel, now in his mid-eighties, was a friend of Darius, and the king was very upset about executing the decree. Darius must have had a knowledge of God.

In the morning, he cried with a lamentable voice, “Is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?” (6:20). This took courage to cry out to Daniel like this, because a king does not go alone, and people heard him. v22 - This was an amazing miracle, for God sent an angel and shut the lions mouths. But in v24, the lions had mastery over the 120 princes. The fact remains: God delivers sometimes, and at other times He does not. In the Colosseum in Rome, we may see the bones of Christians who were devoured by lions. Hebrews 11:33 says: “Through faith...they stopped the mouths of lions.” A godly life, like Daniel lived, is the key to being preserved.

Daniel’s Dream of the Four World Empires

Chapter 7 (541 BC). This dream was given while Belshazzar will still be alive and Babylon had not yet fallen. The interpretation of this dream is very similar to Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2. It concerns the four major empires of ancient times, but the fourth one (the Roman empire) will be revived in our time in the area around the Mediterranean Sea, and from this will come the Antichrist.

7:3-7 - Four great beasts came up from the Great Sea, which is the Mediterranean Sea. They were:

v4 - Lion - Babylon (606-539 BC)

v5 - Bear - Media-Persia (539-330 BC) 3 ribs in his mouth: Lydia (Turkey), Babylon, and Egypt.

v6 - Leopard - Greece (330-146 BC) 4 wings speak of the rapid world conquest of Alexander.

4 heads - Alexander died, leaving his kingdom to 4 generals.

v7 - Dreadful Beast - Rome (146 BC - 476 AD) but looks ahead to a revived empire in the last days.

This has ten horns (and answers to the ten kings of Revelation 17:12-13).

7:8 is extremely important—“There came upon among them another little horn.” He is given a mouth speaking great things;” and he is the Antichrist. This man will come up from among the kingdom of the 10 kings in the last days. v11 - This “little horn” will be thrown into the lake of fire when Christ comes again (cf. Rev.19:20). v20-28 speak of the three-and-a-half-year reign of the Antichrist, who wages war against the saints. He will change times and laws (v25). He is a homosexual (11:37). This man will introduce a new morality, will justify sin, and will rationalize away every moral standard.

Review: This fourth beast, to a certain extent, has been the Roman empire, but we must conclude that there will be a kingdom in these last days around the Mediterranean Sea composed also of 10 kings, and from it will come one king—the Antichrist. This one king in v25 “shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out (mentally and otherwise) the saints of the Most High. This king has power for 3 1/2 years (a time, times, and dividing of time), until the end of the Church Age and the beginning of the Millennium. This truth is continually repeated throughout the book of Daniel. v21 - This man makes war with the saints; therefore, some will give their lives during his reign.

The Rise of Media-Persia and Greece

Chapter 8 - (539 BC). Babylon was about to fall when Daniel had the vision. Although Daniel was in Babylon when he had the vision, he saw himself in Shushan in the palace, in the province of Elam (or Persia). Shushan was the capital of Persia. With Babylon ready to fall, God was showing Daniel what the next two empires would be. They would be Persia, and then Greece.

8:3 - The ram with two horns was Media-Persia (v20). 8:5 - The he-goat coming from the west was Greece, led by Alexander the Great (v21). Daniel is seeing something that would happen 208 years later. Greece defeated Media-Persia around 330 BC. 8:8 - When this he-goat (Alexander) became great and very strong he was broken (or died); therefore, his kingdom was divided into four parts amongst his four generals.

General Cassander - took Macedonia (west).

General Lysimachus - took Thrace (north).

General Ptolemy - took Egypt (south).

General Seleucus - took Syria (east).

8:9 - Out of one of these four came a “little horn”. This little horn was Antiochus Epiphanes IV, who came out Syria, the kingdom of Seleucus. The little horn is a type of the coming Antichrist. This man, Antiochus Epiphanes IV (176-164 BC), came up in the latter time of the Grecian empire (v23). “When transgressors are come to the full” must apply more to our time, however. Some of these verses in Chapter 8 had a fulfillment in history with Antiochus, but look ahead to another fulfillment in our time in the Antichrist. Antiochus represents another to come. Antiochus invaded Israel, the pleasant land (v9). Then he removed their daily sacrifice (v11), and “cast down truth to the ground,” burning all the holy Scriptures. Antiochus massacred scores of Jews, built a heathen altar over God’s altar, and offered the “abomination”—a swine in God’s temple. Verses 13-14 must apply more to our time. Jesus foretold that a similar event would happen in our days (Mt. 24:15,21), and that this event would start the Great Tribulation. “When you see the abomination ... then shall be great tribulation.”

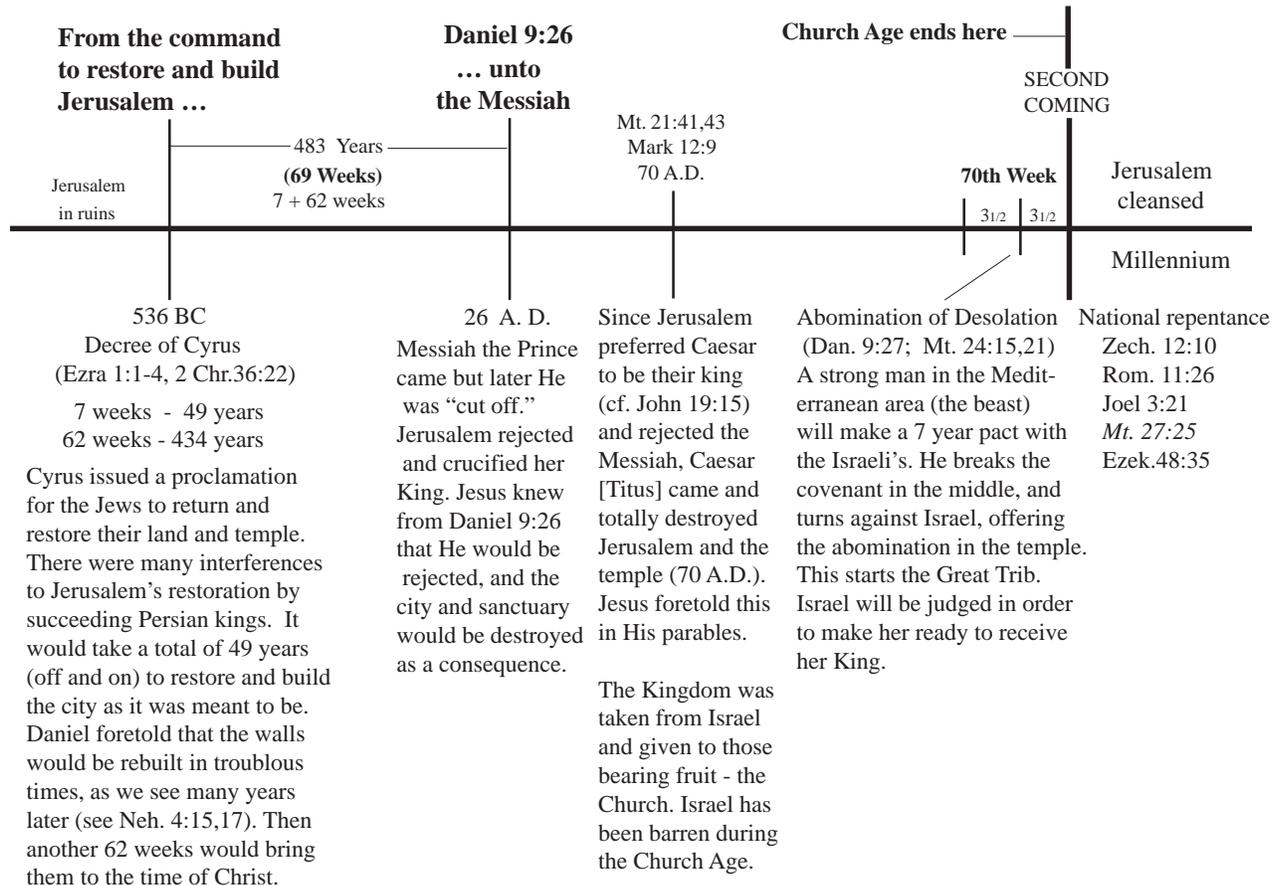
Daniel’s Intercession and Vision of “The Seventy Weeks”

Chapter 9 - (539 BC). Daniel understood by Jeremiah’s prophecies that the captivity in Babylon would be 70 years, and that now the restoration time had come (9:1,2). Therefore, Daniel began to pray and to intercede for Judah’s restoration. During his intercession he is given the vision of seventy *weeks*. In Hebrew, a *week* meant seven years (Gen.29:27). This vision of seventy weeks was a long-range vision for Israel, which brings them up to the Second Coming of Christ and the Millennium. “To make an end of sins...and bring in everlasting righteousness” (v24). Then Jerusalem will be holy.

9:25 From the command to restore and build Jerusalem unto Messiah’s coming would be 483 years. This is 62 weeks and 7 weeks, or a total of 69 weeks (483 years). v26 - But Jerusalem would reject and crucify the Messiah; He would be “cut off.” Therefore, God sent an evil prince (Titus, of Rome) to destroy the city and sanctuary. He would overflow them as a flood. One million Jews died in 70 A.D. And “unto the end, wars and desolations are determined.” Unto the end of the Church Age, Jerusalem has had wars and desolations determined upon them. Verse 27 is the final week, the last seven years before Jerusalem is cleansed. An evil man, the Antichrist, will make a covenant with Israel for 7 years but break it in the middle, stopping the daily sacrifice and offering the “abomination.” This is the last 3 1/2 years. Then Jerusalem will be cleansed and anointed and have everlasting righteousness.

The Seventy Weeks (9:24-27)

Then Jerusalem will be Holy



Warfare in the Heavens

Chapter 10 - (533 BC). Babylon fell in 539 BC to the Medes / Persians. Although it was a coalition dynasty, the Medes were the prominent part. Darius the Mede was the king. Darius the Mede is mentioned in 5:31, 6:1, 9:1, and 11:1. Cyrus the Persian was related to Darius, and Cyrus was the commander in chief of the armies. When Darius died three years later (536), Cyrus became king of the empire and released the Jewish captives to return to Judah.

10:1 - This vision was given to Daniel in the third year of Cyrus (533 BC). Daniel had been praying and fasting for 21 days. Then he was visited by an awesome majestic heavenly messenger. This messenger was not the Lord, but was very similar. He was sent to deliver an important message to Daniel, but he was opposed by the evil angelic prince of Persia. Thus, Michael the archangel came to help him. The fact that the messenger needed help from Michael shows he could not have been the Lord. Perhaps the messenger was Gabriel, but we are not sure.

v13 - This heavenly messenger had a very important message to bring to Daniel. As Daniel prayed for 21 days, the message was being hindered tremendously by the evil prince of Persia. Thus, we must prevail in prayer. The message concerned the end of the Persian Empire, and this evil prince of Persia did not want the revelation to be made known. v20 - Historically, the prince of Greece did not come for a long time after Daniel's vision, and yet *destiny* is established long before the foundation of the world (and all the angelic hosts know it). Many years later, Greece overthrew Media-Persia.

History From Cyrus to Antiochus Epiphanes IV / Glimpse of the Antichrist

Chapter 11 - (539 BC). This seems to be Gabriel speaking here. He strengthened Darius to take the kingdom away from Babylon. v2 Now the angel is showing Daniel the events that were going to take place from Cyrus to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes IV (from 529 to 164 BC).

v2 - "There shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the *fourth* shall be far richer than they all." The three kings which followed Cyrus the Persian are as follows: Cyrus (536 - 530 BC).

Cambyzes (529 - 522 BC)

Smerdis (522 - 521 BC)

Darius Hystaspes (521 - 486 BC)

Xerxes (486 - 465 BC) "Ahasuerus" Husband of queen Esther. The fourth king. (Esther 1:1-12).

Xerxes (Ahasuerus) was by far the richest king. With his wealth, he stirred up many against Greece. He maintained an army of 2 1/2 million. With this great army, he burned Athens and destroyed Macedonia. Many years later, Alexander the Great was born and sought revenge against Persia. v3 is Alexander the Great. v4 - Alexander ruled from 336-323 BC, and died suddenly at age 33. Since he had no son or *posterity*, his kingdom was divided into four parts, and his four generals took over.

v5 - The "king of the south" is Ptolemy, one of Alexander's generals who started a dynasty in Egypt (south of Palestine). Another general (Seleucus) started a dynasty north of Palestine in Syria. He is known as "the king of the north." There were many wars between the kings of the north and south in the years to come. The importance of these wars is that they happen again in our time. Even now there is rivalry between Egypt and Syria; and Israel is caught in-between. But special attention is given now to a vile man who usurped the Selucid throne (Syria) by flatteries, and he is the same "little horn" of Daniel 8, a type of the coming Antichrist. He is Antiochus Epiphanes IV (175-163 BC).

v21-35 - Many of the same traits of the coming Antichrist were exhibited by Antiochus Epiphanes IV. He used bribes, flattery, murder, intimidation and broken covenants to steal positions and power. When he tried to make further attacks against Egypt, the ships of Chittim (the western coastlands, or Rome) intervened and commanded him to stop. Therefore, returning toward Syria, he vented his rage on Israel, taking away the daily sacrifice and committing the "abomination of desolation" (v29-31). Even in Israel he "corrupted many by flattery." Many welcomed him with open arms and turned to the Greek culture. Antiochus and the circumstances surrounding him presents a prophetic picture of what will happen in our days when the Man of Sin comes. By means of charm, warmth, flattery, and rationalization, he will bewitch many halfhearted Christians to follow him. "But those who know their God shall be strong and do exploits, and they that understand among the people shall instruct multitudes" (11:32-33). Yet, some will lay down their lives as martyrs.

The Great Tribulation / The Resurrection

Chapter 12 - v1 - This is the Great Tribulation, the last 3 1/2 years before the Lord comes. Michael the archangel is the prince who fights for Israel. There will be a time of tremendous trouble and then Israel and the redeemed will be delivered. There is a resurrection at the Second Coming, but the wicked are not raised until the end of the Millennium (v2). Verse 11 pinpoints the abomination of desolation"—it is about 3 1/2 years before Christ comes. From the abomination of desolation there are 1290 days, and then an additional 45 days of intensified trouble, and then the Lord comes.

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

Introduction to the Twelve Minor Prophets

We are now entering another section of Scripture called *The Minor Prophets*. The arrangement of the twelve minor prophets in the Bible is not in perfect chronological order. However, we could say that the first seven—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, and Nahum prophesied *before* the Babylonian exile; Habakkuk and Zephaniah prophesied *just prior* to the exile; and the last three—Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prophesied *after* the Babylonian exile.

The Theme—God’s Love for the Backslider

Hosea prophesied to the rebellious Northern Tribes of Israel. Israel is likened unto Jehovah’s adulterous wife—repudiated, but ultimately to be purified and restored. In like manner, Hosea’s wife Gomer, who had been unfaithful to the prophet, would be cleansed and restored after a period of probation. Though the prophet’s wife became so degraded, the Lord told him to take her back and love her. Likewise, the Lord would restore His backslidden nation. Hosea is divided into two parts:

Outline

Chapters 1–3 - Personal - The faithful prophet / the unfaithful wife

Chapters 4–14 - National - The faithful Lord / the unfaithful nation

Hosea’s Personal Anguish / His Wife Later Restored

The prophet’s message to Israel was woven into his domestic life, for he was instructed to marry a woman who was not going to be faithful to him. The children would have bad names too, such as “unpitted” and “not my people” (1:2-9). Yet, the Lord promised a future restoration in verse 10. As Jehovah’s adulterous wife, Israel had shared her affections with many other “gods” and worldly interests. She had used her Lord’s blessings for selfish pleasures and interests. Therefore, the Lord was going to temporarily disown her (2:1-5). God would remove all her blessings and give her trouble (the valley of Achor) for a door of hope. Jehovah’s wife would be brought into the wilderness where the Lord could reason with her. After a period of probation, affliction, and cleansing, He would “betroth her unto himself forever” (2:6-23). This is the Millennium.

In chapter 3:1-3, God further instructs Hosea to go and love his adulterous wife and take her back again as a sign of God’s love for His unfaithful people. His wife had sunk so low that she sold herself as a slave. Hosea is purchasing Gomer his wife back for half the price of a slave. Israel would go through a long period without a king, until David becomes king in the Millennium. Thus, we can see that God did not divorce Israel, for after a long period of probation, she will be restored. God did not believe in divorce, not even in the Old Testament.

Ephraim—Name for the Rebellious Northern Tribes

Hosea had a long ministry to the Northern rebellious ten tribes. Ephraim was the leader of the tribes, and therefore “Ephaim” came to be the name for Northern Israel. “Ephraim” is mentioned 37 times in Hosea and is known as “The Backslider.” The prophet started his ministry during the reign of Jeroboam II (1:1), when there was great material prosperity. As Ephraim became more degenerate, God started sending the Assyrians against them. Hosea covers about 60 years (782-725 BC); he prophesied at the same time as Isaiah, who ministered to Judah (cf. Isa.1:1, Hos.1:1).

Major Marks of the Backslider from Hosea

- 4:4 - Striving with the priest; arguing with the pastor. God *never* blesses this.
- 4:6 - Rejecting knowledge (deeper things of God) and being *satisfied* with just the elementary.
If we do not go on with God, we will backslide.
- 4:11 - Immorality and drinking. These destroy the heart and bring hardness and spiritual dullness.
- 4:17 - Joined to idols (obsessed with the things of the world). Idolatry is also equated with lust.
- 5:5 - Pride—This is the reason backsliders can never admit their faults but blame everyone else.
- 6:4 - Fickle and shallow. “Like a morning cloud and early dew that goes away.”
- 6:6 - Making sacrifices and rationalizations, instead obeying the truth.
- 7:8 - Mixing with worldly people. Wrong associations destroy Christians.
- 7:11 - Looking to the world for help (like Egypt and Assyria) instead of turning to the Lord.
- 8:3-6 - Having their own leadership and their own form of worship; rebelling against Jerusalem.
- 8:12 - Taking lightly the greater truths of the Word.
- 9:9 - Deeply corrupting themselves. (Backsliders are vexed with envy, cf. Isaiah 11:13).
- 10:1 - Without fruit—lacking the fruit of the Spirit.
- 10:2 - A divided heart - acknowledging God, but filled with the world. “Unstable in all his ways.”
- 10:12 - Fallow ground - signifying a hard heart that has backslidden, with thorns growing.
- 10:13 - Trusting in one’s own mind and natural abilities.
- 13:9 - Destroying one’s self. People can destroy themselves, but God can restore.

All these things have an application to the Church. 4:6 - “Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee.” Many churches are satisfied with the basics; but when people do not move on with God they will backslide. Those who reject knowledge are spiritual “Ephraimites.”

13:7 - “My people are bent to backsliding from me.” Ephraim represents the backslidden children of God who commit adultery and love the world and all its lusts. In the coming revival some of them will come back to God. 11:9 - Here is the only excuse God has for not utterly destroying Ephraim: “I am God and not man.” Thus, we see the absolute grace of God that is necessary for restoration.

Steps to Restoration

14:1 - “Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” People have to be willing to admit that the real problem is in themselves. Rebellion is at the bottom of all their struggles, and they have “fallen by their own iniquity;” it is not what someone else said or did. An honest confession that “I am the one at fault” is necessary. 14:2 - “Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously.” When a hardened heart can melt and admit his sins and ask God to take away all iniquity, this is evidence of the gift of repentance. Repentance is an anointing; it is a gift of God’s grace. (See Jeremiah 31:18-20.) 14:3 - “Assur shall not save us.” Israel was turning to Assyria for help for his problems, but a heart that is truly repentant will acknowledge that “it is only the Lord that can save me. God is my only salvation!”

14:8 - “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?” This is a holy hatred for former sins. “*I have heard him and observed him.*” In the quest for restoration, it is so important for a backslider to hear a word directly from God. Along with this breaking and melting, and the Spirit sovereignly drawing him, hearing a word directly from God will turn him back to the Lord.

THE BOOK OF JOEL

Joel, a prophet of Judah, probably exercised his ministry sometime during the forty year reign of Joash (852-812 BC) (2 Kgs.12; 2 Chron. 24). Therefore, he would have been a contemporary of Elisha. Joel is an important, often quoted prophetic book. He is best known as the prophet of the Pentecostal outpouring. Joel also prophesied of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, which look ahead prophetically to our times at Armageddon, when Israel is surrounded by hordes of enemies.

1:3 tells us that Joel is prophesying not only to his generation but to generations to come. The army of insects that came to devour the land is literal, but is representative of other invading foreign armies. 1:6 - “A nation is come up upon my land.” This could have several fulfillments: 1.) The Assyrian invasion; 2.) The Babylonian invasion; 3.) The battle of Armageddon in our days. Being an extraordinary prophet, Joel was prophesying of events of that present era, and of the latter times. Prophecy, therefore, can have double and triple fulfillments. Chapter 2:1-27 could have had a partial fulfillment when Hezekiah and Jerusalem were surrounded by 185,000 Assyrians, but then God delivered them. However, 2:19 is Millennial. “No more” is usually associated with the Millennium.

Theme

God’s people had backslidden, therefore God withheld rain and sent plagues of insects and armies of foreign nations against them. 1:12 - Joy had withered. When joy goes from a life, it is because of disobedience (Psa. 45:11). Joy is God’s blessing upon the righteous. God commanded repentance (1:13,14, 2:12-17). With repentance, He would fight for them and bring restoration. Rain is a symbol of the Spirit; and Joel foretells two great outpourings of the Spirit. One was fulfilled at Pentecost, but Pentecost looks forward to a greater outpouring in our days which will usher in the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Joel 2:28-32 could only have its *complete fulfillment* in our days.

Early and Latter Rain / Natural and Spiritual Meanings – 2:23-32



3:1 is speaking of 1948, not when Judah’s captivity returned in 536 BC. 3:2 is referring to the time of the Second Coming when He brings all the nations to Armageddon to judge them there. v9-16 again is Armageddon. v11-12, all the nations are awakening today—China, Africa, the Arabic nations. Wickedness is coming to full ripeness (v13). There are multitudes in the valley of decision (v14). Every nation must choose between Christ and the Antichrist. v15-16 is the coming of Christ.

3:17-21 - This is the Millennial Age. The Lord Jesus Christ will literally and bodily be in Jerusalem. There will be a literal river of water flowing out from the house of the Lord; it is the same vision that Ezekiel saw. 3:21 - Israel will be cleansed of innocent bloodshed. They accepted full responsibility for the shedding of the innocent blood of Jesus before Pontius Pilate. Thus, they brought a curse upon themselves and their children ever since. Notwithstanding, they will be cleansed of their bloodguiltiness when Jesus comes again. Please compare Joel 3:21 with Matthew 27:25.

THE BOOK OF AMOS

Amos came from Judah, from a little town named Tekoa, ten miles south of Jerusalem. However, God sent him north to prophesy in northern Israel, though he was not appreciated there (7:10-13). Prophesying during the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II, he would have known the prophet Hosea. Amos was a poor man and of very humble origins when the Lord called him (7:14-15). Although he was uneducated, his prophetic writings contain a wealth of historical knowledge and quotable sayings. In a society where the rich greatly oppressed the poor, the theme of the Book of Amos is—*Social Justice in the Midst of Economic Prosperity*.

Jeroboam II, king of northern Israel, was an able but idolatrous leader who brought his kingdom to the zenith of its power. Nothing could seem more improbable than the fulfillment of Amos' warnings; yet within fifty years the kingdom was destroyed and went into captivity (722 BC). The vision of Amos, however, is wider than the northern kingdom, for it includes the whole "house of Jacob."

General Outline

- I. Judgments on Surrounding Cities - 1:1 – 2:3
- II. Judgments on Judah and Israel - 2:4-16
- III. The Three "Hear Ye's" - 3:1 – 5:17
- IV. Announcement of Exile - 5:18 – 6:14
- V. Five Visions of Judgment - 7:1 – 9:10
- VI. Future Restoration of Israel - 9:11-15

Judgments Upon the Heathen

Chapters 1–2 are judgments upon various cities around Palestine. The expression, "I will send a fire" is found seven times. Even though these judgments are pronounced upon nations who do not know the Lord, God still holds them responsible for the way they treat one another. God judges everyone by the golden rule; as we treat others, so will we be treated. 2:1 - Moab burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime. This is disrespect for the dead, and God held them accountable. Cremation itself is not Scriptural. In the Bible, the bodies were always carefully embalmed and placed in sepulchres.

2:4-16 contains judgments against Judah and northern Israel. God was going to judge Israel for oppressing the poor (v6), for incest (v7), for discouraging Nazarites from living a separated life to God, and for commanding the prophets not to prophesy (v11-12). There was great disdain for holy living in Israel. Today in some churches, you are mocked if you try to live a godly life.

God's Controversy with the Whole Family of Jacob

3:3 "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" It requires unity of spirit and doctrine to walk together with another individual; but the context here is more serious. This is God speaking to His nation, saying that He can only walk with them if they are in agreement with Him. We must align our thoughts with God's. God is not going to align His thoughts with ours (cf. Isa. 55:8, Ezek. 33:17). 3:7 - "Surely the Lord will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." God will do nothing before He reveals His plans to someone on earth first. Therefore, we should seek to be in tune with God so that we know from God what will happen before it comes.

“Prepare to Meet Thy God”

4:4 - “Come to Bethel to transgress.” Bethel and Dan were two cities in northern Israel where the golden calves were worshipped (1 Kg.12:28-33). This “new” worship started two centuries earlier, when the nation divided into north and south. Northern Israel rebelled against Jerusalem, the place of true worship and sacrifice. Rebellion brings idolatry, confusion, and a loss of spiritual direction.

4:6 - God gave them “cleanness of teeth” (or famine) to get their attention, but there was no repentance. The purpose of judgment is to make us listen. Therefore, God sent more judgments to speak to His people. v7,9 - He sent drought and plagues, but still there was no repentance. v11-12 - “Therefore, prepare to meet thy God.” After all the judgments and rejections of God’s call to repentance, God tells them to “prepare to meet thy God.” This is a fearful thing, because it is a message to believers. Unbelievers have no God. Not he who *begins*, but “he who endures to the end shall be saved.”

“Be diligent to know the state of thy flocks” (Prov. 27:23). A pastor must be sure that everyone in his congregation is ready for heaven. Shepherds must not be overconfident and assume that everyone’s standing before God is acceptable. One evangelist was invited to a church of 9,000 people, and while he was there the Lord said that only 870 belonged to Him.

Our Life Must be Upright or God Will Not Accept Our Praise or Worship

5:21-24 - God hated their religious rituals, feast days, and offerings. He would not accept their sacrifices. There is so much talk today about offering the sacrifice of praise. Sometimes people worship for hours and then go out and live a sensuous life. God will not accept our offerings if our life is not right. v24 - Instead, “Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream”.

Captivity into Assyria Predicted

5:27 - This is a prediction that Israel would go into captivity “beyond Damascus”. In 722 BC, the Assyrians invaded northern Israel and deported many into Assyria and other countries. 7:10-17 - Amos himself is rejected by the northern kingdom and is told to go back home to Judah and prophesy there. Amaziah, the priest who opposed Amos, was severely judged.

Famine of the Word Foretold

8:11-12 - When people reject the word of the Lord, God will send a famine of the Word. He will no longer speak or give direction. Today there is a shortage of the true message, the true vision. The spiritual food that is offered has little spiritual “nutrition.” Let us highly value the words of the Lord.

Restoration Foretold

9:11-15 - The Book of Amos ends with a promise of restoration for Israel. v13-15 - Israel will be brought back from captivity. This has a special fulfillment when they are rescued from the horrors of the Great Tribulation. Then God will plant them in their own land, and they will *never* be plucked out of their land again. They will flourish marvelously, and this is the Millennial Age. David’s tabernacle had no veil (v11-12). In David’s tabernacle, not only the high priest once a year could enter God’s presence, but *everyone* with clean hands and a pure heart. The Apostle James interprets “the restoration of David’s tabernacle” as evidence that God had accepted and invited the Gentiles into His presence, not just Jews and priests of Aaron. See Acts 15:13-18.

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

Internal evidence fixes the date of Obadiah shortly after the Philistines and Arabians had broken into Jerusalem and plundered its substance, during the reign of Jehoram (2 Chron. 21:16,17). Seeing the calamity of his brother Jacob, Edom then entered Jerusalem with great delight and dancing. If this date is correct, and if the ministry of Joel was during the reign of Joash, then Obadiah would be chronologically first of the minor prophets, and the first to use the expression “the day of the Lord.” The strong and central theme of the book is—God has a perpetual hatred for Edom because Edom harbors a perpetual hatred for his brother Israel.

Where the Hatred Began

Jacob is Israel, and Esau is Edom. These are two neighboring countries. They are brothers, but one hates the other. The descendants of Esau have held a perpetual grudge against the descendants of Jacob (see Ezek. 35:5-7). Because of this perpetual hatred, the Lord said he would make them “most desolate.” An unforgiving spirit can make us cursed and barren as well.

Being the elder brother of Jacob, Esau had all the privileges a birthright brought to the firstborn son. He should have received the covenantal promises made to Abraham by God; he should have been the heir to the land of Palestine. Instead, he threw all these promises to the wind for a bowl of lentils when he was hungry. Thus, he took lightly or despised his birthright. Ever since that time, the Esauites have been vexed with the spirit of jealousy, and they have hated their brother Jacob, the Israelites.

Rejoicing at the Calamities of Others

1:10-14 - “For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee...forever” (v10). While the enemies were invading Jerusalem, the Edomites danced for joy. v13-14 - The Edomites aided Jerusalem’s attackers, blocking the Jews from escaping and also taking their goods. Proverbs 17:5 warns: “He that is glad at calamities shall not go unpunished.”

Pride is at the Bottom of Man’s Problems

1:2-4 - Edom is governed by pride. Pride is an attribute of Satan, and it brings *deception* and a false sense of strength and invincibility. Therefore, God would make them “small and despised among the nations” and He would bring them down. Pride is the reason people are tormented perpetually, but humility sets us free and brings great peace. The Prince of Peace was the most humble (Mt.11:29).

The Strife Between Jacob and Esau in the Church

Jacob represents believers who value the things of God, and Esau represents believers who treat sacred things lightly and sell their birthrights for quick temporal gain. In the Church there is always a conflict between those who compromise and those who do not. 1:17 - Jacob will possess what Esau forfeits. Those who do not compromise shall go on to spiritual Mt. Zion and have full deliverance in their personal lives, and also become deliverers (v21). Saviors (or deliverers) come from Mt. Zion. There are many preachers today, but few deliverers.

1:17-21 - These verses also have a literal meaning in the Millennium. Jacob will take Esau’s possessions, and Esau will suffer perpetual judgment for his perpetual hatred, grudge, and pride.

THE BOOK OF JONAH

Jonah is universally known for his experience in the belly of the big fish for three days and nights. The life and events of Jonah are verified by Jesus Christ (Mt.12:39-41), as a sign of His death and resurrection. 2 Kings 14:25 records the fulfillment of a prophecy by Jonah, during the reign of Jeroboam II. Perhaps 850 BC is a safe date for the Book of Jonah. The theme is Nineveh and its repentance. The Book of Nahum, written about two hundred years later, has only one theme—God will utterly destroy Nineveh (fulfilled 612 BC). However, in Jonah’s time, God decided to spare them, and he sent Jonah to preach to them. Geographically, Nineveh would be in modern N. Iraq.

Chapter 1 - Jonah’s Reluctance to Preach and its Consequences

The land of Israel had been overrun by the cruel Assyrians; hence, there was great animosity toward the Assyrians. When Jonah was command to preach to Nineveh their capital, he had no such desire. Jonah did not want the Assyrians to repent; he wanted them judged in forty days. Therefore, he fled to Tarshish, a city probably in the western Mediterranean area in Spain. Running from the will of God, everything went wrong for Jonah. He went *down* to Joppa, *down* into a ship, *down* into the sea, and *down* into the belly of a whale. Jonah was really down. God sent a terrible storm into the sea, but Jonah was fast asleep (1:5). He had great peace. He also had tremendous faith, honoring the Lord as the One “who made the sea and the dry land.” Jonah knew that God controlled the sea and the tempest (1:9). Realizing that he was the cause of the storm, and not wanting to jeopardize the lives of the other seaman, he tells them to throw him overboard. This required great faith. Jonah was a very remarkable and wonderful man. Reluctantly, the seaman cast him into the sea.

Chapter 2 - Jonah in the Belly of the Fish / His Release

2:2 - “Out of the belly of hell I cried.” This was like being in hell, in the lower parts of the earth. Of course, this is prophetic of Christ being in the lower parts of the earth for three days and nights after His crucifixion. How terrible it is to be lost and trapped underneath the earth’s surface forever. Jesus conquered death and hell, and rose from the dead three days later. After Christ rose from the dead, the Gospel went to the Gentiles. When Jonah was vomited out of the belly of hell, he preached to the Gentiles in Nineveh and had the world’s greatest revival to the Gentiles in Old Testament times. 2:9 - Trouble is meant to soften our hard hearts and help us with our struggles. Thus, Jonah makes a vow, or remembers an old one, and is now released and recommissioned to his task to go to Nineveh.

Chapter 3 - Jonah Recommissioned / Nineveh Repents

In tremendous resurrection power, after being in the belly of hell for three days and nights, Jonah immerses and preaches to the Gentiles without any inhibitions. The people “believed God” (a prerequisite for salvation) and turned from their evil ways. When God saw their response to the message, He “repented” or changed His mind, and would not judge them. But Jonah is displeased.

Chapter 4 - God Deals With the Prejudices of Jonah

Jonah was “very angry.” He knew that the Lord is “a gracious God, merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.” Our confessions about God are important. God deals with us accordingly. Now the Lord is going to deal with Jonah graciously, mercifully, and with great kindness. While Jonah is being blasted by the sun, God causes a huge gourd to grow up and shield him. Jonah loved that gourd. Then the gourd withered and Jonah felt so bad. God reasoned: “You have had more pity on this vegetable than on 120,000 souls who *cannot discern between their right hand or left*, a reference to small children. The total population of Nineveh may have been half a million.

THE BOOK OF MICAH

Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea, prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings over Judah, and of Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea, kings over Israel (2 Kg.15:23-30; 17:1-6). Micah was a prophet in Judah (Jer. 26:17-19), but the book called by his name chiefly concerns Samaria. “Samaria” is another name for northern Israel because it was the capital. Micah predicts the fall of the northern Israel which occurred in 722 BC, but he also has special concerns for the sins and dangers of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah, around 700 BC. While condemning the sins of the nation, he looks ahead to God’s ultimate purpose—the blessing of His people.

1:6 - “I will make Samaria as an heap of the field.” 1:6-16 describes the coming Assyrian invasion upon Samaria (northern Israel). It also looks ahead to a greater invasion in the last days (4:11-13), and of the Lord’s deliverance at Armageddon (Rev.16:14; 19:17).

2:1-4 “Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it.” Sin begins by meditations. Some people lie in bed and continuously think of all the evil they can do; and when morning comes they perform it (Gen. 6:5). May the meditations of our heart be acceptable to God. 2:7 - “Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly.” Here is *the key to understanding*—walk uprightly and meditate upon God’s words.

2:12 - “I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.” This is a promise of restoration to Israel. We can apply this to America and England. After the tremendous judgments upon America and England, those who are left (i. e. the remnant) will be holy (cf. Isa. 4:3,4). Nations who have light are more accountable to God. This is an unfailing principle of God’s Word (cf. Lk.12:48).

3:1-7 describes the spiritual dullness of the princes and prophets. v1 - “Is it not for you to know judgment?” Leaders must understand justice and judgment. Because justice was perverted, Micah was “full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment and of might to declare unto Jacob his transgression”(v8). This is the mark of a true prophet. A real prophet must declare the iniquities of the people; and this takes power and might and courage from the Spirit of the Lord.

Micah 4:1-3 and Isaiah 2:1-4 are identical. Both prophets lived at the same time and were inspired by the same Spirit to say the same thing. In the Millennium, many nations will come to Israel to learn the ways of the Lord. The Church of the last days will also be exalted, and many nations will come to the Church and say: “Teach us the ways of the Lord; we will walk in His paths.” 4:10 - predicts the Babylonian captivity of Zion and their deliverance. They were also “delivered” from idols there.

5:2 is the universally recognized prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. “Whose goings forth have been from everlasting.” Christ did not have his beginning when He was born in Bethlehem. He is eternal, and He is the Co-creator of the universe (Jn.1:1-5, 14).

6:6-8 - These passages reveal what God *really* wants: “to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.” Sacrifices never take the place of obedience, mercy, and humility (1 Sam.15:22).

7:8-9 - When we pass through dark experiences, it does not mean we have done anything wrong. During these times, God will judge things in our lives to purify us. But in the dark experience the Lord will be a light unto us, and He will bring us back into the light again.

7:19-20 - v20 “Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old” (Gen.13:14-17). God will be faithful to keep his covenant with Abraham. He will judge, cleanse, restore, and exalt Israel during the Millennial Age.

THE BOOK OF NAHUM

Nahum has but one subject—the downfall of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Nahum declares that Nineveh will fall, even as “populous No” (Thebes, Egypt) which the Assyrians themselves had conquered in 663 BC. The book therefore was written after 663 but before 612, when Babylon destroyed Nineveh. For Nineveh, the cup of iniquity was full. Many years earlier, this city had repented at the preaching of Jonah. But the repentance was temporary, and now a hundred years of savage cruelty and oppression of God’s people must be paid for.

The book of Nahum is in two parts: first there is a poem concerning the greatness of God (1:2-15); then we have another longer poem detailing the overthrow of Nineveh (2:1–3:19). The impassioned expressions of Nahum can be better understood when we remember how Assyria had overthrown the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. The cruelty of the Assyrians is almost beyond belief. Their policy seemed to have been one of calculated terror. Little wonder Nahum exulted at the overthrow of the proud, rich, cruel empire of Assyria. If it was wrong for Nahum to rejoice at Nineveh’s fall, what shall be said of the heavenly throng of Revelation 19:1-6?

Chapter 1 – A Holy God Must Judge Sin

1:2 - “God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.” The moral theme of Nahum is that the holiness of God must deal with sin by judgment. 1:3 - Although the Lord is “slow to anger,” He will not at all acquit the wicked who are unrepentant. 1:7-8 - The Lord defends the righteous, but will make an utter end of the wicked. 1:9 - He will make an utter end: “affliction shall not rise up the second time.” Zephaniah 2:13-15 also prophesies of the coming judgment of Nineveh. She was “careless” and arrogant, saying: “I am and there is none beside me.” Such attitudes invite God’s judgment.

“The Lord revengeth” (1:2). Assyria was a terrible *thorn* to Israel and Judah; but Assyria was doing a work in God’s nation. We must never try to take vengeance upon a vessel of wrath. Vengeance belongs to the Lord. Rather than take vengeance we should place everything in God’s hands. We can choose to *be a thorn* or to have *a thorn in the flesh*, which is far better, for a thorn keeps us moving. 1:13 - There comes a time when God deals with the thorn and we do not have to bear it any longer.

1:15 “O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts...for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.” For Israel, this refers to the Millennium. Spiritually, a believer should keep all the feasts of the Lord. This is the secret to the prosperity and health of any church. Passover is the salvation message. Pentecost is the message of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. The day of atonement means deeper cleansing, and the feast of tabernacles represents the glory of God.

Chapters 2–3 – The Overthrow of Nineveh

2:1 - “He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face.” This is a reference to Babylon, who would come to destroy Nineveh. v10 - She is empty and void and waste. v11 - The lion is a symbol of Babylon. 3:1 - Nineveh was a bloody city, a city of lies and robbery. 3:4 - Spiritism was another cardinal sin. 3:7-8 - God said Nineveh would be just like No-ammon, a prominent city in Egypt that Assyria had destroyed earlier. 3:19 - “There is no healing of thy bruise.” This is the absolute and final judgment upon Nineveh. After being destroyed in 612 BC, its location was uncertain until 1843 when it was rediscovered and excavated. God used Babylon (confusion) to destroy Assyria (pride, hardness of heart, cruelty). In our personal lives, God can use one enemy to destroy another. God used Saul to chase David. After humility and dependance on God was developed in David, God removed Saul.

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

It seems probable that Habakkuk prophesied in the latter years of Manasseh or early years of Josiah, kings of Judah. Perhaps 640 BC is a safe date. Babylon was the great emerging power at that time, and was a threat to the world. Northern Israel had fallen 80 years earlier, and now Habakkuk and Zephaniah were directing their warnings to the kingdom of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem. Shortly, Jeremiah would join them. We can summarize the three chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 - Sighing: The prophet, perplexed by the coming judgment, asks; “Why Lord?”

Chapter 2 - Seeing: The prophet withdraws to hear what the Lord will further tell him.

Chapter 3 - Singing: The prophet, having been given understanding, is able to rejoice.

Chapter 1 - “Lord, I Do Not Understand”

In 1:2-4, the prophet looks at the terrible moral declension of society, in families, in neighborhoods, in commerce, and in courts of law, and is appalled that God is seemingly overlooking the situation. However, God always waits until the cup of iniquity is full before He judges. Although Judah was sinful, the Babylonians whom He saw coming to judge them were far worse and very cruel. 1:6 - “Behold, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs” (v6).

1:12 “O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; thou hast established them for correction.” Habakkuk understood that the Babylonians were ordained of old to judge and correct his nation. Yet the prophet is perplexed; he agonizes and asks in v13: “Lord, how can you behold such iniquity and hold your peace while wicked men devour those who are more righteous than they?” The prophet was beholding the slaughter of his people in a vision as though it were taking place before his very eyes.

Chapter 2 - God Gives Understanding to the Prophet

Chapter 2:1-3 - Habakkuk is prophesying before the Babylonian invasion. Therefore, the vision of the coming invasion was “yet for an appointed time, but it would surely come.” It would be another 35 or 40 years before the first deportation of Judah into Babylon (606 BC). In 2:4-20, God is going to answer Habakkuk’s perplexing question—How can a righteous God use the wicked Chaldeans to punish Judah, which, although it has become apostate, is still far better than the Chaldeans? God’s answer is that the proud conquerors will themselves be punished. The Chaldeans are puffed up with pride and self-sufficiency; but in this hour of national calamity, “the just shall live by faith”. In the middle of gross darkness is a promise that “the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord” (v14). God sends revival when situations in the world are the bleakest (cf. Isa. 60:1-5). We believe that the greatest revival ever known to man will come in our times when conditions are very dark.

Chapter 3 - The Prophet Sings in the Midst of the Gloom

After hearing from God and getting heavenly perspective, the prophet begins to sing. Also, he prays for revival. 3:2: “O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years...in wrath remember mercy.” Shortly after that, revival did come; and it started during the reign of King Josiah. The revival prepared and preserved the sincere when judgment came later in the Babylonian captivities. Habakkuk ends with rejoicing (v17-19). Hearing from God had changed everything. The prophet received new strength and he could face adversities with singing. God Himself became the joy of his salvation.

THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah's name means: "Whom the Lord Hides." Certainly Zephaniah lived up to his name, because the theme of his book is "How to be Hidden in the Day of Judgment" (2:1-3). Zephaniah is prophesying at the same time as Habakkuk, during the days of Josiah (1:1). During the time of King Josiah there occurred the greatest revival in Israel's history. This revival was to prepare and preserve the people for the soon coming judgment of the Babylonian captivity. For many, unfortunately, the revival was only outward; they never allowed the revival to penetrate their hearts.

General Outline

1. Coming Judgment Upon God's Nation
2. Conditions for Being Preserved in Judgment
3. Cleansing of the land and its Restoration

1:1 - "The word of the Lord which came...in the days of Josiah." It was a time of tremendous revival (2 Chron. 34-35). But in 1:2-3, God would "utterly consume all things...[even] the fish of the sea." There is no record of this happening in the Babylonian captivity. It must be looking ahead to our times when judgment will be universal and upon all living creatures. 1:6 - Great judgment was coming upon those "who turned back from the Lord; and had not sought the Lord, nor enquired for him." These people had not taken advantage of the revival. Many were unchanged and indifferent, saying, "The Lord will not do good or evil" (1:12). 1:8 - The Lord was going to punish "the king's children." Josiah was a godly man, but his children were evil. No one can live off the experience of his parents. Each must make his own decision to live for God. "The day of the Lord" always is a reference to judgment. See 1:7, 1:8, 1:14, 1:18. 1:17 - "They shall walk as blind men because they have sinned against the Lord." When people do not live right, darkness comes into their hearts (Mt. 6:23, Ro.1:21). It is a terrible thing to be smitten with blindness. Many believers are engulfed in a stupor and have no ability to discern the ways of God. There is a dullness to the perilous times in which we live.

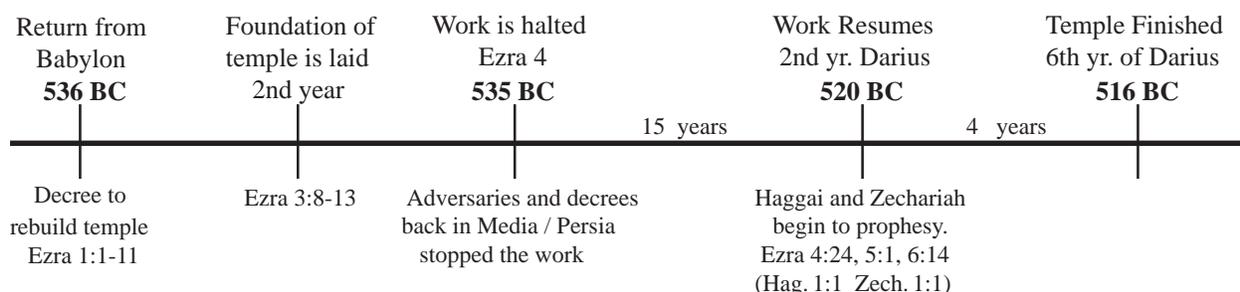
2:1-3 - This message is to believers, to the "meek of the earth who have wrought his judgments." Four times it says "before." Before judgment comes, "seek righteousness, seek [humility];" it may be that you will be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. There is no guarantee that we will be preserved when judgment comes. It *may be* that we will be hid. We must seek righteousness and humility. God gives grace to the humble, but will not protect proud and unrighteous Christians in times of judgment. See Luke 21:36. Stocking up food supplies, gathering gold and silver coins, and going out into some obscure place in the wilderness is not the answer. It is having God's approval and protection! God places a mark of protection upon *pious* and *devout* believers (Ezek. 9:1-6). These are protected.

3:1-7 is a "woe" to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; but v8-13 speak of a remnant who will escape judgment. Verse 7 - The purpose for judgment is that people might have a holy fear and receive instruction. God earnestly longs to bless and not judge. Verse 8 could also look ahead to Armageddon. v9 shows us the kind of people God wants and desires—those with pure speech, who are ready to do the will of God with one consent. v13 - The remnant who make it through the times of judgment will have a clean tongue. Our speech determines whether or not we find favor with God. The tongue reveals our heart.

3:14-20 is the Millennium. The Lord Himself will be in Jerusalem; they shall not see trouble any more. They will be made a praise among all the people of the earth. Presently the Jews are cursed, but this will change when the Lord is in the midst of Jerusalem and turns her captivity.

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

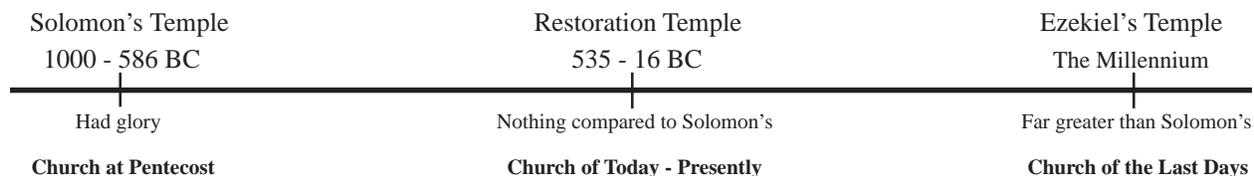
Habakkuk and Zephaniah prophesied *just prior* the Babylonian captivity; but Haggai and Zechariah were prophets to the restored remnant *just after* the 70 years captivity. The circumstances are detailed in the first six chapters of Ezra. Their task was to hearten, rebuke, and instruct the remnant who returned from Babylon. The theme of Haggai is the unfinished temple; and his mission was to admonish and encourage the builders to finish it. A date for Haggai is about 520 BC.



To appreciate the background of Haggai and Zechariah, you should read Ezra chapters 1–6. The exiles had returned from Babylon and had started to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. After they had laid the foundation, neighboring countries complained to the powers back in Media / Persia; thus, a new decree ordered the work to stop for 15 years. After the people had settled for defeat for 15 years, Haggai and Zechariah stood up and prophesied and ordered them to resume building (Ezra 5:1).

1:1-2 - The message is always to the leaders first. Thus, Haggai speaks to Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest. Haggai addresses the lazy, defeatist attitude of the people who said: “It is not for today but some other time to rebuild God’s house.” v3-11 - Haggai encourages the people to put God and His house first. Because the people had not done so, but were absorbed with their own houses and interests, they were having many economic problems. They were “earning wages to put into a bag with holes.” This is a timely exhortation for many who neglect attending God’s house and whose tithing is sporadic. v12-15 - When the people obeyed, God prospered them and assured them, “I am with you” (v13). After stirring them up and reviving them, God makes a greater promise in Chapter 2.

2:1-9 - The people had resumed the rebuilding of God’s house. But this temple was nothing compared to the former one, Solomon’s temple (v3). Yet, the Lord promised that He would “shake all nations” and that He himself would come and fill the temple with His glory. Then the temple would be even greater than Solomon’s. That temple is in the Millennium. It is the temple that Ezekiel saw; and the Lord Himself will be there. This message has profound implications to the Church. Spiritually it means that the last day Church will be *far greater* than the former house at Pentecost.



2:10-19 - The Lord reminds them of the poverty they had when they allowed the house of the Lord to lie waste; but now that they have repented, God says, “from this day forward I will bless you” (v19). 2:20-23 - These passages look beyond Zerubbabel, the builder of the temple, unto the last days when the Lord will overthrow all the strength of the kingdoms of this world. In the Millennium, Zerubbabel will have a special place of prominence, as will his Descendant, Jesus Christ. See Matthew 1:13.

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Zechariah prophesied at the same time as Haggai. Both were in the same place with the same purpose—to encourage the people who had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. Zechariah has more detail than Haggai and had extraordinary visions. Zechariah strengthened and confirmed the message of Haggai, and together they stirred up all the people to build God’s house (Ezra 5:1-2).

General Outline

- 1:1-6 - Introduction / Call to Repentance
- 1:7–6:8 - Eight Visions in One Night
- 6:9-15 - Crowning of Joshua the High Priest
- 7:1-14 - The Question of Fasting
- 8:1–11:17 - The Restoration of Israel
- 12:1–14:21 - The Second Coming

Chapters 1–8 - During the Time the Temple is Being Rebuilt

In 520 BC, both Haggai and Zechariah began to prophesy. God commanded the people (through the prophets) to resume building the temple. The temple was finished about four years later in 516. Those four years start at the second year of Darius unto his sixth year (Ez. 4:24, 6:15). Therefore, the first eight chapters of Zechariah take place during the time the temple was being rebuilt. What was Zechariah saying during the time the temple was being rebuilt? Chapters 1 - 8 will reveal it. They have a meaning to us, the spiritual temple.

Eight Visions in One Night

1:1-6 - Zechariah started to prophesy in the second year of Darius, in the eighth month; and after giving an exhortation and call to repentance, he has eight visions in one night. The eight visions all came on “the 24th day of the 11th month” (1:7 - 6:8).

Vision 1 - The Horsemen Among the Myrtle Trees (1:7-17). These horsemen are very real in the spiritual realm, and they have tremendous power. The red horse in Revelation 6:4 has power to take peace from the earth. (God can give peace or take away peace.) God was angry with the nations who afflicted Judah and Jerusalem and halted the work of the temple; and He was angry with the authorities back in Media-Persia who stopped the work. Being jealous for Jerusalem, He declared, “My house shall be built” (v16). The Lord would defend the rebuilding of His house, and judge with the sword all that opposed it. This has a meaning for Zechariah’s time, and for our time too. God will build His Church today.

Vision 2 - The Four Horns and the Four Carpenters [or Iron Smiths] (1:18-21). The four evil horns were Gentile powers who had scattered God’s people. The four were Egypt (Shishak, Necho); Assyria (Sargon, Sennacherib, Esar-Haddon); Babylon (during 70 years exile); and Media-Persia, who reigned over the Jews at the time of Zechariah. The four “carpenters” were literally iron smiths who were going to hammer and destroy the four kingdoms that had scattered Israel. After Alexander the Great came, his four generals subdued these four horns. Egypt represents *worldliness*; Assyria represents *pride and stoutness of heart*; Babylon represents *confusion and idolatry*; and Media-Persia was a *devourer*. These enemies scatter and oppress God’s people. God will judge every evil force that attacks His people. God will defend and restore His people—His temple and His city.

Vision 3 - The Man With the Measuring Line (2:1-13). Jerusalem represents the Church. To build God's city, we must have divine dimensions. There must be absolute exactness in our doctrine. "Measurements" reveal certain spiritual truths, and we must not cross over them in excess, or come short of them. Jerusalem would be built in Zechariah's time; but the chapter looks ahead to the joy in a rebuilt Jerusalem during the Millennium.

Vision 4 - The Cleansing of Joshua the High Priest (3:1-10). Before the temple (or Church) can be restored, God first has to cleanse the priests; and He has to start at the top. There were many priests, but only one high priest—Joshua. The spiritual garments upon Joshua were filthy. They could not be washed, but needed to be thrown away. God must purify His ministers and leaders first. v8-10 are references to the Millennium. God will remove the iniquity of the land in one day (v9).

Vision 5 - The Candlestick Fed by Two Olive Trees (4:1-14). v11-14 explain who the two olive trees are—"the two anointed ones who stand before the Lord of the whole earth." These are Moses and Elijah, the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-12. These are the two prophets who stood with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, strengthening Him to go to the cross (Lk. 9:30-31). The two greatest men of history will be sent back in our time to help restore and build the Church. Haggai and Zechariah prefigure the two anointed ones who are coming to Jerusalem in the last days.

4:6-10 - Zerubbabel was being opposed by surrounding countries from rebuilding the temple. But the battle was spiritual, being manifested by the hatred in the neighboring nations, the lawyers they hired, and the powers back in Media-Persia who brought the work to a halt. The victory would be won, not by might nor by power, [not by numbers or military strength], but by my Spirit saith the Lord. The "mountain" was Media-Persia and the authorities who issued new decrees to stop the work. God would make that mountain a plain. God's decree would overrule any decree given by Media-Persia. Zerubbabel started the temple, and he would also finish it. And when he put the final headstone in its place, he would do so crying "Grace Grace" unto it. He would know that it was by grace alone that he finished the task. It would not be by strength or numbers, but "by my Spirit saith the Lord.

Vision 6 - The Flying Roll (5:1-4). This roll contained a curse: on one side there was a curse for thieves, and the other side a curse for those who swear. Stealing is one of the cardinal sins of the last days, as it must have been in Zechariah's time. See Revelation 9:21. Stealing brings other evils into the heart, such as lying and deceit. Judas betrayed the Lord and lost his soul because he would never deal with theft in his heart. God cannot bless a home that harbors stolen articles; and God cannot bless a church that does not practice honesty. Wrong use of money is one of the greatest problems in man. The *money issue* is the one of the major reasons couples divorce.

Vision 7 - The Woman in the Measuring Basket (5:5-11). This woman and "wickedness" are sealed in a container and taken to Babylon (Shinar). A woman represents a church, and in the last days this "woman" and an evil spirit will be released. According to Revelation 17 and 18, a false church will emerge, named *Babylon*. Tremendous signs and miracles will be performed by the false church in our time. When God rebuilds and restores His Church, there will also arise *a counterfeit church*.

Vision 8 - Four Chariots Representing the Four Spirits of the Heavens (6:1-8). These are great unseen powers in the spiritual world. They go forth from standing before the Lord of the whole earth. Undoubtedly they are able to protect God's people, but bring terrible judgments to the wicked. 6:9-15 is the symbolic crowning of Joshua the high priest, a prefiguring of the crowning of Jesus the Priest / King in the Millennial Age. v15 - Many nations will help rebuild the Millennial temple.

Not Fasts But Right Living

Chapters 7–8 were spoken two years after the eight visions described in the first six chapters. In these two chapters, Zechariah answers questions posed to him as to whether the fasts observed in memory of the destruction of Jerusalem should still be kept. The reply is “no.” God does not demand fasts, but observance of moral laws. God has come to dwell with His people, and even the heathen will desire to worship God in Jerusalem. Parts of chapter 8 jump from Zechariah’s time to the Millennial Age. 8:3 - When Jerusalem shall be called “a city of truth,” that is certainly speaking of the Millennium. v13 also deals with the age to come, as do verses 20-23.

The Coming Messiah is Humble, Riding on a Donkey

Chapters 9–14 are various prophecies given by Zechariah at a later time in his life. 9:9 is quoted in all four Gospels. Israel disregarded the last part of this verse: The King of Israel is humble and would come into Jerusalem riding a donkey. Only someone truly great could do this. Someone else who is proud and insecure would have to come into city in a helicopter or a limousine, with much publicity and the sound of trumpets and much fanfare.

The Latter Rain — In God’s Time

10:1 - “Ask of the Lord for rain, *in the time of the latter rain.*” God has a time and season for everything. Israel’s “early rain” is in November; it is a light rain to soften the ground for sowing. April is the time of the latter rain; and Jordan overflows its banks at this time (Josh 3:15; 4:19). (April is the first month of the Jewish calendar.) The latter rain was heavy, and it brought the harvest to ripeness. At Pentecost, the spiritual rain that was poured out was light. That was for the planting of the Church. God will send a much heavier outpouring of latter rain in our time to bring the Church to maturity (cf. Jas. 5:7). See page 171 again. God has *a set time* for the latter rain to begin. The Lord will make “bright clouds” speaking of His glory.

Jerusalem is Made Burden to all Nations

12:3 - God is making Jerusalem a burden to all people, even today. If you support Israel, your oil supply either is cut off or unreasonably high in price. Ultimately God is going to “cut in pieces” every nation that seeks to destroy Israel. When Israel is oppressed, God takes it very personally (12:9).

The Lord’s Coming to Israel

12:10 - When Christ comes again, “they will look upon Him whom they have pierced.” Israel will have the spirit of repentance poured out upon them, and they will mourn. The curse of blindness that has plagued Israel since they crucified Him, will be taken away. 13:1 - A fountain will be opened for all sin and uncleanness. Israel will be deeply cleansed when the Lord comes. We need to experience this verse ourselves in a much greater way. v2 - The unclean spirit will pass out of the land. 13:6 - The Jews will ask Him, “What are these wounds in thine hands?” These are the nail prints He received on the cross. 14:1-21 is the Second Coming of Christ and His reign in Israel. In verse 2-3, God will lure all nations to Israel to destroy them. Jerusalem will be surrounded by the Arabian armies and half the city will be taken; but then the Lord comes and defends them. The slaughter will be terrible. 14:4 - Jesus will descend from heaven to the Mount of Olives, the same place where He ascended. 14:8 - A river flows from the temple. v9 - The Lord Jesus shall be King over all the earth. 14:16-20 - There is still rebellion during the Millennium. Those who refuse to acknowledge the Lord will have no rain. The problem is the heart, not Satan. Satan is bound during the 1000 year reign of Christ (Rev. 20:1-3).

THE BOOK OF MALACHI

Malachi is the last of the writing prophets and ends the Old Testament. The book was written in approximately 400 BC. Malachi's message was given to counteract the apathy and discouragement that had overtaken the people because they thought the Messiah should have already come. Many churches have had an expectation of an early return of Christ, but have given way to lukewarmness and worldly living because the Lord has seemingly "delayed his coming." See Matthew 24:48-51.

The principal message therefore of Malachi is that "the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his temple." Both advents of the Lord are foretold, and both forerunners are predicted. The people were exhorted to walk in wisdom, discernment, holiness, holy fear; and they were to be faithful to their spouse. The priesthood in particular is reprimanded for the letdown of God's standards.

1:1-5 - Because the people of Judah felt abandoned by God, the Lord reassured them of His everlasting love by comparing His dealings with Jacob and Esau. But the Lord's main concern was that His people have vision, for without vision people cast off all restraint (Prov. 29:18). The Lord wanted to place before them a vision of His sudden coming to His temple that they might prepare themselves.

1:6 - The priests offered "polluted bread," which speaks of truth that is leavened with error. 1:7-9 - The attitude of the people was: "anything is good enough for the Lord," as they offered blemished sacrifices. God was offended and would not accept their offerings (v10). 1:11 looks ahead to the pure offerings of praise and worship among the Gentiles in every nation. See Romans 15:16.

Chapter 2:1-9 is a continued indictment against the priests, the Lord's ministers. The ministers had caused "many to stumble at the law" by changing the standards of God's Word. Thus, God removed His respect from the spiritual leaders, making them "corruptible and base before all the people" (v9). When a minister changes any of God's moral laws, he will damage the lives of those he ministers to.

2:10 speaks about sins against the brotherhood; and 2:13-16 are sins against a spouse. God states that He will not accept our petitions and offerings if we are not good to our spouse. We have to guard our hearts so that we do not deal treacherously with our husband or wife. Even in the Old Testament, where the standards were much lower, God said He hated divorce (2:16). With the conditions of the homes represented in our churches today, are we ready for the Lord's coming? The greatest struggle in life is with our relationships with others. Let us work things out, by grace, and stay together.

Chapter 3:1 is prophetic of John the Baptist, who would prepare the way for Christ's coming. Jesus literally did come to a temple; He came to Herod's temple, and His words consumed the iniquity of those who yielded to His Words. God will visit our individual "temples" and purify us, so that we may offer an offering in righteousness (3:1-4). The unrepentant and adulterers will be judged (3:5).

Chapter 4:5-6 speaks of another messenger, Elijah, who will come to prepare the way for the Lord's Second Coming. All of today's problems are in the home and marriage. If things are not right in a couple, the children will be rebellious. John the Baptist *partially fulfilled* this prophecy because he came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Lk.1:17). In other words, he had the same anointing as Elijah, but he was not Elijah (Jn.1:21). Elijah and Moses are the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-12. Do we have a vision for revival and are we preparing our hearts for the Lords' coming, or are we in the category of Matthew 24:48-51? Have we become careless and lukewarm because our expectation of an early return of Christ has not come? Before Christ comes, let us *first* prepare our hearts!

SUMMARY

From pages 49–184 we have surveyed all 39 books of the Old Testament, observing and applying our seven major laws of interpretation to them. Once again, here are the seven laws:

- 1.) Interpret Scripture in its simplest and most literal form.
- 2.) Recognize natural things as representing spiritual and unseen things.
- 3.) Apply the first mention principle, especially in Genesis.
- 4.) Stay in the context of the Old Testament, and in the context of a book of the Bible.
- 5.) Realize Israel symbolizes the Church.
- 6.) Recognize relationship principles —with others / with God.
- 7.) Apply the time principle, recognizing the importance of “*when*” something is said or done.

Take the Simplest Interpretation

The Bible is in fact literal. God meant exactly what He said, and says it in a manner that we can understand. When something is parabolic, allegorical, or exaggerated, we are able to distinguish the difference. While the Scriptures are literal, there are spiritual meanings and applications, as we have seen all throughout pages 49–184. Therefore, a truth is like a beautiful gem; it has many facets. The literal meaning of the Bible cannot be discarded. Instead, it is something we build upon. And remember, the Bible is like a large puzzle with many pieces; we need every piece to have the whole picture. Many Christians have only *some* of the picture.

The Natural Represents the Spiritual

Every object, symbol, and place in Scripture has a meaning. Everything God created contains a truth and a divine lesson. Each color, number, name, and event in Scripture has an important message. Everything in nature (such as the stars, the sea, the animals, the seasons, the plants, and much more) reveals something about life and the way to holiness. Absolutely everything that God has included in His Word is important and essential for our perfecting.

The First Mention Principle

The *first* time a subject is mentioned in Scripture is a key to understanding the subject. It is a seed, an origin. All succeeding references to that subject more clearly define what is in that seed. Jesus always went back “to the beginning” to find God’s original purpose for something. To settle the divorce issue, He said, “In the beginning it was not so.” Most beginnings are found in Genesis and are keys to understanding the other books of the Bible.

Importance of Context

Context is important for interpretation. The exact meaning of a word or passage is dependent upon the other surrounding words, sentences, and paragraphs. Isolating a word or sentence from its context is like tearing a single thread from a garment. A passage cannot be isolated from the rest of Scripture. Scripture is interdependent upon all other Scripture to have the correct and complete interpretation. Some truths from the Old Testament must be kept in the context of the Old Testament or there will be error. The New Testament has different standards and is the final authority.

Israel is a Symbol of the Church

Israel symbolizes the Church in virtually every way—the nation that was separated from among all nations, its journey from Egypt to Zion, its tribes [or denominations], the temple, the sacrifices, the ministers, the city and its walls, its backslidings, worldliness, factions, its restoration and all of its aspects, and much more all typify the Church. All the messages of the prophets are relevant to the Church—Hosea’s message to the backslider, Ezekiel’s exhortation to the ministers, Jeremiah’s calls to repentance and a new heart, the rebellion of the ten northern tribes who appointed their own priests and a “new” worship independent from Jerusalem, and Malachi’s message to people who felt the Lord had “delayed his coming” — these all speak directly to the hearts of believers today!

God’s Entire Revelation is Summed Up Into Two Things

The entire canon of Scripture was founded upon Matthew 22:36-40. Christ’s summary of the Law and the Prophets was so simple, yet profound. The entire revelation of God to the human race was condensed into—our heart condition toward God and our heart condition toward man. Everything in Scripture is built upon these two precepts. In every moral lesson of the Old Testament, whether it be in the lives of the kings, the teachings of Moses and the prophets, the Proverbs, or the accounts in Genesis, it always comes down to *relationships* with people and with God. The purpose of the new covenant was to take away a stony heart. The whole problem in man, as we have seen repeatedly in the Old Testament, is a hard, rebellious, and revolting heart.

Importance of the Time Element

The time element is extremely important for having a correct interpretation. As you have observed in our survey, the prophets and their message had to be coordinated with the reigns of the kings. We cannot appreciate what the prophets are saying without understanding the circumstances that surrounded him and *the time frame* in which he is speaking. And how often do we see the prophet who is pleading with his generation suddenly jump ahead to the Millennial Age and then come back to his own times! If we can grasp this principle, I believe we will be able to understand what the prophets are saying.

To Understand the Prophets:

- Know *when* the prophet was speaking (during whose reign, and in what circumstances).
- Know *where* the prophet was. Was he in Judah, Northern Israel, or some other place?
- Know *what* the prophet was doing. Was he a sign to the people?
- Know *to whom* he was speaking. Was he speaking to other ministers, to kings, or to foreign nations?
- Know *the range* of his prophecies. Is he looking ahead to future times?
- Know the key phrases: i. e. “The day of the Lord,” an expression found 26 times.
- Know how to make the prophet’s message relevant to today.

Now that we have briefly summarized the Old Testament, let us quickly survey the books of the New Testament to understand their general themes. In the New Testament, God will manifest Himself as a Man, the One to whom all Scripture bears witness. Jesus Christ is that Living Word—and His whole aspiration during His earthly sojourn was—“I have come to do thy will, O God.” The mark of *a true Christian* is a commitment to do the whole will of God, and not his own will.

V. KEYS FOR OPENING UP THE NEW TESTAMENT

In this section we would like to go through the New Testament and give a brief overview of each book. By the grace of the Lord, we hope to offer keys that will make each book simple, easier to grasp, and edifying.

THE FOUR GOSPELS (Matthew Mark Luke John)

The four Gospels are perhaps the most important books of the Bible. They record the very words and life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Although the Gospels contain many of the same accounts, each one is unique because the personalities of the Gospel writers were different, and the audiences to whom they were writing were diverse. Matthew, an accountant, was writing to the Jewish world. Mark, an interpreter for Peter, geared his Gospel to the Roman world. Luke, a physician, historian, and able scholar, wrote to the Greek world. But John is written to all. His is a universal Gospel.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are inherently different. Yet they all present the same gospel, and they were all inspired by the same Spirit. All of them were directing their messages to different cultures who had different needs. Each writer selectively recorded that teaching of Christ which would apply to his respective readers. Other teachings were purposely omitted. For example, Mark mentions women not divorcing their husbands (Mk.10:12), while Matthew did not include this in his Gospel to the Jewish world, since Jewish law did not permit a woman to divorce a husband anyway.

SUMMARY OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Matthew, a former tax-collector, is the only one of the Gospel writers to record the story of Jesus paying the temple tax (Mt.17:24-27). A man's life-experience always comes out in his preaching. More inferences to money occur in his writings than in the other Gospels. Matthew makes reference to rare coins, while Mark mentions three coins used by the poor, (the mite, farthing, and penny). Matthew also speaks of gold, silver, and brass, and he uses financial terminology like *reckoning*, *debt*, and *money changers*—terms which would be familiar to his vocation.

True to his accountant nature, Matthew constructed his Gospel under *headings*. He collected the Lord's parables of the kingdom and grouped them together in chapter 13. He also gathered other messages and important narratives and placed them under distinctive headings:

- Chapter 1-2 - The Genealogy and Birth of Jesus
- Chapter 3 - The Baptism of Jesus
- Chapter 4 - The Temptation and Commencement of Christ's Ministry
- Chapter 5-7 - The Sermon on the Mount
- Chapter 10 - The Charge to the Twelve / The Command to Take Up Our Cross Daily
- Chapter 13 - The Parables of the Kingdom
- Chapter 18 - The Teaching on Greatness and Forgiveness
- Chapter 23 - The Denunciation of the Pharisees
- Chapter 24 - The Olivet Discourse / His Coming
- Chapter 25 - The Parables in Light of His Coming

Matthew Addresses the Jewish World

Matthew writes to the Jews. He is uniquely and thoroughly Jewish in his presentation. This is evidenced by the genealogy which traces Christ's ancestry back to Abraham through David (1:1), and his emphasis on the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Matthew has about 129 references to the Old Testament; Mark contains but a few. (The Roman world to whom Mark was writing, had little background and appreciation for the Old Testament.) Matthew sought to convince the Jewish world that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. He repeatedly related Messianic prophecies to the life and ministry of Jesus, showing how they were fulfilled in Him. Because Matthew is writing to the Jews, he seeks to answer *three major questions* that were foremost in the minds of the Jews concerning the Messiah:

- 1.) COULD THE LINEAGE OF JESUS BE TRACED BACK TO DAVID?
- 2.) DID JESUS UPHOLD THE LAW?
- 3.) HAD JESUS COME TO ESTABLISH THE KINGDOM?

1.) THE LINEAGE OF JESUS COULD IN FACT BE TRACED TO KING DAVID! The first thing the Hebrews had to know about Jesus was His ancestral relation to David. They all knew and understood that the Messiah would descend from David's line. Therefore, Matthew clearly answered the Jews' first question when he opened his Gospel with the genealogy of Christ. "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, *the son of David*, the son of Abraham" (1:1).

Jesus is called the "Son of David" repeatedly (9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30, 21:9, 21:15). Jesus made it very clear that He was not only a descendant of David, *but also David's Lord* (22:42-45). Christ received His physical body from David's line (Rom.1:3). His spirit, of course, was eternal. The miracle of the incarnation made Jesus both God and man simultaneously.

2.) JESUS SURELY UPHOLD THE LAW! He declared, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Mt. 5:17-18). Christ came to fulfill the Law in the truest sense of the word, bringing the Law into the heart by a new and better covenant. He came to bring redemption into the very core of man's being. Jesus taught that one's righteousness had to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (which was exterior) if he wanted to be worthy of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:20). Christ held up a very high standard, commanding: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48).

For the benefit of the Jewish readers, Matthew was portraying Jesus as a new and greater Moses, who gave higher implications to the Law. He taught: "Ye have heard that it was said of old ... but I say unto you" (5:21, 5:27, 5:31, 5:33, 5:38, 5:43). Each time He said, "but I say unto you," He was giving deeper meanings to the Law. Jesus was going beyond *acts*, to *attitudes* of the heart. The Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5 - 7) is a picture of the Law written in the heart. Christ, as the new and greater Lawgiver, was seeking to bring the Law into the hearts of His people. He spoke as one having authority, and not as one of the Scribes (7:28-29).

3.) JESUS HAD TRULY COME TO ESTABLISH THE KINGDOM! Matthew *alone* uses the expression "the kingdom of heaven," and he uses it 33 times. First and foremost, Christ came to establish an inward, spiritual kingdom in the lives of people. The principles for kingdom living were embodied in His Sermon on the Mount. Christ taught that the heart needed to be conquered (15:18-20). In order for society to change, people's hearts need to change. The real problems in life are *spiritual*.

More than anything else, Christ spoke on the subject of the heart. Politics cannot change the heart. Only a move of God's Spirit can change the way people live. Society never changes unless men and women have a divine change in their hearts. This spiritual kingdom that Christ came to establish is *an inner reality* of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom.14:17). The kingdom of heaven, therefore, refers to three realms: 1.) It is heaven itself. 2.) This heavenly kingdom needs to come into our personal lives. Jesus taught, "The kingdom of God is within you." 3.) Eventually, there will be a physical kingdom brought to earth. This takes place in the Millennial Age, but it starts in the heart. Thus, we are to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

Matthew's Gospel is highly Jewish. Many of the statements of Christ have a special Jewish flavor: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24), and, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:5-6). Matthew is the only Gospel writer who counters the Jewish charge that the disciples of Jesus had stolen His body (28:11-15).

SUMMARY OF MARK'S GOSPEL

Mark's Gospel was composed by John Mark, under the direction of Peter. When the Apostle Peter proclaimed the Word of God in Rome, there were a great number present as John Mark interpreted Peter's messages into Latin. Peter's audience requested Mark to reduce Peter's teachings to writing. The result was the Gospel of Mark. Under the Holy Spirit's guidance, Mark took of the words of Peter and created his Gospel, tailoring it especially to his Roman listeners (A.D. 65).

The early Church was unanimous about two things: Mark's Gospel was written by John Mark, and it presents the preaching of Peter. Early Church fathers such as Papias, Eusebius, Clement, and Origen ascribe this Gospel to Mark. Papias (140 A.D.) quotes the Apostle John as saying: "Mark being the interpreter of Peter, whatsoever he recorded he wrote with great accuracy ... he was in company with Peter, who gave him such instruction as was necessary, but not to give a history of our Lord's discourses."

Mark Writes to the Roman World

Mark geared his Gospel to the Roman world. The Romans were not religious, neither were they philosophers like the Greeks. They were impressed by physical strength and military might. The Romans respected authority, and they were people of action. Therefore, Mark's Gospel is very rapid and is filled with action. The words *immediately, straightway, forthwith, as soon as, and anon* are found 44 times.

Mark's Gospel Contains:

- Little teaching
- No Sermon on the Mount
- Few parables (4) - Matthew has 18, Luke 19
- No record of the Lord's birth or childhood
- No genealogy of Jesus
- Few quotes from the Old Testament (Matthew has 129)
- But nearly all the notable miracles of Christ

THEME: Christ is not presented to the Romans as the Teacher of Israel or *a greater Moses*, as Matthew portrayed to the Jews. Instead, Mark introduced Him as the mighty miracle worker. He could control nature – the winds and the sea obeyed Him. The spirit world trembled before Him. He had power over all manner of sickness and disease, and even death. Whole cities were healed by Him. He had power over the economy, feeding five thousand with just a handful of food. He spoke with an authority which none of his peers could gainsay. In spite of having such awesome authority, He was able to humble Himself before those who were far weaker and yield His life a ransom for many (Mk.10:42-45). This was *a challenge* to the Roman mind and thinking.

Different Personalities / Different Calls

God uses men with different personalities and gifts to reach certain kinds of people. Eloquent Luke was commissioned to write to the philosophical Greeks. Matthew Levi ministered to the Jewish world. Explosive Peter (through John Mark) ministered to the aggressive Romans. God will also prepare you and send you to a people of His choosing. He knows *precisely* which people we can minister to the most effectively. You will be able to reach people that others could not. Others will be able to reach people that you could not. God will anoint us and flow through us in His own unique way, just as He did through Matthew to the Jews, Mark to the Romans, and Luke to the Greeks. Remember the word of the Lord to us in Psalm 47:4: “He shall choose our inheritance for us.” It is God who determines which people we will minister to and claim for our spiritual inheritance.

Matthew and Mark Compared

Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 144 - 220) stated that the Gospels containing the genealogies (i. e. Matthew and Luke) were written first. The Gospels of Mark and John came later. Therefore, the supposition by some that Matthew had to borrow from Mark's content is probably wrong. Mark was written after Matthew. (Conjectured dates of writing: Matthew - 50's A.D. Mark - 65 A.D.)

- Matthew was written to the Jews and quotes extensively from the Old Testament.
- Mark was written to the Romans and quotes very little from the Old Testament.
- Mark explains certain Jewish traditions (cf. Mk. 7:2-4, 7:11, 14:12).
- Mark translates Aramaic words (Mk. 5:41, 7:34, 14:36, 15:22, 15:34).
- Mark explains the geographical relationship of the Mount of Olives to the temple (Mk.13:3).
- Mark explained Greek expressions by their Latin equivalents (Mk.12:42, 15:16).
- Mark mentions that women should not divorce their husbands.
- Matthew did not include this because women in Jewish society were not permitted to divorce their husbands anyway.

It is very clear that Matthew and Mark were writing to two different societies. Matthew would never have tried to clarify Jewish customs to the Jewish world as Mark did to the Romans (Mk. 7:2-4). Nor would Matthew have ever explained that the Mount of Olives was in plain view of the temple (Mk.13:3). Every Jew would know that. Matthew did not need to interpret Aramaic words to Jews; but Mark, who was writing to a non-Jewish society, found it quite necessary. Luke, who was writing to the Greek world, also explained that the feast of unleavened bread was called the Passover. Every Jew would have known this from his youth, but not a Gentile (cf. Lk. 22:1).

SUMMARY OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

Luke was a physician and travelling companion of the Apostle Paul (cf. Col. 4:14). Paul refers to him as “the beloved physician” indicating his sweetness of character. Many had deserted Paul at the end of his life. Nevertheless, Luke remained supremely loyal to the finish (cf. 2 Tim. 1:15, 4:16). Among Paul's last words were these—“Only Luke is with me” (2 Tim. 4:11).

Luke had unusual capacity for research. He was an accurate and able historian, possessing a polished vernacular no New Testament writer could supersede. Besides his medical knowledge, he had an interest in ships and had experience at sea. He was a traveller. This is evidenced in his narratives in the Book of Acts. In Acts he joined Paul on his missionary journeys (16:10), and continued in close contact with him until Paul's death. He never discloses his name in the Acts narrative, but includes himself inconspicuously, saying “we” or “us” (16:10-17, 20:5, 21:18, 27:1 - 28:16). This signifies his humility of mind and heart.

As a New Testament writer, Luke ranks number two in content, second only to Paul. Luke wrote almost as much as Paul. Combining the 24 lengthy chapters of Luke's Gospel with his 28 chapters of the Book of Acts, Luke contributed almost as much to the New Testament as Paul's fourteen epistles. The Apostle John ranks third.

Luke's two literary masterpieces (The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts) could be considered Volume One and Volume Two of one work. Acts continues where his Gospel leaves off. The Book of Acts was written *shortly after* his Gospel (the Gospel perhaps in 62 A.D. and the Acts in 63). Both books were written to Theophilus and those surrounding him. Theophilus was a high ranking Greek nobleman whom Luke entitles “Most Excellent Theophilus” (Lk. 1:3, Acts 1:1). Thus, Luke was writing to a cultured Greek society. His presentation of the Gospel was to the educated, the thinkers, and those who appreciated beautiful speech and intricate details.

Luke's Sources for Writing

For many years Luke had close contact with Paul and numerous Christian leaders such as Philip, Timothy, Silas, Mark, Barnabas, James the Lord's brother, the twelve apostles, and many of the five hundred brethren who were with Christ during his ministry and had witnessed His resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:6). As a result of being in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17), Caesarea, and other places where Christ and His apostles ministered, Luke had splendid opportunities to obtain firsthand knowledge regarding our Lord, His teachings, His miracles, redemption, and the beginnings of the Church.

Luke declares in his prologue (Lk. 1:1-4) that he made an intensive research of the Gospel story in order to be able to write a reliable account. His prologue shows clearly that he had access to a number of written documents as well as oral testimonies from reliable eyewitnesses (Lk. 1:1-2). Luke had at his disposal the most intimate and direct sources of information. He knew James the brother of Jesus personally (Acts 21:18). Probably he knew Mary the mother of our Lord as well. He had direct dialogue with many of the men and women he describes in his Gospel and the Book of Acts. Luke was able therefore to accurately trace the history of all things regarding Jesus, so that he could write a Gospel that enabled believers to know with certainty “those things which are most surely believed among us” (Lk. 1:1, 1:4).

Luke's Devotional Life

Luke, more than any of the other Gospel writers, took special notice of how often Jesus prayed. This is an indication of Luke's own heart. Luke himself was a man of prayer and would naturally be attracted to this aspect of the life of Christ. Luke was the only writer to record that Christ was praying as He was being baptized. "... It came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, *and praying*, the heaven was opened" (Lk. 3:21). Matthew and Mark omit the part about Jesus praying. Moreover, only Luke includes the account of Jesus praying all night when He had to select twelve apostles from His many disciples (Lk. 6:12-13).

Luke draws attention to the fact that Jesus had been in the spirit of prayer before He asked the disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" "And it came to pass, *as he was alone praying* ... he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?" (Lk. 9:18). Luke implies that the Father prompted Jesus to ask this when He was praying. Matthew and Mark do not include this. In Luke 9:29, Christ was transfigured *as He was praying*. Prayer opens the heavens and brings us in touch with God's glory. (See 1:10, 5:16, 6:28, 11:1-2, 18:1, 21:36, 22:32, 22:40, 22:44, 22:46.)

Luke's Style of Writing

Luke was a physician. He pointed out rare diseases in his Gospel, such as the dropsy in 14:1-6. All four Gospel writers record that Peter cut off a man's ear with the sword, but only Luke includes that Jesus healed him (22:50-51). Luke is the only one to record that Christ's blood vessels in His forehead broke from the pressure against His mind in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk. 22:44). Luke alone includes Christ's message in Nazareth when He began His ministry saying, "He hath sent me to heal" and concluded with, "Physician, heal thyself" (4:18,23). Luke alone records that "The power of the Lord was present to heal" (5:17). There is more mention of *healing* in Luke than in Matthew and Mark combined. Being a physician, it was natural for Luke to do case histories on those he writes about. This is especially true of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. Certainly a doctor who had delivered many babies during his career would be fascinated with the supernatural conception of the child Jesus (Lk.1:30-38). Luke alone includes this in his narrative. And when he recorded the genealogy of Christ, he traced it all the way back to Adam, and to God Himself in 3:23-38. No writer is more thorough, precise, orderly, and scientific than Luke.

When Luke describes the birth of John the Baptist, again he performs a case history on the lives of John's parents (1:5-25). Zacharias and Elizabeth had been praying many years for a son but still remained childless. Suddenly, at a certain hour of the day, as Zacharias was ministering at the altar in a certain priestly course, a particular angel (Gabriel) appeared to him. Not only did Gabriel appear at the altar, but at the *right* side of the altar. Luke included every point. Yet, every detail was saturated with revelation and spiritual life. This was the man God chose to write to the Greek world. Although Luke was highly educated, his intellect was *surrendered* to God.

ACCOUNTS FOUND ONLY IN LUKE

Luke preserved many of the words and parables of Jesus which would have otherwise been lost. Some of the most beautiful and significant narratives regarding Christ are found only in Luke. Below is a list of accounts found only in the Gospel of Luke:

- 1:5-25 The announcement of John the Baptist's birth
- 1:26-38 The annunciation of Christ's birth to Mary by Gabriel

1:39-56 Mary's visit to Elizabeth; the leaping of the babe in her womb / Mary's song of rejoicing
 1:57-80 The birth of John the Baptist / Naming of John / Tongue of Zacharias loosed to prophesy
 2:1-20 Taxation by Caesar / birth of Christ in Bethlehem / the angels' glad tidings to the shepherds
 2:21-38 Circumcision of Jesus; Mary's purification / Jesus in the temple; joy of Simeon and Anna
 2:39-40 Jesus' childhood at Nazareth
 2:41-50 Jesus' visit to the temple at age twelve / the confounding of the doctors of the law
 2:51-52 The eighteen silent years at Nazareth
 3:1-2 The political and religious scene
 3:10-14 Answers John the Baptist gave to those who came to his baptism
 3:19-20 The reason Herod imprisoned John the Baptist (John disapproved of his marriage.)
 3:23-38 Genealogy of Jesus traced back to Adam
 4:16-30 Detailed description of Christ's preaching at Nazareth and the rejection that followed
 5:1-11 The miraculous draft of fishes
 6:24-26 The four woes (not included in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount)
 7:11-17 The son of the widow of Nain raised from the dead
 7:36-50 Jesus anointed by a sinful woman; (parable of the two debtors); the woman's salvation
 8:1-3 The second tour of Galilee / The women who followed Jesus and ministered to him
 9:51-56 The Samaritan towns who rejected Jesus / Desire of James and John to consume them
 10:1-24 The sending out of the seventy / Their return
 10:30-37 Parable of the good Samaritan
 10:38-42 In the home of Mary and Martha
 11:5-8 Parable of the friend at midnight
 11:27-28 Blessedness of those who *obey* more than the blessedness of Mary
 12:13-21 Warnings against covetousness / Parable of the rich fool
 12:47-48 Many or few stripes (Judgment is determined by the light one has.)
 13:1-9 Tale of two tragedies / Parable of the fruitless fig tree
 13:10-17 Healing of the woman bound by Satan eighteen years
 13:31-33 Christ's reply to the warning to flee because "Herod will kill thee."
 14:1-6 Healing of the man with dropsy (edema - abnormal accumulation of body fluid)
 14:7-15 Teaching on humility (taking the low place; i. e. "If you stay down, no one can put you down.")
 14:28-33 Parables on counting the cost
 15:8-10 Parable of the lost coin
 15:11-32 The prodigal son
 16:1-13 Parable of the unjust steward
 16:14-15 Hypocrisy of the Pharisees (not how we appear to men but to God)
 16:19-31 The rich man and Lazarus
 17:7-10 The servant's duty (After going the second mile, we should say, "This is only my duty.")
 17:11-19 Healing of the ten lepers (Only *one* healed leper used his healthy body to glorify God.)
 17:20-21 Interpretation of the kingdom of God (It is spiritual; it is within you.)
 18:1-8 Parable of the unjust judge (on importunity - "I *insist* on having an answer.")
 18:9-14 The self-righteous Pharisee versus the publican who had no plea
 19:1-10 The conversion of little Zacchaeus
 22:31-33 Peter's need of conversion (Peter was the wheat; his self-strength was the chaff.)
 22:35-38 The two swords
 23:6-16 Jesus stands before Herod
 23:27-31 Jesus and the wailing women (They bewailed him because he was dying without seed.)
 23:40-43 The repentant thief on the cross
 24:13-35 The two Emmaeus Disciples
 24:33-35 The news of Christ's appearance to Peter
 24:44-49 Christ's appearance to open the scriptures / Command to preach but wait for the Spirit

SUMMARY OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

The Gospel of John is unlike Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John deals chiefly with the words and discourses of Jesus. John contains *no* parables, and the few miracles he records are for *signs* or messages. Christ's genealogy and childhood are not included. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all foretell Jerusalem's coming destruction (70 A.D.), and were written before Jerusalem fell. John, written 26 years after the city was plundered, does not predict its fall. John uses Roman time, which is the same as ours, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke use Hebrew time. The Jewish day started at what would be 6:00 p.m. our time, whereas our day starts at midnight.

Astoundingly, the word "faith" is not found in John, although "believe" is frequently mentioned. "Verily verily I say unto you," an expression Jesus used for *double emphasis*, is recorded by John alone (a total of 25 times). One third of his Gospel covers one day—the Passover in which our Lord was crucified. Chapters 13 through 19 all took place within twenty-four hours. The following 41 accounts are found only in John's Gospel, and nowhere else:

1:19-34	John's presentation of the Messiah	9:1-41	Healing of the man born blind
1:35-49	The calling of the first disciples	10:1-21	The Good Shepherd
2:1-11	Christ turns water into wine - a sign	10:22-39	Jesus at the feast of dedication
2:12	His first sojourn in Capernaum	10:39-42	Withdrawal - Jerusalem to Bethany
2:13	The first passover during His ministry	11:1-44	The raising of Lazarus
2:14-25	The first cleansing of the temple	11:45-54	Plot to kill Jesus / Caiaphas' prophecy
3:1-21	Discourse with Nicodemus - new birth	11:55-12:1	His arrival in Bethany
3:22-37	John turns all attention to Jesus	12:9-11	Six days before the passover
4:5-42	Jesus in Samaria - "The Water of Life"	12:20-50	Desire of the Greeks to see Jesus
4:43-45	The arrival in Galilee	13:1-20	Washing of the disciples' feet
4:46-54	The healing of the nobleman's son	14:1-31	Farewell address in the upper room
5:2-16	Lame man healed at pool on sabbath	15:1-17	Christ, the True Vine
5:17-47	Discourse on His divinity	15:18-16:4	The world hates you. / It hates Me.
6:22-59	Discourse on the "Bread of Life"	16:5-15	The coming Holy Spirit
6:60-71	Many offended disciples forsake Christ	16:16-33	Christ's death and resurrection
7:2-9	The time of the Feast of Tabernacles	17:1-26	Christ's High Priestly prayer
7:11-52	His ministry at the Feast of Tabernacles	18:12-14	Jesus examined by Annas
7:53-8:11	The adulterous woman	19:25-27	Jesus entrusts his mother to John
8:12-20	Discourse - "I am the light of the world"	20:26-31	Christ appears eight days after res.
8:21-59	Discourse - "Which father are ye of?"	21:1-14	Miraculous draft of fishes
		21:15-25	Public restoration of Peter

Jesus taught by Contrast

The greatest teacher of all time often taught by *contrast*. In all four Gospels this facet of Christ's nature is clearly seen. Jesus drew a line and said, "Be on one side or the other. Be either hot or cold; if you are not with me, you are against me." Christ is against being neutral. We cannot serve two masters or be double-minded. God wants to cleanse His people of all mixture. When there was a battle in the Old Testament, each side *arrayed themselves* to identify which side they were on. We will either be a child of the kingdom of heaven, or a child of hell. In these last days everyone will be forced to decide for Christ or the Antichrist. Consider some of the contrasts on the next page:

- Natural birth / Spiritual birth (Jn. 3); Natural water / water of life (Jn. 4)
- Natural bread / Bread from Heaven (Jn. 6); Natural light / Spiritual light (Jn. 8)
- God is the Father of the redeemed / Satan is the father of the unredeemed (Jn. 8:21-59)
- The narrow gate / The wide gate; *Few* who find eternal life / *Many* who seek eternal life (Mt. 7:13,14)
- The son who said yes but did *not* obey / The other son who said no but later *did* obey (Mt. 21:28-32)
- The sheep / goats (Mt. 25:31-46); The good fish / bad fish (Mt.13:47-49); Wheat / tares (Mt.13:24-30)
- The tree bearing good fruit / The tree bearing bad fruit (Mt. 7:16-20).
- True prophets and teachers / False prophets and teachers (Mt. 7:15-20)
- Children of the Kingdom / Children of the Wicked One (Mt.13:37-43)
- The five wise virgins / The five foolish virgins (Mt. 25:1-11)
- New wine skins / Old wine skins (Mt. 9:17)
- Water baptism / The Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3:11)
- The great harvest / The few laborers (Mt. 9:36-38).
- Loving God more than family and friends / Loving family and friends more than God (Mt.10:37,38)
- Having the praise and honor of God / Having the praise and honor of men (Mt. 23:5-12, Jn.12:43)
- Desiring to be seen of God only / Desiring to be seen of men (Mt. 6:2-6; 6:16-18).
- Losing our life to find it / Seeking to preserve our life (self) and losing it (Mt.10:38,39)
- The new garment / the old garment (Mt. 9:16)
- Confessing or denying Christ before men / Christ confessing or denying us before the Father (Mt.10:32,33)
- Loving truth and receiving more truth / Rejecting truth and losing the truth we have (Mk. 4:24,25)
- Letting our light shine before men / Hiding our light under a cover (Mt. 5:14,15)
- Being the salt (symbolic of sincerity) of the earth / losing our saltiness, going corrupt (Mt. 5:13)
- Serving God / Serving Money (Mt. 6:24); Hearts full of light / Hearts full of darkness (Mt. 6:22,23)
- Treasures in heaven / Treasures on earth (Mt. 6:19-21); Rewards now / Rewards later (Lk. 6:20-26)
- Investing in our earthly house / Investing in our heavenly house (Mt. 6:19-21)
- The wise builder who builds on a rock / The foolish builder who builds on the sand (Mt. 7:24-27)
- One who hears and obeys / One who hears but does *not* obey (Mt. 7:24-27)
- One whose house stands the storm / The one whose house collapses from the storm (Mt. 7:24-27)
- Showing mercy to others / God showing mercy to us (Mt. 5:7, cf. Jas. 2:13)
- Judgment we mete out to others / The same judgment God metes out to us (Mt. 7:1,2)
- Forgiving others / God forgiving us; Not forgiving others / God not forgiving us (Mt. 6:14,15; 18:21-35)
- Those who are *great* in the kingdom / Those who are *least* in the kingdom (Mt. 5:19)
- Offerings God accepts / Offerings God rejects (Mt. 5:23,24; 9:13; 12:7)
- Love of enemies / Hatred of enemies (Mt. 5:43,44,46,47)¹
- Exterior righteousness / Interior righteousness (Mt. 5:20)
- Sun light and rain that fall on the righteous / Sun light and rain that fall on the unrighteous (Mt. 5:25)
- Say Yes and meaning Yes / Saying No and meaning No. Mean what you say (Mt. 5:27).
- Laughing now / Crying later; Riches now / Poverty later; Persecution now / Rejoicing later (Lk. 6:20-26)
- The servant who knew the Lord's will / The servant who did *not* know the Lord's will (Lk.12:47,48)
- His yoke, which is easy / Our yoke, which is heavy (Mt.11:28-30)
- Faith of the Centurion / The faith of all the other Israelites (Mt. 8:10-12)
- Judgment of Tyre, Sidon, Sodom / Judgment on Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum (Mt.11:20-24)
- Gathering the harvest *with* Him / Gathering the harvest *our own way* and losing it (Mt.12:30; Lk.11:23)
- The ones who are taken / the others who are left (Mt. 24:41)
- The faithful and wise servant / the evil and unfaithful servant (Mt. 24:44-51)
- The servant who used his talent / the servant who hid his talent (Mt. 25:14-30)

ADD YOUR OWN. YOU WILL FIND *MANY* OTHER CONTRASTS IN CHRIST'S TEACHINGS.

Parables

Matthew has 18 parables, Mark has 4, Luke has 19, and John has none. Jesus spoke in parables for two reasons: 1.) To hide truth from the unworthy; 2.) To reveal truth to the worthy and upright. We should remember that parables are only intended to present *one main theme*. Every detail of a parable *does not* have a meaning. With allegories, everything has a counterpart. This is important when we attempt to interpret a parable. When proper names are mentioned, such as in the case of the rich man and Lazarus, it is not a parable but a true story. In the study of the Gospels, I recommend that you obtain our book, *Synoptic Gospels*. Also, Dr. Brian Bailey's books are excellent.

Outline for the New Testament

* Preparation – The Old Testament

I. Manifestation – The Four Gospels (4)

II. Propagation – The Book of Acts (1)

III. Explanation – The Epistles (21)

IV. Consummation – The Book of Revelation (1)

The Old Testament was the preparation for the New Testament. Jesus is written about in the Law, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms (Lk. 24:44,45; Jn. 5:39). He declared that all the Scriptures “testify” of Him. He is the Living Word which came down from heaven.

In the four Gospels, Christ was made manifest to the world. God “became flesh and dwelt among us.” He is the Light of World, the One who was slain for our sins. In God’s estimation, He had to become a man in order to die for humanity. Therefore, that message must not be taken lightly. The sacrifice of Christ is *the only provision* for finding forgiveness and life everlasting. Many nice people ignore and neglect the Gospel message, but when they die they will go into a lonely eternity, lost and in despair forever. Let us lay hold of eternal life; let us lay hold of the dear Savior.

After Christ was manifested in the four Gospels, the Book of Acts records the propagation of the Gospel—starting in Jerusalem, then Judaea, then Samaria, and on to the ends of the earth. However, it is not enough to preach forgiveness. Christ commanded his apostles to go and “teach” all nations. Thus, we have the 21 epistles which *explain* the details of redemption. Paul, the supreme interpreter of the New Testament, wrote 14 of the 27 books of the new covenant. The other seven epistles are termed, “The General Epistles.” They are James, I-II Peter, I,II,III John, and Jude.

Finally we have the consummation of all things in the Book of Revelation. We are shown the end of the Church Age, the purifying of the Church during times of tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ, the Millennial reign of Christ for a thousand years, and then the new heaven and the new earth. Let us now move along into the Book of Acts.

THE BOOK OF ACTS

INTRODUCTION

The Beginning of the Church

Acts is a historical account of the *beginning* of the Church. When Christ declared, “I will build my church” (Mt.16:18), He started by preparing twelve foundation stones during His three-and-a-half year ministry. This is recorded in the four Gospels. Jesus poured His life and message into the twelve apostles. These men would become the role models and writers of the New Testament. Our faith and indeed our very lives are *based* upon the eternal Scriptures which they and the prophets inscribed. The Apostle Paul confirmed this truth when he said we are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20).

Unworthy Foundation Stones Removed

Christ does not build His Church upon anything faulty. His foundation stones are “tried” stones. Before the new move of the Spirit in Acts, God weeded out all of those who had a treacherous spirit. Virtually half of chapter one concerns the replacement of Judas the traitor. In Acts 15:36-41, there is a shuffling of positions and offices again, when Silas replaced Barnabas. Today we see the same process going on in the Church. God is about to move again. Therefore, He is revealing the hearts of men. All those who are traitors like Judas, usurpers like Absalom, Korah, and Adonijah, and all those who are unrepentant as Cain are being exposed and removed from leadership. All are being tested today to see whether they will be worthy to have a part in the next move of God.

A Time of Transition

Acts is a divine account of a new move of God. The brethren had never walked this way before. It was not like anything they experienced in the past. Therefore, on the day of Pentecost, everyone was *amazed* and *confounded*. The emphasis of the Holy Spirit had changed. The winds of God were blowing in another direction. For Israel, it was a time of transition from the Old Covenant to the New. There was a new message and a totally different order. Many in the old regime *refused* to flow with the new move, being “old wine skins” who wanted to remain in their old traditions. Most of all, they resented seeing God bless the Gentiles, whom they deemed quite inferior to themselves. Vexed with jealousy, Israel became the biggest opponents of what God was doing in their generation.

The twelve apostles themselves were also hampered during the transition. Even the chief leaders of the revival still had elements of prejudice and bigotry in their hearts. Ten years had passed since Pentecost and still they had preached Christ *only* to fellow-Israelites and Gentile proselytes who attended their synagogues. Evangelism to the Gentile world had been greatly impeded because of bias. After a notable vision from heaven (Acts 10:1 – 11:19), Peter and the apostles clearly understood that God had welcomed unreservedly *all the Gentiles* into His kingdom. Later, in chapter 15, a public statement was made at the Jerusalem Council clearly delineating which laws the Gentiles should observe, and which ones were unnecessary. This came about after “no small dissension.” We can see, then, that the newborn Church was imperfect in her infancy stage as she was learning to walk in the unfamiliar paths of the new covenant.

A Focus on the Center of the Fire

Acts focuses on *the center* of the fire. By this we mean the center of what God was doing. When fire-fighters are trying to determine the source of a fire, they look for the hottest spot. In Acts, the fire started on Mount Zion in the upper room, especially with Peter and the eleven apostles. Peter and the eleven were the center of the fire in chapters 1-12. Then the fire spread to Paul and the church of Antioch in chapters 13-28. Many were added to the center of what God was doing, while others dropped out.

After Barnabas was offended and separated himself from Paul, we see that he vanished totally from the narrative of Acts. Therefore, he left the center of God's move to labor on the perimeter of God's vineyard. Silas came into the center of the fire, and so did Timothy and Luke. We should guard our hearts very carefully so that we always stay in the middle of what God is doing. Every one of us is going to be tested by *offenses*. Will we also be offended and leave? Remember, there is always a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense in Zion because Zion is God's hottest spot (Isa. 4:4, 33:14). It is the place of holy devouring fire, the habitation of God's presence (Psa.132:13,14). Who is able to dwell among everlasting burnings?

The Two Main Leaders—Peter and Paul

In chapters 1-12, *Peter* was in the forefront of the new move of God. He ministered primarily to the Jews (the circumcision). In chapters 13-28, *Paul* emerged as the main leader. He brought the Gospel to the Gentiles (the uncircumcision). It is interesting to note that both leaders of the new move of God had major failures in their past, which in a sense should be a comfort to us.

Formerly, Paul had persecuted the Church. During that time he had considered himself “blameless” with respect to the [ceremonial] law (Phil. 3:6). He never violated a sabbath or missed a feast day, yet his heart was full of hardness and controversy. Paul had relied on his own righteousness, but had utterly failed. Peter also was confident in the flesh, boasting, “Though all men forsake thee, I will never.” In actual fact, only *dependent* men and women are protected by God from temptation. People remove themselves from God's protection when they make proud, boastful statements. Peter was left unprotected because of his lofty assertions and became an open target of the enemy. What was the result of his pride? Fear overtook him and he ended up cursing and swearing, and denying the Lord. Yet, God extended grace and retrieved both Peter and Paul from their failures. Both of these men became the main leaders of the revival.

The Two Main Mission Bases

Jerusalem was the main headquarters for the Jewish Church. James, the Lord's brother, was the presiding elder over the Jerusalem Church. As a young man, James himself wavered in his faith and was double-minded (Jn. 7:5, Jas.1:6-8). He did not believe his older brother was the Messiah until after the resurrection when Jesus appeared to James, causing a profound conversion (1 Cor.15:7).

Antioch in Syria was the headquarters of the Gentile Church. There were fifteen Antioch's in the world at that time, but it was here in Antioch, *Syria* that believers were first called Christians (11:26). Before that, they were called “disciples.” Antioch became Paul's home base, and it was from here that Paul was launched into all of his missionary journeys; and he always returned there.

Summary of the Book of Acts:

- Acts records the *beginning* of the Church (the birth and infancy of the Church).
- Jesus started building his Church by preparing the *foundation stones* during His ministry.
- The foundation stones were His twelve apostles. Christ Himself is the Chief Cornerstone.
- The apostles gave us the New Testament Scriptures upon which we base our lives and faith.
- God first removed unworthy foundation stones like Judas before he built his Church.
- The Lord did not allow treacherous men to have a part in the new move. It is the same today.
- Acts is an account of a fresh, new move of God. It was unlike anything in the past.
- Every new move of God is unpredictable. It staggers the mind...like on the day of Pentecost.
- Many people did not flow with the new move because of their *love of tradition*.
- Acts was a transition time from the old covenant to the new. It required many adjustments.
- Many Israelites hated the new message, and resented seeing God bless those who received it.
- Jealousy is a curse that infects those who resist the Holy Spirit and refuse what He is saying.
- The greatest opponents of a new move *often* are those who were in the center of a previous one.
- The twelve apostles still had prejudice and bigotry in their hearts.
- Evangelism to the Gentiles was impeded because of bias.
- The vision to Peter (Acts 10:1-11:19) persuaded the Jews that God had accepted the Gentiles.
- Undedicated Jews had numerous “disputations” about what standards the Gentiles had to observe.
- The Church needed *clarification* in her infancy stage as she began walking in the new covenant.
- It took a number of years after Pentecost to properly understand the true tenets of faith.
- Acts focuses on the center of the fire. The apostles were in the center—the hot spot.
- Some people remained in the center of the fire, but others like Barnabas left it.
- Some were brought later into the center of the fire, like Silas, Timothy, and Luke.
- Zion is the center of the devouring fire. There are many stumblingblocks in Zion.
- We will be given every excuse to be offended and quit if we are in or near the center of the fire.
- In chapters 1-12, Peter was the main leader of the new move of God to the Jews.
- In chapters 13-28, Paul was the main leader of the new move of God to the Gentiles.
- Jerusalem was the main missionary base for the Jewish Church.
- Antioch was the main missionary base for the Gentile Church.
- Acts is a book of rain—the outpouring of the Spirit.
- In Acts we see the early rain—a light rain for softening ground and planting.
(The Church was planted and germinated in the first century.)
- In the last days there will be the latter rain—a heavy rain to bring God's Church to maturity.
- The miracles we see in Acts will be mightily intensified in our days.
- The apostolic, prophetic and teaching ministries will be very prominent, just as in Acts 13:1-2.
- Judgment will begin in the house of the Lord, as it did with Ananias and Sapphira.
- People will be transported as was Philip. They will be taken bodily from one place to another.
- The greatest opposition to the new move will come from Bible-quoting believers who have not moved on with God. *Jealousy* will be the greatest problem, even as it was in the first century.

Luke - The Writer of Acts

Luke was a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. Paul's reference to Luke as "the beloved physician" indicates his sweetness of character (cf. Col.4:14). He was a loyal friend to the finish (cf. 2 Tim. 4:11). Luke had a great capacity for research. He was an accurate and able historian, and possessed a polished vernacular that no New Testament writer could excel. Besides his medical knowledge, he had interest in ships as well as experience at sea. This is evidenced in his narratives in Acts. In Acts 16:10, he joined Paul on his missionary travels and continued in close contact with him until Paul's death. He never discloses his name in the Acts narrative but includes himself inconspicuously, saying *we* or *us* (16:10-17, 20:5, 21:18, 27:1–28:16). This signifies humility.

Acts—A Continuation of Luke's Gospel

Luke's two literary masterpieces (The Gospel of Luke / The Book of Acts) could be considered volume one and volume two of *one work*. The Book of Acts continues where his Gospel leaves off (compare Luke 24:47-53 / Acts 1:1-14). Probably Acts was written shortly *after* his Gospel. (The Gospel perhaps in A.D. 62, Acts in 63). Both books were written to a high ranking Greek nobleman named Theophilus and those surrounding him. Luke entitles him "Most Excellent Theophilus" (Lk.1:3, Acts 1:1). Thus, Luke was writing to a cultured Greek society. His presentation of the Gospel was to the educated, the thinkers, and those who appreciated beautiful speech and intricate details. The Book of Acts appears to be in chronological order from start to finish.

Date

The Book of Acts opens with the resurrection and ascension of Christ (April / May, A.D. 30). The resurrection was in April, the ascension in late May, and the day of Pentecost was ten days later in early June. The final chapter concludes with Paul being released from prison in Rome in the early part of A.D. 63. Paul had been under house arrest for two full years (61-63). He stood before the emperor Nero in early 63 A.D. and was acquitted. The Book of Acts covers a total of 33 years—(from the resurrection in *April, A.D. 30* to Paul's release in the early spring of *A.D. 63*).

The beloved physician obviously could not have completed writing Acts before spring, 63. Since Luke's Gospel and Acts were written consecutively and probably close to each other, our dates seem safe. (Luke's Gospel in 62, and Acts in later 63). While Paul was in prison, his faithful traveling companion probably had the time to collect his material and finish his Gospel, and have the resources for his Acts narrative well under way.

Luke's Sources for Writing

For many years, Luke had close contact with Paul and numerous Christian leaders such as Philip, Timothy, Silas, Mark, Barnabas, James the Lord's brother, the twelve apostles, and many of the five hundred brethren who had witnessed Christ's resurrection (cf. 1 Cor.15:6). As a result of being in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17), Caesarea, and other places where Christ and His apostles ministered, Luke had splendid opportunities to obtain firsthand knowledge regarding our Lord, His teachings, His miracles, and the beginnings of the Church. For further studies on the subject, we have prepared a book on Acts entitled: *Acts—A Focus on the Center of the Fire*.

CHRONOLOGY FOR ACTS – THE “HUB” OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

(Most dates are conjectural but reasonably close)

Chapter	Date	Event
Chapter 1-2	30 A.D.	The Lord's final words, the ascension, and the Day of Pentecost — Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost - April / May / June - 30 A.D.
Chapter 3-8	30-34 A.D.	From Pentecost to Stephen's martyrdom, and the revival in Samaria — Some estimate that it was 3 1/2 years from Pentecost to Stephen's death.
Chapter 9	34-37 A.D.	Paul's conversion in A.D. 34, his three years in Arabia (between 9:22-23); his brief return to Damascus and his escape to Jerusalem where he met Peter and conversed with him 15 days. (Paul is sent home to Tarsus by the brethren; was not heard of for about seven years. 9:23-31, Gal.1:15-24).
Chapter 10	40 A.D.	About ten years after Pentecost the Gospel was brought to the Gentiles, starting at the house of Cornelius. Peter had the vision that God had accepted the Gentiles and was not to call them “common or unclean.”
Chapter 11	40-44 A.D.	From the opened door to the Gentiles (approximately 40 A.D.) to Paul's coming out of obscurity in 44 A.D. to teach at Antioch (Acts 11:25-26).
Chapter 12	44-45 A.D.	James was martyred, Peter was delivered, and Herod slain by the Lord. <i>A. D. 44 is an established date in secular history</i> for these events.
Chapter 13-14	48-49 A.D.	First Missionary Journey (13:1 – 14:28) — They launched from Antioch and returned there. Then they had a long rest.
Chapter 15	50 or 51 A.D.	The Jerusalem Conference (to consider what laws the Gentiles should observe) — Paul and Barnabas soon split up; Silas replaced him.
Chapter 16-18	51-54 A.D.	The Second Missionary Journey (15:40 – 18:22) — The Philippian, Thessalonian, and Corinthian churches were started on this journey. While at Corinth (18 months) Paul wrote <i>I-II Thessalonians</i> .
Chapter 19-21	54-58 A.D.	Third Missionary Journey (18:23 – 21:17) — While at Ephesus Paul wrote <i>First Corinthians</i> . In Macedonia, he wrote <i>Second Corinthians</i> . When he came back to Corinth for a third visit, he wrote <i>Galatians</i> and <i>Romans</i> .
Chapter 22-26	58-60 A.D.	Paul's last visit to Jerusalem, where he was rejected and imprisoned. Under Roman custody for two years at Caesarea, he testified before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. He appealed to Caesar, and headed for Rome.
Chapter 27-28	60-63 A.D.	Paul started for Rome but was shipwrecked en route. Remaining on Malta (or Miletta) for the winter, he preached there. Paul came to Rome in the Spring, and was under house arrest for two full years. While in Rome he wrote <i>Ephesians</i> , <i>Colossians</i> , <i>Philemon</i> , and <i>Philippians</i> . Acts ends here. In early spring, 63, he appeared before Nero, was acquitted, and released.

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

Romans was written by Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:1-3). During those three months in Corinth, Greece, he wrote Galatians as well. Written at almost the same time, both Romans and Galatians are occupied with the same reasonings. Galatians was written in December 57 A.D. and Romans in February of 58. As far as we know, Paul had never been to Rome but he was hoping to go there soon (Acts 19:21). Shortly after writing his Roman Epistle, he was imprisoned in Jerusalem. Paul did come to Rome several years later, but in chains (cf. Acts 21 to 28).

Rome already had a thriving church. But just like it is in our times, the new believers were horribly ignorant of the Scriptures and the treasures of spiritual truth that lie within its pages. Perhaps more than any of the New Testament books, Romans lays a firm foundation in our lives for all the major doctrinal truths. We will outline Paul's Epistle to the Romans as follows:

General Outline

- I. Chapters 1-5 - Jews and Gentiles Are All Under Sin.
(The whole world is guilty before God)
Salvation is offered to all by faith in Christ
- II. Chapter 6 - Being Dead to Sin.
- III. Chapter 7 - The Strife of Two Natures in a Christian
- IV. Chapter 8 - The Resurrection Power of a Crucified Life
- V. Chapters 9-11 - God's Purposes for Natural Israel
- VI. Chapters 12-15 - Details for Practical Christian Conduct
- VII. Chapter 16 - Personal Greetings to Various People in Rome

Romans 1:1-17 is Paul's introduction to the Church at Rome. Then in 1:18-32, he addresses the problem in humanity of wilful rejection of the Light, and its consequences.

1:18 - "who hold the truth in unrighteousness"

1:21 - "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God"

1:23 - "they changed the glory of the incorruptible God"

1:25 - "and changed the truth of God into a lie"

1:28 - "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge"

1:32 - "who knowing the judgment of God"

The result of rejecting God and bringing Him down is that God rejected them and brought them down:

1:24 - "Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness"

1:26 - "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections"

1:28 - "God gave them over to a reprobate mind"

The real problem in man is *rebellion*, not ignorance. Man knows far more than he is willing to admit. The human heart loves its sin. Man hopes to excuse himself from obligation by pleading ignorance. People in general try to dull themselves to judgment and not retain God in their knowledge. In God's evaluation, the whole world is guilty, "without excuse," and worthy of judgment. When God came down from heaven and died for us, He was trying to save us from the judgment we deserve.

God is No Respector of Persons / All Have Sinned / All Need a Savior

The church at Rome was a blend of Jews and Gentiles. The Jewish believers felt that they were superior to the Gentiles because God had chosen them to be a light to the world, and God had committed unto them “the oracles of God” or the laws of God. But Paul is trying to prove a point to the Jews, that “all have sinned.” Therefore, all need a Redeemer.

2:1 is directed to the Jewish believers. “For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things” (also verse 3). 2:17 - “Behold thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God and knowest his will...and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind” (v18-19). 2:21 - “Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” The Jews were not practicing what they preached. They were sinners just as the Gentiles.

3:9-20 - Paul is proving that “all have sinned” (3:23), that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. “There is none righteous, no, not one” (3:10); “boasting is excluded” (3:27). Chapter 4 makes it clear that everyone (both Jew and Gentile) is saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Even as Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness, even so we (both Jew and Gentile), are justified by faith in Christ (4:1-8). 2:11 - God is no respector of persons.

2:12-16 - The Jews had the law of God, but they broke it.

The Gentiles had the law of the conscience, but they broke that.

All have sinned, and all need a Savior.

Everything we have is instantaneous, but also progressive

Virtually everything we have from God is instantaneous, but also progressive. This is certainly true of our salvation. When we come to Jesus we are instantly justified because Christ paid a high price for our debt of sin. In the same way that a criminal is cleared by a judge of all crimes, so also are we acquitted of all our transgressions by the blood of Christ. But justification is also progressive. 5:1 “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” This is an ongoing process. Even as the right margin of a letter needs to be “justified,” the Lord continues to justify us *after* our new birth experience. The right margin of a page is very uneven and jagged; some lines go over the boundary, and some lines come short of it. Likewise, God has to deal with our excesses and deficiencies, one by one, after we are saved. Thus, we are “being justified” in the present tense.

Imputed Righteousness / Imparted Righteousness

In Romans 4:1-8, we are told that Abraham was “counted” righteous because he believed what God said to him. A believing heart is a soft heart. Just as Abraham was counted righteous, so are we counted righteous when we believe the message that *Jesus Christ died to pay our debt*. When we believe the Gospel message, *instantly* we are reckoned righteous, irrespective of our many problems. God then goes to work to fill us with the Spirit, renew our mind, break every bondage, and deal with wrong ideas, wrong friendships, wrong music, wrong habits, and much more. Meanwhile, as we are in the process of being *made* righteous, we are “counted” righteous. But the righteousness that is mentioned in Revelation 19:7-8 is a much higher level of righteousness. This is actually a garment of righteousness. It is *experienced* righteousness; righteousness that is wrought out in our hearts. A person then is not only counted righteous; he has been made righteous and performs righteous deeds. There is a great difference between Romans 4:1-8 and Revelation 19:7-8. If we grasp the principle of “instantaneous and progressive,” it will bring great clarity to many other truths of redemption.

5:12-19 - These passages compare the first Adam with the last Adam, Jesus Christ. Both are fathers of a race of people. Adam is the father of all who are born, but Christ is the father of all those who are born again. Everyone descended from Adam and was “*in Adam*,” but all those who are born again become “*in Christ*.” The redeemed are a new race and of a new family; they are in another kingdom, and have a new Father. More and more they take on a new nature and a new mind. 5:17 - “Abundance of grace” is needed to reign in life. Some people receive a small amount of grace and some receive no grace. God only grants grace *to the humble*. If we want to be transformed totally, we must continue to humble ourselves to receive new grace. Nothing ever changes in our lives until we receive new grace. Let us not harden our hearts and cut off the flow of grace (Heb.12:15; 4:16).

Being Dead to Sin

After experiencing new birth, being baptized in water, and receiving the Holy Spirit, there can still be tormenting temptations and the pull of the world that need to be broken. Just ask the Corinthian believers who had experienced all these blessings, yet struggled with sin. Christ made a provision upon the cross, not only to pay for our sins, but to break the power of sin in our lives. This is the Romans 6:6 experience—“Knowing this,” that our old man [was] crucified with Him.” This word *knowing* is a word that means “knowledge that comes from firsthand experience.” It is not an intellectual grasp of a concept, or something we “take by faith,” but an *experience*. This experience would probably be what John Wesley termed, “the second work of grace.” We should ask God to bring us into this experience, but we must hunger and thirst for holiness to have this blessing.

After “knowing,” then we can “reckon” ourselves to be dead indeed to sin, and alive to God” (6:11). Then we will have the power and the ability to “yield the members of our body to righteousness” (6:13). Then “sin will not have dominion over us” (6:14). We are not under the Law but under grace. This means we have God’s grace (divine enablement) to help us. To say that we are “not under the law” does not mean that we can be lawless. It simply means we are not under the powerless old covenant, but that we now have grace or divine ability to observe God’s standards. In the New Testament we are called “to fulfill the righteousness that is in the law” (Rom. 8:4).

Spiritual Adultery

In chapter 7:1-6, some Jews were trying to be married to the old covenant and the new covenant at the same time. They believed in Jesus and the new covenant, but were trying to be wedded to the old covenant simultaneously. They were observing feast days, animal sacrifices, and all the rituals of Moses, yet trusting in the blood of Jesus for salvation. Paul said, the old testament has died, and now you are married to Christ and the new testament. Trying to be wedded to both was adultery. This has a meaning in marriage too. One should only remarry if one’s first companion has died.

7:15-24 is the struggle of two natures in a believer. This refers to the battles we have as we try to overcome certain things in our lives before the experience of Romans 6:6, “knowing that our [old nature] was crucified with Him.” Certain things can have dominion over us, and we need to meet God and find true deliverance. Even after the experience of Romans 6:6, there is an ongoing “dissecting” of our inner life. The Christian life is a continual meeting with God on all the issues in our lives.

Chapter 8 is the power of a crucified and resurrected life in Christ. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. By the power of God and by His grace, we are to “mortify” or put to death the deeds of the body (8:13). This is possible only by grace.

God's Purposes for Natural Israel – Chapters 9 - 11

There will be a national repentance and restoration of Israel when the Lord Jesus Christ returns (Rom.11:26). This truth is confirmed numerous times in Scriptures. The reason God rejected Israel was their unbelief. But if they do not abide in unbelief anymore, they can be accepted again. They will be grafted back into the “olive tree” as it says in Romans 11:23. God has a covenant with Israel (Gen.13:15; 15:18, Psa.105:8-11; Jer. 31:35-37). Paul said, “God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew ... I myself am a Benjamite” (11:1-2). The Lord always preserves a remnant, according to the “election of grace” (11:5). But remember, God always has a good reason for having mercy upon one, and hardening another. The Lord would never harden a good person. The Master Potter fashions a good or bad vessel, but He does it according to the *desire* of the person. As Paul said in chapter one, God brings people down when they bring Him down.

Predestination is Based upon Foreknowledge

Romans 9:11-23 is often terribly confused and is used to overemphasize *predestination*. This is a doctrine that affirms that since all of man is under the fall and all are in rebellion, God ordains some to be saved and some to be lost. Extreme predestination disregards the free will of man to choose his destiny. However, predestination is always based upon “foreknowledge” (Rom. 8:29). It simply means that because God knows beforehand the heart of a man, He chooses and ordains certain ministries or functions for that person. Yes, God will use an evil man to accomplish certain things, but God is never the author of evil. He simply uses a person for who they are.

Vessels of Wrath / Vessels of Mercy

9:11-13 - God chose Jacob above Esau because he knew Esau had little interest in eternal matters, but Jacob did. He knew the hearts of both brothers before they were born. God hardened Pharaoh ten times, but that is because Pharaoh hardened his own heart ten times. God would never do that to a good man. God needed an evil man in office who would not obey the command to “Let my people go.” That way, God could perform His ten judgments upon Egypt for all their sins. In verses 22-23, God bears with evil people (“vessels of wrath”) with much longsuffering, while they do a work of grace on the “vessels of mercy.” In these last days, God will use the children of the devil to hammer His own people into shape. Then He will judge the wicked. See Revelation 19:1-2; 16:4-6.

Details for Christian Conduct – Chapters 12 - 15

In these chapters, Paul is very practical as he gives his advice for Christian behavior. He deals with right attitudes toward God, toward one another, toward authorities, toward secular employment, and toward nonbelievers. He asks us to be sensitive to the conscience of weak believers, and to bear the infirmities of the weak, and so fulfill the law of love. The life of the Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (14:17). Again he emphasizes that we should be good to Israel (15:25-27; 11:31). All the light we have came from Israel through the apostles, prophets, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Redemption started in Jerusalem; the Holy Spirit was first poured out in Jerusalem; and this is the place where Christ will return. In chapter 16, Paul gives personal greetings to various people in Rome. Among others, he salutes a man named Apelles who was “*approved in Christ*” (16:10). This is the one main thing we want to strive for in life—to have the full approval and favor of Christ Jesus our Lord.

THE EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS

Paul Comes to Corinth

Corinth was the capital of Achaia, in southern Greece. It was situated fifty miles west of Athens. While Paul had little success in Athens, Corinth (known for debauchery) was one of the most fruitful of all his stops on his journeys. The Lord said, “I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:9-11). Therefore, Paul stayed in Corinth for eighteen months, establishing a church of perhaps 50,000 people. It is believed that about ten percent of the city turned to Christ.

Corinth was a strategic port city, linking north and south, and also east and west. It was heavily traveled, and people from all walks of life lived there. In Paul’s time the population exceeded half a million. At its height, there were nearly 700,000 (200,000 were free; 500,000 were slave). It was a city of wealth, luxury, drunkenness, and gross immorality. Paul remained a year and a half on his first visit in 52 A.D. He revisited them several times, and wrote letters to them, answering their questions (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1). Paul also had to sharply correct them for allowing gross immorality (5:1), and numerous other problems.

A Mixture of Godliness and Worldliness

The Corinthians were washed in the blood of Jesus, baptized in water, and filled with the Holy Spirit. They had all the nine gifts of the Spirit in operation. Yet, when Paul wrote to them in the spring of 57 A.D, he termed them “carnal” and “babes” (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Later that fall, he wrote another letter (II Corinthians). Let us consider for a moment the background of these two Epistles: The Corinthians came from terrible backgrounds but had received Christ several years earlier. They had been visited by God in revival power and were filled with the Holy Spirit and had the best teachers, like Paul and Peter. Even so, they were still very worldly, and “walked as natural men.” The Corinthians were a tremendous mixture. While experiencing *imputed* righteousness, they needed to be *made* righteous, which eventually leads to *holiness and perfection* (2 Cor. 7:1; 13:9,11).

Like many believers today, the Corinthians were violating many of the precepts of the new covenant which Jesus taught in His Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5–7). The thirty-three precepts of the Sermon on the Mount are the standards of the New Testament; they are a picture of the laws of God written upon the heart. This is the work God desires to perform in every believer. These thirty-three precepts are to be written in our hearts; yet it does not come about overnight. This takes time, truth, cleansing, deeper commitments, and many acts of obedience to God.

The Corinthians were “sanctified in Christ” (1:2; 6:11), and washed and justified. But they were not holy. On the contrary, they were carnal and worldly. Still in the infancy stage, they had envy and divisions among them. Believers must maintain a proper rate of growth to have God’s continued favor. God is not pleased with His people if they are not growing into spiritual adulthood.

Knowing the Condition of the Corinthians—By What Paul Confronted Them With

We can know the state of the church at Corinth by the issues Paul addressed in his two Epistles. On the following pages we would like to list the thirty-three precepts of the Sermon on the Mount and observe how the Corinthians were violating them. Remember, these precepts are the standards of the New Testament, standards which the Lord wants wrought in all of our hearts.

The Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5 - 7

The Corinthians were violating all 33 of its precepts They were not made perfect in love

Precept of the Sermon	Violation of the Precept
<p>1. Matthew 5:3 <i>A Grateful Heart</i> - “Blessed are the poor in spirit...” (One bankrupt, a beggar, thankful for the smallest kindness, opposite of a demanding spirit).</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:8 - They were reigning as kings. 1 Cor. 4:18 - Were puffed up 1 Cor. 8:2 - Thought they knew it all 1 Cor. 10:10 - Guilty of murmuring</p>
<p>2. Matthew 5:4 <i>A Tender Heart</i> - “Blessed are they that mourn...” (Not critical of those who are straying; a sadness for the sin in the Church).</p>	<p>1 Cor. 5:2 - They had not mourned. 1 Cor. 5:6 - No godly sorrow, but pride 1 Cor. 8:12 - Wounding the conscience of immature believers; insensitivity</p>
<p>3. Matthew 5:5 <i>A Tamed Heart</i> - “Blessed are the meek...” (Seeks no revenge or retaliation for wrongs; accepting of circumstances, opposite of wrath)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 6:1-8 - Taking one another to court 2 Cor.12:20 - Wraths, swellings, tumults, backbitings, debates, whisperings</p>
<p>4. Matthew 5:6 <i>A Disciplined, Hungry Heart</i> - “Hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Abstaining from other fleshly “appetites”)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 3:2 Had to be fed with milk because they were not hungry for meat 1 Cor. 4:8 They were “full” and satisfied.</p>
<p>5. Matthew 5:7 <i>A Merciful Heart</i> - “Blessed are the merciful...” (Kindness in thought life and in actions)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 1:10 - Had to put away divisions 1 Cor. 16:10-11 - Timothy's ministry was “despised”, making him <i>anxious</i>.</p>
<p>6. Matthew 5:8 <i>A Clean Heart</i> - “Blessed are the pure in heart” (No mixture, perfect in motives and desires)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 5:8, 6:6-11 - Had to remove old leaven 1 Cor. 10:14 - Warned to flee idolatry 2 Cor. 7:1 - And be cleansed from filthiness</p>
<p>7. Matthew 5:9 <i>A Peaceful Heart</i> - “Blessed are the peacemakers...” (Peacemakers must first have all conflict removed from their own life; unity begins in me)</p>	<p>1 Cor.1:10,11 - Divisions, Contentions 3:3 1 Cor. 5:8 - Malice mixed in them 1 Cor. 6:5 - No one able to judge rightly 1 Cor.14:33 - Confusion among them</p>
<p>8. Matthew 5:10-12 <i>An Unoffended Heart</i> - “Blessed...those persecuted for righteousness sake...” (Realizing that offenses and injustices are ordained of God to bring us closer to God and the throne)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:8 - They had not suffered enough. They thought they were “reigning as kings” already. 1 Cor.4:10,12 - They were so “distinguished,” while Paul was dishonored and persecuted.</p>
<p>9. Matthew 5:13 <i>A Sincere Heart</i> - “Ye are the salt of the earth.” (Salt that remains salty, representing sincerity and genuineness that merits the respect of men)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 3:1-3 - Carnal, acting like the world 1 Cor. 5:1 - Allowed immorality that made even the unsaved blush 1 Cor. 6:1-8 - Quarrelled before unbelievers (the world did not respect them)</p>

Precept of the Sermon	Violation of the Sermon
<p>10. Matthew 5:14-16 <i>Enlightened, Consistent Heart</i> “Ye are the light of the world.” (Letting our light shine without embarrassment; being a star on course so that others can find their way)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 6:2,6 - They were unworthy to judge the smallest matters. They would preach Christ, then make a denial of Him by their inconsistent lives. They were no example to the world</p>
<p>11. Matthew 5:17-19 <i>Whole-hearted</i> - “Keeping all the commandments and teaching men so” (Rejecting no part of the Word of God; thereby despising no part of Christ).</p>	<p>1 Cor.11:19 - There were heresies among them. 1 Cor.15:12 - Some denied the resurrection. 2 Cor.11:3-4 - They were willing to receive false teachers and reject Paul (2 Cor.13:3).</p>
<p>12. Matthew 5:20 <i>A Transparent Heart</i> - “Righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees” (no outward show or externalism to impress others ... like the Scribes and Pharisees)</p>	<p>1 Cor.1:31 - They gloried in the flesh, and in men. 2 Cor. 5:12 - And they loved those who gloried in appearance, not in heart.</p>
<p>13. Matthew 5:21-22 <i>A Harmless Heart</i> - “Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca...” (No slander or contemptuous name calling, which leads to violence. Mercy begins in thoughts and words.)</p>	<p>2 Cor.12:20 - They had to repent of debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, and tumults.</p>
<p>14. Matthew 5:23-24 <i>A Heart Without Ought</i> - “First be reconciled to thy brother” (Putting all things right with others so that there is no offense or “debt”)</p>	<p>1 Cor.13:1-7 - Having all the ministry gifts but treating people abrasively makes a man <i>nothing</i>. God does not accept one's service or offering</p>
<p>15. Matthew 5:25-26 <i>A Yielding Heart</i> - “Agree with thine adversary...” (A beligerent attitude toward our enemy brings hardness into our heart and stirs up our enemy.)</p>	<p>1 Cor.10:32 - “Give no offense to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God.” They had <i>not yet learned</i> the blessings of meekness (1 Cor. 6:7).</p>
<p>16. Matthew 5:27-30 <i>A Morally Clean Heart</i> - “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her” (Refusing to desire what does not belong to us— Adultery begins in the thoughts.)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 5:1 There was fornication among them. 1 Cor.10:6 They lusted after evil things, 2 Cor. 12:21 And had to repent of lasciviousness.</p>
<p>17. Matthew 5:31-32 <i>A Faithful Heart</i> - “Whoso putteth away his wife...committed adultery” (Will not divorce, but keep vows and covenants) God Himself is a covenant keeping God</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:2 Stewards must be found faithful. 1 Cor. 5:1 A man had his father's wife. 1 Cor. 7:10 “Let not the wife depart from her husband” (1 Cor. 7:39).</p>
<p>18. Matthew 5:33-37 <i>A Reverent Heart</i> - “Swear not at all...” (Will not swear by the Lord's name, presuming to have His backing and blessing)</p>	<p>1 Cor.10:9 They were warned not to “tempt Christ” as others did</p>
<p>19. Matthew 5:38-42 <i>An Unvengeful Heart</i> - “Whoso compels you to go a mile, go twain...” (Going the extra mile and not being bitter)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 6:7-8 “There is utterly a fault among you because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong?”</p>

Precept of the Sermon	Violation of the Sermon
<p>20. Matthew 5:43-45 <i>A Praying Heart</i> - “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you...” (Hating no one; praying for those who persecute and abuse us; loving our enemies)</p>	<p>1 Cor.13:4-8 The Corinthians were exhorted to <i>bear</i> all things and <i>endure</i> all things. This is perfected love; and they did not yet possess it. Thus, Paul exhorted them to bear and endure all things</p>
<p>21. Matthew 5:46-47 <i>An Accepting Heart</i> - “If you love those who love you, what reward have ye?” (A heart that is not exclusive or cliquish) Even sinners can love those who love them.</p>	<p>1 Cor. 3:4 “One saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos.” They divided into <i>cliques</i>. Each had their favorites and excluded others from their inner circles. 1 Cor.12:21 An “I have no need of thee” attitude</p>
<p>22. Matthew 5:48 <i>A Perfect Heart</i> - “Be ye perfect as your heavenly father is perfect” (Perfection means being “entirely fit”)</p>	<p>1 Cor.1:10 Be perfectly joined together 2 Cor. 7:1 Perfecting holiness in the fear of God 2 Cor.13:9,11 “We wish ... even your perfecting”</p>
<p>23. Matt. 6:1-11 <i>A Heart Seeking God's Glory Only</i> “When you do alms or pray do not sound a trumpet.” (Our works must be out of right motives to glorify God alone, and not bring attention to ourselves.)</p>	<p>1 Cor.13:4-5 Love does not vaunt itself, is not puffed up. Perfected love does not draw attention to itself. Love “<i>seeks not her own.</i>” Many of the Corinthians had ulterior motives regarding the gifts of the Spirit</p>
<p>24. Matthew 6:12-15 <i>A Forgiving Heart</i> - “But if ye forgive not men their trespasses...” (Forgiveness is the foundation stone of Christianity.)</p>	<p>1 Cor.10-11 Divisions, contentions 1 Cor. 3:3 Divisions, envy, strife 1 Cor.11:18 Divisions are rooted in unforgiveness.</p>
<p>25. Matthew 6:19-24 <i>An Undivided Heart</i> - “No man can serve two masters” (Our heart must be set on the right things; we must invest in eternal treasures, not the earthly; we need to have an eternal vision.)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:8 Some thought they were rich, but were poor. 1 Cor.10:14,20 Idolatry, inordinate affections 1 Cor.15:12 Some said there was no resurrection. They were not living for the eternal but for the temporal 2 Cor. 6:15-18 Exhorted to be “separate”</p>
<p>26. Matthew 6:25-34 <i>A Believing Heart</i> - “Take no thought for tomorrow...” (Seeking the kingdom of God first and not worrying about what we will eat, drink, or wear)</p>	<p>1 Cor.10:5 Warned that Israel was overthrown in the wilderness because of unbelief 1 Cor.10:10 Again warned that Israel was destroyed for murmuring about God's provision</p>
<p>27. Matthew 7:1-5 <i>An Unhypocritical Heart</i> - “Judge not, that ye be not judged...” (Do not be severe with others; judge your own heart; Harshness with others reveals that we are worse.)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 4:3-5 Judge nothing before the time. 1 Cor.11:28 Let a man examine <i>himself</i>. 1 Cor.11:31 Judge <i>yourself</i>, you won't be judged. 2 Cor.10:12 Do not compare yourself with others.</p>
<p>28. Matthew 7:6 <i>A Wise Heart</i> - “Neither cast ye your pearls before swine...” (Do not share sacred things with mockers.)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 2:6-8 Hidden wisdom is spoken to those who are perfect (or living up to the light they have). 1 Cor.1:18-25 The wisdom of the world is foolishness.</p>
<p>29. Matthew 7:7-11 <i>A Seeking Heart</i> - “Ask, seek, and knock” (God will grant nothing to the passive.)</p>	<p>1 Cor. 9:24 Run, that ye may obtain (2 Cor. 6:2). 1 Cor.12:31 Covet earnestly the best gifts. 1 Cor. 4:8 They thought they had it all (8:2).</p>
<p>30. Matthew 7:12 <i>A Loving Heart</i> - “All things ye would that men do to you, do to them.” (This is the golden rule)</p>	<p>1 Cor.13 The need for unselfish love that bears, hopes, and endures all things, and does not rejoice at the calamity of others</p>

Precept of the Sermon	Violation of the Sermon
31. Matthew 7:13-14 <i>A Sold Out Heart</i> - “Enter ye in at the strait gate...” (One who goes God’s way, not the popular way)	1 Cor. 6:19-20 We are not our own, but God’s. 2 Cor. 6:14-18 We cannot compromise, or be friends of evil people, or be yoked with unbelievers.
32. Matthew 7:15-23 <i>A Discerning Heart</i> - “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (By wisdom, we know people by the fruit of their life)	2 Cor.11:13 “Such are false apostles” - They lacked discernment and needed to be told that! 2 Cor.13:5 “Examine yourselves.”
33. Matthew 7:24-29 <i>An Obedient Heart</i> - “Whoso heareth these sayings ... and doeth them” (Building one’s life on the foundation of obedience)	1 Cor. 3:10 Let every man take heed how he builds. 1 Cor.11:2 Keep the ordinances I delivered to you. 1 Cor. 6:9-10 The unrighteous build on bad foundations.

Perfection—Paul’s Goal

The goal of the Apostle Paul was Christian perfection for all his converts (cf. Col.1:28-29). The Corinthian believers needed to be assured of God’s ability to conquer every problem in their lives. “Who shall confirm you unto the end that they might be *blameless*” (1 Cor.1:8-9). Paul remembered his own ferocious nature before he met Christ, and was confident that the Lord could break every bondage in the hearts of his listeners. Surely God is able to make us without fault (Jude 1:24). Perfection is the theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which we shall see a little later. Below is a brief summary of the problems at Corinth. These same problems are common to man today:

- Divisions, cliques, personalities, envy, strife
- Immaturity - Paul still had to feed them with milk, not meat.
- Worldly wisdom instead of the “hidden wisdom” from above
- Glorifying in the flesh rather than in the Lord Himself
- Pride (1 Cor. 8:2, 4:8); thinking they knew everything
- Some were judging Paul (1 Cor. 4:3,4)
- Many lacked discernment. They did not discern the false apostles among them
- Immorality running rampant and spreading like leaven
- Going to court against other brothers
- They were unworthy to judge the smallest matters.
- Uncertainty about God’s laws on marriage
- Wounding the conscience of weak believers
- Murmuring, idolatry, tempting Christ
- Men having long effeminate hair / women with shorn heads
- Disrespect around the communion table
- Confusion with the spiritual gifts
- Having all the gifts, but lacking in the nature of love
- Some were denying a literal resurrection.
- Some rejected Paul and listened to false teachers. / Some despised Timothy’s ministry.
- Being unequally yoked with unbelievers
- Some were receiving the grace of God in vain.
- Comparing and competing with one another
- Debates, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults (2 Cor.12:20)

**Please see Daniel G. Caram’s
excellent book on Corinthians**

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

Introduction

Upon Paul's arrival at Corinth for a third visit, intelligence reaches him from Ephesus that his churches in Galatia had been infiltrated by false teachers. These "Judaizers" had persuaded them to turn to Jewish rituals, sacrifices, ceremonies, sabbaths, and circumcision as a means of salvation and perfection. (See Acts 15:1,5 for the mentality of the Judaizers). The last time Paul had been in contact with them, they were "running well" (Gal. 5:7). But now, someone had "hindered them that they should not obey the truth." This startling information that a sudden and drastic change in attitude toward him and his Gospel was taking place, provoked the writing of this Galatian epistle (Dec. 57 A.D.).

Theme

In this epistle the theme is very clear. We are justified and made perfect by faith, not rituals! The false teachers did not deny Christ, but mixed the Gospel with unnecessary man-made laws; and it was bringing the people into bondage. It is only the truth that sets us free, not lifeless rituals. Christian perfection comes through a walk of faith with Christ; it comes by living in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, and having the fruit of the Spirit produced in our lives. This enables us to not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Perfection is not attained by abstaining from pork, wearing certain kinds of clothes, or observing holy days (Heb.13:9). Rituals do nothing to change our heart; but *reinforce* a fallen nature. Some people exalt their traditions above God's commandments, but traditions cannot save or change us (Mk. 7:8-9). "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, or uncircumcision, but faith which works by love" (Gal. 5:6). Faith will "work" and operate in a soft and obedient heart.

In chapters 1–2, Paul defends his apostolic authority. The false teachers attacked Paul's character and credentials to undermine the people's confidence in Paul's theology. They reasoned that Paul was not one of the original twelve apostles; they said he was sent out by the twelve, but was now in conflict with them. Paul counters the charge by saying he was personally taught *by the resurrected Christ* for three years in the Arabian desert, and it was another fourteen years before he met the twelve, except Peter. Upon being introduced to them, the twelve warmly extended the right hand of fellowship to him, and could not add or subtract anything to his message. Paul later had to reprimand Peter, the leader of the twelve, for "not walking uprightly according to the truth" (2:14).

In chapters 3–4, Paul draws a line of demarcation between faith and works. In 3:2-5, he asks: "How did you receive the Spirit? Was it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? And how are the miracles of healing and deliverance performed? Are they done by works or by faith?" Just as Abraham was justified by faith, so are his children justified by faith. Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac represent the old covenant of works and the new covenant of faith. Ishmael was born as a result of the human mind and works, but Isaac was born as a result of a miracle of faith. The promises and blessings of God are inherited by faith and grace, not by works and human effort.

In chapters 5-6, Paul gives practical applications to our Christian liberty. The fruit of the Spirit mentioned in 5:22-23 is the greatest evidence of Christian perfection and liberty. There is no higher law than this. The nine fruits of the Spirit reveal the very nature of God. Anyone flourishing with these fruits in his life is very much like the Lord. All nine fruits are divine *strengths* as well. When you have peace, you are not shaken by doubts, fears, or accusations. Peace makes us strong. Joy is a divine strength too. Joy cleanses the heart of depression and evil feelings toward others. Joy produces holiness and purity. Temperance gives us power over *appetites*. We judge a man's character by his fruit (Mt. 7:20). These fruits give us victory over Satan. Let us continue to abide in the Vine.

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

(First of the prison epistles)

Introduction and Background

Paul came to Rome as a prisoner in early 61 A.D. For two years he sat under house arrest awaiting a hearing with Caesar (Acts 28:16,30). During this time he wrote four notable epistles; they are now known as “the Prison Epistles.” In the spring of 62, Paul penned Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, a personal letter to an elder in the Colossian church. All three epistles were written at the same time, and were delivered to their destinations by the same messenger, Tychicus. Later that fall, Paul wrote to the Philippians. In early 63, he appeared before Caesar and was acquitted of all charges. It is believed that soon after, while still in Italy, Paul wrote his epistle to the Hebrews.

The Founding of the Church at Ephesus

Paul had established a mighty church at Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:16). While giving a farewell address to all the leaders of the church of Ephesus (20:17-38), he noted that his time spent in Ephesus was a total of three years (20:31). Ephesus became a mother church to all of Asia Minor (Acts 19:10). Paul later stationed Timothy here (1 Tim.1:3).

Character and Theme of the Epistle

Unlike any of Paul’s other epistles, there are no personal names mentioned, and he is not writing to correct any doctrinal errors. Thus, it is the most impersonal of all his writings. His message looks beyond Ephesus to the universal Church as he explains *the eternal purposes of God* for the redeemed everywhere. The theme of Ephesians is—“The Church His Building, His Body, His Bride.” The expressions “in Christ,” “in Him,” or their equivalent are found 35 times in Ephesians. To say we are *in Christ* means we are “in the Vine,” intricately joined to Him and part of His substance.

The Church His Building - He is the Chief Corner Stone. We are all fitly framed together (2:19-22).
The Church His Body - He is the Head and we are the body. “Every joint” is to function (4:15-16).
The Church His Bride - He is the Bridegroom, we are the Bride. We are his bone and flesh (5:21-23).

1:4 We were chosen in Him from before the foundation of the world.

1:7 We have redemption through his blood. We are saved by grace, through faith (2:8-9).

1:13 We are *sealed* by the Holy Spirit, signifying a finished transaction; *yet we can still turn from God*.

1:14 We received “*an earnest*” (or down payment) of the Spirit, insuring the full amount will come later.

1:18 Christ has an inheritance in us, and we have an inheritance in Him (1:14). This is marriage.

2:1 We were dead in sins (death means separation), but now He has quickened and made us alive.

2:7 We have been saved for *an eternal purpose* ...“that in the ages to come.” He has much more to reveal.

2:10 We are his *workmanship* (Gr. poem). We are His poem; He is forming us into a unique “message.”

2:14 He is “breaking down every wall” in our minds that separates us from one another. This is ongoing.

4:1-3 We need humility, meekness, forbearance and longsuffering to have unity. “One” is a key word.

4:11-14 We need the fivefold ministry to help bring us unto perfection and unity.

4:13 We are to come to unity and to have “the fullness of Christ and of God” in our lives (3:19).

4:29-31 We are not to grieve the Spirit with our speech, anger, or attitudes, but be tender (4:32).

5:3-18 Immorality and such, if continued in, can cause us to lose our soul. “Let no man deceive you.”

5:21-33 Marriage is “an object lesson” of our relationship with Christ. He is our Leader and Head.

6:1-9 Attitudes toward authority reflect our attitudes toward God (see Ezekiel 3:7).

6:10-18 We have to fight spiritual battles with spiritual weapons against intangible forces and thoughts.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Paul had established the Philippian church ten years earlier, as it grew out of the nucleus of Lydia's household (Ac.16:12-40; 16:15). Except for a few disunities (1:27; 2:2-4,14; 4:2), there were relatively few problems in the church; therefore, Paul was able to point them to deeper truths. In spite of Paul's unpleasant conditions in Rome, "rejoice" is found eleven times in this little epistle. Paul was *the rejoicing prisoner*, though he was chained to a rotation of coarse Roman soldiers.

General Outline

Chapter 1 - Christ Our Purpose / Our Privilege of Persecution

Chapter 2 - Christ Our Pattern / Our Piety

Chapter 3 - Christ Our Prize / Our Promoter

Chapter 4 - Christ Our Peace / Our Power

1:1-8 - Paul expresses his tremendous love for the people in Philippi. He was confident that God would finish the good work He had started in their hearts. Truly they had been "partakers of Paul's grace" (1:7), for the truths he imparted to them were revolutionizing their lives. Yet he prayed that they would continue to increase in further superior knowledge so that they could be totally blameless and "without offense" (1:9-11). He wanted all his converts to experience the depths of redemption and to have a better resurrection (3:10-14). In 1:12-20, he speaks of his confinement in Roman captivity, and of those who preached Christ out of contention and not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to his bonds. He exhorts the Church not to be terrified by their adversaries, for it is required of us not only to believe on Christ, *but also to suffer for His sake* (1:29). Paul had such vision of the life to come that he could say, "to die is gain" and "to depart and be with Christ is far better" (1:21-23).

2:5-11 - Christ is our pattern; we are to act and *think* as He does. The mind of Christ can be summed up in one word—humility. Though He was equal with His Father and co-creator of the universe, yet He humbled himself and sought no earthly reputation. He went lower than any man by His death on the cross; therefore, He was exalted by His Father above all names in heaven and in earth. *In eternity, we will be exalted to the degree we have been willing to go down in humiliation.* If we want to be great in God's kingdom, we must be the servant of all (Mk.10:42-45). Unfortunately, many believers "seek their own interests" (2:21). Let us be servants like Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:12-30).

3:1-6 - True circumcision is in the heart. The evidence that God's Sword has performed its work in our hearts is that "we have no confidence in the flesh"—meaning our reliance is not upon our own minds, but upon Him. 3:7-9 - Paul desired "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ." This is what it takes to be conformed to His image and to have a better resurrection. In 3:10-14, Paul describes the mark we are pressing toward. The mark and the prize is *Christ Himself*, to have a better resurrection, and to be as close to Christ in eternity as possible. Revelation 14:1-5 is the fulfillment of this. Here is a group of people standing *with the Lamb* on Mt. Zion. These are "without fault" before the throne.

4:5-9 - God does not want us to be "anxious" about anything, but to have faith and to pray matters through. Also, our thought life is extremely important. Discouragement and despair are *always* because of something we are *thinking*. We must discipline ourselves to meditate only upon those things that are lovely and of good report. We will have perfect peace when our minds are stayed upon Him (Isa. 26:3). Contentment is also something that can be "learned" (4:11-12). Growing in faith, learning to live in harmony with others, controlling our thoughts, examining our motives, and accepting our circumstances, then "we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us" (4:13).

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Colossians was written at the same time as Ephesians; thus, they are “sister epistles” bearing many similarities. Between the two, there are about 55 verbatim or near verbatim passages. The theme is “The Way to Holiness.” Just like the Galatians, the churches of Colosse were falling into the errors of *external observances* in their search for perfection and fulfillment. But Paul contends that, “Ye are complete in Him” (2:10), and that nothing can be added to Him, for in Christ “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (2:3). The Colossians had three main problems:

2:8 - Self-styled philosophy (“vain philosophy”) – The Gnostics exalted knowledge over Christ.

2:16 - The observance of Jewish feast days, sabbaths, etc.

2:18 - A combination of angel worship, and rigid abstinence - “touch not, taste not, handle not”

1:5 - “The hope that is laid up for you in heaven” – The first thing Paul did to counteract their errors was to get their mind on heaven. It is important to live in the light of heaven. Then Paul prays in 1:9-11, that the saints would know God’s will, but “in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Not only must we know the will of God, but how He will bring it to pass. Without an understanding of God’s plan for our lives, we will be distracted from our course. Then Paul prays “that we would walk worthy of the Lord” (1:10). It has been said that if we will take heed to our private life, God will watch over our public life. What we are in private is the person we really are. In v11 he asks that we may “be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.” Paul is praying that the Holy Spirit will give us a holy tenacity to never give up in our trials, but to be longsuffering and maintain a good attitude, with joyfulness.

1:11 - This verse contradicts the teaching of the Stoics, who maintained that we should not show any emotions and that we triumph over our problems by hardening our heart. People harden themselves to stop from getting hurt, but this causes a crust to build up over the heart, and it always brings bitterness. If someone hurts you, immediately you should ask God for *grace* (see Heb. 4:16). In 1:15-19, Paul now counteracts the teachings of the Gnostics by exalting Christ as the Creator. These passages are the highest revelation of Christ’s deity in all of Scripture. He is the image of God; the firstborn of every creature; the Creator; He is before all things, and by Him all things consist; the head of the Church; the firstborn from the dead; the most preeminent in all things; and filled with all the fullness of the Godhead. Truly, Jesus is LORD!

2:3 - The Colossian church was attracted to earthly knowledge; therefore, Paul exalts Christ as the One possessing all wisdom and knowledge. 2:6-10 - It is not enough just to receive Christ; we must continue to walk in Him. Philosophy, psychology, sociology, and other “ologies” have spirits that detract from the keenness of the Spirit. The Colossians had depreciated Christ, putting Him on the level of an angel. Paul stresses that since Christ is the Creator, “we are complete in Him” (v9-10); He is the answer to every problem we have. 2:14-17 - On the cross Jesus absolutely destroyed the power of Satan, the fallen angels, and the demons. He also blotted out all the Levitical ordinances so that it is no longer necessary to observe feast days, new moons, and other Jewish rituals.

In chapter 3, the way to holiness is clearly defined—we should “set our affections on things above, not on things of this earth.” We must mortify [put to death] all degrading practices like fornication, and by grace, “*put off*” [as one would a garment] sins like anger, wrath, and lying (3:5-8). Then we should “*put on*” mercies, kindness, humility, and meekness (3:12-14). Keeping peace in our hearts and maintaining a thankful spirit are other keys for holy living (3:15-17). Order, love, and respect in the home and family will insure spiritual growth and God’s abiding favor (3:18-21). Demas and Luke, fellow-ministers, sent their greetings from Rome, along with Paul’s. Demas later backslid (2 Tim 4:10), and Archippus, of Colosse, was neglecting the ministry God gave him (4:14, 4:17).

THE EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS

Background

Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians were the *first* of his inspired writings. Upon coming to Thessalonica and preaching to them for only three sabbath days, he had to leave at once because of persecution from the unbelieving Jews (Acts 17:1-10). Leaving Thessalonica, Paul and his team moved south to Berea, and then on to Athens (see Acts 17:10-15). From Athens, Paul sent Timothy back to the Thessalonians to know their state, for they were newly saved (1 Thes. 3:1-6). See map, page 195. Meanwhile, Paul departed to Corinth where he resided 18 months. When Timothy returned to Corinth with a good report, Paul wrote his first epistle to the Thessalonians, and then a second one. Therefore, both epistles were written during his 18 months stay in Corinth (Act 18:11). Dates for writing: First Thessalonians was written in 52 A.D; Second Thessalonians in 53.

Theme

The theme of both epistles is "The Second Coming of Christ." Throughout his first epistle, Paul alludes to Christ's Second Advent. Some of his teachings, however, were misinterpreted by the young believers. Therefore, Second Thessalonians was written to counteract these misunderstandings. Some of them were leaving their employment, roaming about and looking up into heaven for the imminent return of the Lord. Paul had to quickly correct their misconceptions of his theology.

Chapter 1 - When Timothy returned from Thessalonica with a positive report, Paul was overjoyed. See chapter 3:1-10. 1:2 - They had been praying fervently for the *establishing* of the new believers. Now Paul learned that indeed they had become "followers and him and of the Lord" (1:6), and that from Thessalonica the Word of the Lord was sounding out to all who were in Greece (Macedonia and Achaia) (1:7-8). Their response to his three week ministry in Thessalonica was phenomenal. Outsiders were testifying and bearing witness to the impact Paul and his ministry team had on this city, so that they did not have to say anything.

1:9-10 - "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in [or acceptance] we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." These verses give us the primary foundational doctrines new believers must hear and build upon:
1. *Faith* - "how ye turned to God" 2. *Repentance* - "from idols, to serve the living and true God."
3. *Second Coming* - "to wait for His Son from heaven." 4. *Resurrection* - "whom he raised from the dead." 5. *Eternal Judgment* - "which delivered us from the wrath to come."

Chapter 2 - Paul is a model servant for all ministers. His converts were very endeared to him; and his example of purity, honesty, gentleness, and unselfishness are unexcelled (v3-12). The words Paul preached to them were received as though they were coming directly from God. Truly the Word of God will work mightily in all receptive hearts; but unbelief will stop that work (2:13). The converts we have nurtured and brought to maturity will be our "crown and joy" and reward in heaven (2:19-20). Paul's goal was to bring his followers to perfection (cf. Col.1:28-29).

Chapter 3 was Timothy's report to Paul, which brought such encouragement. Paul had to leave the city in haste, and sent Timothy back to make sure that "the tempter had not tempted them, and Paul's labor be in vain" (3:5). When we bring people to Christ, we must make sure they are grounded and cared for, otherwise many of them will turn back to the world and be lost.

Chapter 4:1-8 are exhortations to sanctified and holy living. All of Paul's epistles have awesome warnings against fornication and moral impurity. Upon new birth, the Holy Spirit immediately convicts a person of such things. Beware of churches who never mention sin. In 4:9-12, Paul is saying that the golden rule is inborn. Without having to be told, instinctively we are taught of God to love one another. We are to be honest and "do to others as we would have them do unto us." People are harsh and unmerciful to one another because they have been hardened by life and by sin.

4:13-18 - We should not be ignorant of the Second Coming of Christ and the state of the dead. At the Second Advent of Christ, there will be a resurrection and a catching up of the saints. The hope of a Christian is the resurrection and everlasting life. However, when you compare this with Revelation 20:1-6, it is evident that not every believer is resurrected at this time. Only qualified saints will participate in the First Resurrection at Christ's coming. All the others will be resurrected at the end of the Millennium (cf. Rev. 20:11-15). This is called the Great White Throne Judgment. Paul wanted to attain the First Resurrection [Gr. the resurrection *from among* the dead] (Phil. 3:11; Heb.11:35).

Chapter 5:1-11 again mentions the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Paul told them that they knew "the times and seasons," and that the Lord would come "as a thief in the night." These passages, along with 1:10 were misconstrued by the Thessalonian believers. They felt the Lord could come at any moment, and the effects of this mentality was debilitating. This prompted Paul to write a second epistle to them a few months later.

SECOND THESSALONIANS

Anticipating that the Lord could return "at any moment" had caused many to leave their gainful employment and look into the heavens, expecting Him to break through the clouds immediately. In this Epistle, Paul reminds them that he had instructed them differently, and that there were many other events that had to be fulfilled first before the Lord came. The other main reason for the epistle was to comfort those who were undergoing persecutions and tribulations.

Chapter 1 are encouragements for those in persecution. This chapter is written more for our day than the first century. Certainly the Thessalonian believers were experiencing tribulation in their times, but it looks ahead to our times. It is a righteous thing with God to recompense those who persecute the saints (Rev.16:5,7; 19:2). During the Great Tribulation the devil's children will persecute the saints. But when Christ comes He will "in flaming fire take vengeance" and "punish the wicked with everlasting destruction." The saints will shout, "True and righteous are thy judgments altogether."

Chapter 2 makes it very clear that Christ will not come until the great "falling away" (or apostasy), and the Man of Sin is revealed (2:1-12). Paul had taught these things the first time he was with them (2:5). Paul said he was an apostle born "out of time" [or before the due time] (1 Cor.15:8). He knew that the resurrection and these events were not for his time, but the future. Christ will not come until the Man of Sin appears and reigns for 3 1/2 years. Then Christ will destroy him at His coming. There will be a worldwide harvest (Rev.14:14-16); then God will allow the Antichrist to come up from hell to test the hearts of men. Christians who are not sincere will be swept away. It is interesting that *Alexander the Great* was born and raised just a few miles from Thessalonica / Berea.

Chapter 3 are commands to separate from disorderly "brethren." Paul warned, "evil associations corrupt good manners" (1 Cor.15:33). Proverbs 13:20 states that those who "walk with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools will be destroyed." Wrong friendships will bring us down. The church is not obligated to support people who refuse to help themselves (3:8-14).

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

The two epistles to Timothy are the most personal of all Paul's writings, for he is writing to his own son in the faith. Timothy, now about age 35, has entered his first pastorate, having been personally tutored by the great Apostle Paul for many years. In this epistle, Paul is *reminding* Timothy of the lessons he learned while traveling and interacting with him. Its message gives practical instruction and guidance for the manifold problems one faces in the ministry, especially as a pastor. This epistle, as well as the Epistle to Titus, are instructional for *church order*. The key verse here is "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15).

General Outline

- Chapter 1 - Instruction on Doctrine
- Chapter 2,3 - Instruction on Public Worship
- Chapter 4 - The Problem of False Teachers
- Chapter 5 - Church Discipline
- Chapter 6 - Examination of Motives

Chapter 1 - No New Testament church was exempt from the infiltration of false doctrine. Even in Ephesus where Timothy was stationed, there was a constant threat of bizarre teachings. Men with their own agendas, with no call of God and no vision, were aspiring to be teachers of the Law.

Every doctrine is known by the fruit it produces. The Law, when correctly interpreted, produces love, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith. But the fruit of these teachers and their doctrines was "vain jangling," a bickering over trivial points. Some preached "endless genealogies" and "fables" which did not edify, but only produced more questions. Myths, speculations, and genealogies are hallmarks of the Mormon church and "British Israel." Wrong doctrines are inspired by evil spirits. What we believe is so important because *a belief is a spirit*, and it will put us on a course and will take us somewhere. A good shepherd has to carefully guard his sheep from ingesting anything poisonous. Paul mentions in 1:11-16, that God entrusted unto him the great truths of the Gospel because the Lord "counted him faithful." God will not give truth to those who are not going to be faithful to it. The purpose of God giving us revelation is that we might be *obedient* to it (Deut. 29:29).

Chapter 2-3 are instructions for public worship. First, the pastor should lead his congregation into prayers for all men, and especially for those in authority. They are also "to lift up holy hands" to God with a heart that is free of evil feelings and unbelief (2:8). The women are to dress modestly and be filled with good works (cf. 1 Pet.3:3-4). In 3:1-11, the ministers' home life must be in order. He must be "the husband of one wife;" he cannot be divorced and remarried several times, or this will be reproduced in the congregation. He must be cautious of his personal life, hospitable, a good teacher, not a lover of wine or greedy for money, and not argumentative. He must have a good reputation in and outside of the church. The deacons and other board members must be of sterling character as well. The wives also must be faithful and sober, and must guard their tongues.

Chapter 4 - Even though false teachers and false doctrines have been a cancer among God's people in all ages, it will be especially so in our time. 4:1-2, Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. Remember, a wrong doctrine comes from a wrong spirit. Timothy is charged to "be an example to the believers" and to give himself to study, exhortation, and doctrine. A minister must first "take heed to himself, and to the doctrine." In doing so, he will both save himself, and all those who hear him (4:12-16); thus, we see the importance of doctrine.

Chapter 5 is the chapter on church discipline. Every church needs a senior pastor. There cannot be a board of elders running a church; otherwise, with everyone having equal authority, “every man will do what is right in his own eyes.” In every area of life, secular and spiritual, there has to be a senior leader. As a senior pastor, Timothy was to entreat the elders as fathers, the older women as mothers, and the younger ladies as sisters. Older widows were to be cared for by their own families; and widows who had no families, if they were honorable, were to be cared for by the church. Younger widows were to be removed from the enrollment list if they were unruly. Elders who ruled well were to be esteemed worthy of double honor. The word “elder” is a flexible word. It depends on the context. An elder could be a pastor (Acts 20:17), an apostle (1 Pet. 5:1), or an older mature man in the church. Timothy, the senior pastor, was to be *impartial* in all his dealings with the people (5:21).

Chapter 6 deals with motives. The reason people cannot understand sound, wholesome words and doctrine is because of a proud heart (6:3-4). Some people think that material prosperity is a sign of God’s approval, “supposing that gain is godliness.” To the contrary, Paul teaches that “godliness with contentment is great gain.” Verses 6-19 deal with the snares and deceptions of the love of money. The wealthy are exhorted not to trust in their uncertain riches, but in God. They are to be willing to give generously, and lay up treasures in heaven (v17-19). The epistle ends with the exhortation to stay on course, which so many during the ages have been deflected from.

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

The first epistle to Timothy was written between Paul’s two Roman imprisonments. Having been released from his first imprisonment (63 A.D.), Paul wrote this first epistle in 67, but soon after this he was imprisoned again. The date is now May, 68; and Paul had about one month to live. This letter contains the last recorded words of Paul. He was executed under Nero in June, 68, in Rome. The second epistle is a reminder to Timothy that only those who *endure to the end* reap the rewards.

In Chapter 1, Paul reminds Timothy of his responsibilities. There were still certain areas of his life that were undeveloped. The spirit of fear was hindering him from using a particular spiritual gift, and also he struggled with embarrassment (1:6-8). Timothy is urged to “hold fast” the good things that were committed to his trust (1:13-14). Paul was facing death soon, but he knew that “Christ had abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” He was not ashamed of the gospel he preached. He asked Timothy not to be ashamed either. Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul’s chains and was willing to be identified with Paul (1:16-18). All in Asia minor had turned from the grace Paul had preached to them, and were relying on legalism (1:15).

Chapter 2 are the characteristics of a faithful minister. First, Paul exhorts Timothy to be strong in grace, not in himself. Then he urges him to raise up faithful teachers who will carry the vision to many others. Every faithful minister must “endure hardness” and purposely remove himself from “entanglements of this life” (which are often legitimate cares). After reminding Timothy that the reward of suffering with Christ is that we also reign with Him, he charges him to study hard, because a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures is absolutely necessary to counteract error.

Chapter 3 looks beyond the first century to our time, “the last days.” The root of all sin in man is that he is “a lover of himself” and “a lover of pleasure more a lover of God.” Many will resist the truth in our times, but “the scriptures shall make us wise unto salvation.” The two magicians in v8 are types of the two men who shall come out of hell in our days to deceive the world. In closing, Paul charges Timothy to “preach the word” (4:1-5). In 4:6-8, Paul was awaiting his martyrdom with joy and great composure with anticipation of an eternal crown of righteousness.

THE EPISTLE TO TITUS

Titus was another close spiritual son of Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 7:6, 8:16; Gal. 2:1; 2 Tim. 4:10). Among other places, Titus had ministered with Paul on the island of Crete some time between Paul's two imprisonments, and was now given the difficult task of putting the Cretian Church in order and ordaining leaders in the churches in every city. The Cretians were notorious for being liars, and for being lazy and gluttonous. A probable date of writing: 67 A.D.

Titus was charged to do four basic things:

1:1-9 - Ordain qualified leaders

1:10-16 Rebuke false teachers

2:1-15 - Establish sound doctrine

3:1-15 - Order them to maintain good works

1:1-9 - To establish any work, you must have good leaders. Paul lists the qualifications. First and foremost, they had to have a family in order, for if one cannot rule his own house, how can he govern the house of God? (cf. 1 Tim. 3:4,5). The church itself is simply a collection of families. Therefore, a man had to be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children..." (1:6). A leader must not be self-willed, or soon angry, but he must be a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, and self-controlled.

1:10-16 - Titus had to "stop the mouths" of false teachers, for they were ruining "whole houses" or congregations. Their motive was a lust for money, "filthy lucre." 1:12-16 - The Cretians were known for lying, stealing, slothfulness, superstition, and frivolity. Therefore, he was to "rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith. 1:15 - Suspicion is the fruit of an evil heart. People think others are evil, just like themselves. However, "to the pure, all things are pure." 1:16 - These false teachers professed to know God but *in works they denied him*. It is not what we say but how we live that really matters (Jas. 2:17-18). We know the true character of a person by their actions, by their fruits.

2:1-10 - Titus was charged to teach the Cretians sound doctrine. The older women were to teach the young women how to love their husbands and children, and how to be obedient to their husbands. 2:7 - Titus was to be their pattern and example. Purloining (stealing of small things) was forbidden. In 2:11-12, Paul gives the true meaning of grace. Grace "teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." Grace is not permissiveness or a license to do evil; it is divine empowerment to live right. Romans 1:5 says that God gives us "grace for obedience." Five times in the epistle the word "*sober*" is found. It means to be self-controlled, temperate, sensible, discreet, and wise. Because Paul kept bringing this to their attention, we can see what their problem was. 2:14 - Christ gave himself to "redeem us from all iniquity." His sacrifice is capable of breaking every bondage in our lives; He is able to present us faultless before the throne (Jude 1:24). We need to have the vision of Christian perfection before us.

3:1-15 are commands to do good works. This is to counteract the mentality so many have, that because Christ paid all my debt, there is nothing that I need to do. Paul commands them to respect authorities, to speak evil of no man, but to be gentle and meek to all men. 3:5-10 - Although we are not saved by works but by grace alone, after we are saved there are many lifestyle changes we have to make. Paul commands Titus to put a factious, devisive, heretical sectarian out of the church, after admonishing him several times and seeing no repentance. That man, says Paul, is perverted, corrupt, sinful, and warped. There are times when excommunication is in order.

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

Paul wrote three epistles in the spring of 62, during his first imprisonment in Rome. While he was writing to the Ephesians and Colossians, he also penned a short epistle to Philemon, an elder of the Colossian church. All three epistles were delivered by the same messenger, Tychicus.

Philemon, a wealthy and honorable man, had a church “in his house” in the city of Colosse. It is probable that Apphia was his wife, and Archippus was a son (1:2). Colosse was located ninety miles directly east of Ephesus. During Paul’s stay in Ephesus a few years earlier, many from that region (including Colosse) came to hear Paul teach (Acts 19:10). (55-56 A.D.). It is quite possible that Philemon was greatly influenced by Paul’s ministry at this time. (See 1:19).

The purpose of this little letter was to intercede for a young man named Onesimus, a runaway slave belonging to Philemon who had stolen some valuables and fled to Rome. While he was in Rome, Onesimus had met the Apostle Paul and had become a Christian and spiritual “son” of Paul. Paul asks Philemon to forgive the young man and accept him back, not as a slave, but as a brother in Christ.

General Outline

1:1-7 - What Christ has done in our hearts

1:8-16 - Paul’s petition on behalf of Onesimus

1:17-25 - Paul’s promise to Philemon

1:1 “Paul, a prisoner of the Lord...” Paul considered himself a prisoner of the Lord, not a prisoner of Rome, not of Caesar, or even of his circumstances (cf. Eph. 3:1, 4:1). Paul was in prison as a result of preaching the Gospel (Col. 4:2-4), and for the furtherance of the Gospel (Phil. 1:12-13). He asked his readers to pray that “a door of utterance” be opened to preach the Gospel with boldness (Col. 4:2-4, Eph. 6:18-20). In Philippians 1:13, 4:22, we see that a door was indeed opened, for Roman guards received Christ as a result of Paul’s witness there. Onesimus also was saved while Paul was under house arrest in Rome. Paul had the liberty to receive many visitors (see Acts 28:30-31).

1:2-3 - After greeting Philemon, his wife, son, and the “church in his house.” Paul gives thanks to God for the grace that is evidenced in Philemon’s personal life (1:4-7.) It is good to acknowledge all the good things that are in us by Christ Jesus. We should give the Holy Spirit a lot of credit for the wonderful work He has performed in our lives, and not always look at the bad things. The Holy Spirit will bring to our attention the other needs, one by one, and in His time. It does not bring release or glory to the Lord to always depreciate ourselves. In fact, it only brings condemnation.

1:8-10 - Rather than commanding, Paul appeals to Philemon for mercy for Onesimus. This young man probably spent years in the home of Philemon, observing gatherings of believers in the home of his master, but now he has made a true commitment to Christ. Onesimus was not a good servant before, but now the Gospel had transformed him. Paul said, “He could have been profitable to me and my ministry,” but in humility says he would do nothing without Philemon’s permission. Therefore, he is sending Onesimus back home, asking Philemon to receive him as he would Paul himself, and as a brother (1:12-17). He even promises to repay Philemon what the young man owed (1:18-19). Knowing the tender and loving nature of Philemon, Paul knew he would cooperate with his request, and would even do more (1:20-21). Early Church history says that Onesimus later became a beloved bishop in Ephesus. Such is the power of forgiveness and acceptance. The great apostle was expecting to be released from prison, which happened perhaps 10 months later (1:22).

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

This is unlike any other epistle of Paul in that it does not start off with the name of Paul. It is written to the Christian Jews of Palestine and Jerusalem; and it was written before 70 A.D., because it deals with the formality of their temple worship. It seems probably that it was written in 63 A.D. soon after Paul's release from his first imprisonment, and perhaps while he was still in Italy (13:24).

Purpose for Writing

Paul is *not* writing to the Jews to persuade them that Jesus is the Christ. Quite to the contrary, he calls them "holy brethren" (3:1), something you would not say to unbelievers. Truly they had been "enlightened" and were "partakers of the Holy Spirit;" they had tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come" (6:4-5). Acts 21:20-24 describes their state. Twenty-eight years had lapsed since Pentecost but the believers in Jerusalem were still involved in the religion of the Old Testament. They were "all zealous of the law" and of the customs, including: circumcision, observance of sabbaths and holy days, and all the Levitical ordinances, and sacrifices. Five years after the events of Acts 21, Paul is writing this epistle to explain to the Jewish church that Christ and the new covenant is so much better than the outdated old covenant, and that Christ is the fulfillment of all the sacrifices. To continue to offer "the blood of bulls and goats" was not right, since by one offering, the blood of Christ had put away sins forever. Thus, Paul is seeking to wean the Jewish believers away from the old covenant practices. Two key words in this epistle are "better" and "perfect."

Christ and the new covenant are "so much better" than the old:

- 1:4 Christ is better than the angels, better than Moses (3:3). He and the Father created them all (1:2).
- 7:7 a better priesthood.
- 4:1-10 a better rest.
- 7:19 a better hope
- 8:6 a better covenant
- 8:6 better promises
- 9:14 a better conscience
- 9:23 a better sacrifice
- 11:16 a better city (New Jerusalem)
- 11:35 a better resurrection
- 12:18,22 a better mountain (Zion), instead of Sinai
- 12:24 blood that speaks better things than that of Abel

Perfection is possible in the new covenant, but we must "go on" to obtain it.

- 2:10 Jesus Himself was "made perfect through suffering."
- 5:9 And "being made perfect He became the author of eternal salvation."
- 6:1 "Let us go on unto perfection." We must advance beyond the foundational truths.
- 7:11 Perfection did not come by the Levitical priesthood.
- 7:19 "The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did."
- 9:9 Gifts and sacrifices (in the O.T.) could not make the offerer perfect.
- 10:1 Sacrifices never made them perfect. No sacrifice could purge their conscience.
- 10:14 But "by one offering He hath perfected forever, them who are sanctified."
- 11:40 The Old Testament saints were not made perfect; but we can be made perfect.
- 12:23 Next to the Lamb, are men whose "spirits have been made perfect" (cf. Rev.14:1-5).
- 13:20,21 The blood of the everlasting covenant can make us perfect.

Paul's objective for writing to the Jews, and to all generations to come, was to clarify that the new covenant was superior to the old covenant *in every respect*. The theme verse is 11:40: "God having provided some better thing for us." The rent veil signified that the way into God's full presence was opened, where full redemption was now made available (10:19-20). The Law itself had made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we may draw nigh unto God (7:19).

The Jewish believers who still adhered to the old traditions are described in Acts 15:1,5; 21:20-21. They believed in Christ but insisted it was necessary to observe all the external Levitical laws in order to be saved. In 1:8, Paul exalts Christ as being God and Creator (1:10). In 9:25-28, 10:12-14, he reasons that Christ has by one sacrifice put away sin. So why do you continue to offer sacrifices when God Himself has shed His own blood once and for all for sin.? What can you add to that?

The message to the Hebrews is very relevant today. There are many who have been illuminated and Spirit-filled, who still hold on to their old religious habits. Some still pray to Mary and the saints, and many such things, but it is a mixture of truth and tradition, and it is wrong. When people do not break away from these things, often they backslide or just go in circles without any real spiritual direction. Such was the case of the Hebrews who would not break from the old religion. They were backsliding, hardening their hearts, not entering into rest, not bearing good fruit. They were discouraged, and refusing Him who was speaking from heaven. Below are verses that depict their spiritual condition.

- 2:1 They were not giving heed to the things which they had already heard.
- 2:3 They were neglecting so great a salvation.
- 3:8 They were hardening their hearts.
- 3:12-14 Some had an evil heart of unbelief and were turning from the living God.
- 4:1-11 They were not entering into rest, or ceasing from their own works, ideas, or opinions.
- 5:11 They were dull of hearing. Paul had so much more to say, but they could not hear it.
- 5:12-14 They should have been teachers by this time, but were still infants requiring "milk."
- 6:1-3 They had not progressed past the foundational teachings. They were not clear on the basics, and were not going on to perfection.
- 6:6 They were crucifying the Son of God afresh —by offering animal sacrifices, etc.
- 6:7-9 They were bearing *thorns* (the works of the flesh) instead of *herbs* (the fruit of the Spirit).
- 6:12 Some were slothful and impatient.
- 7:11,19 They were trying to come to perfection by Old Testament rituals. Paul told them that if the first covenant and priesthood had worked, God would not have raised up a new one (8:7).
- 10:1-3 They were still offering sacrifices. Paul explains that by *one* offering Christ has put away our sins forever (9:26, 9:28, 10:10, 10:12, 10:14).
- 10:26 Some were sinning wilfully, while others were sinning through ignorance.
- 10:35,36 Some were casting away their confidence, and had need of patience.
- 11:1-40 Paul preaches a whole chapter on *faith* because they were seeking perfection through rituals and works. Faith comes from a *relationship*, not rituals.
- 12:5-11 They had forgotten the exhortations not to despise the chastenings of the Lord.
- 12:8 Many were spiritually "illegitimate" because they refused the Father's corrections and did not bear His likeness.
- 12:12 They were feeble and discouraged; their hands were hanging down and their knees were weak.
- 12:15 They were troubled with bitterness and were failing to receive the grace of God.
- 12:16,17 They were in danger of losing their birthrights, as did Esau.
- 12:25 They were refusing Him who was speaking from heaven.
- 13:9 They were carried about with strange doctrines (Levitical ordinances and legalism).

Let us learn from the message to the Hebrews. Let us ask God for the gift of repentance so that we may cooperate with Him, go on with Him, and break away from traditions that hold us back.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

This Epistle was written by James, the half-brother of Jesus. Some scholars date its composition in the 40's A.D. when the Church was essentially Jewish in nature. For at least the first ten years after Pentecost, the Gospel was preached to the Jewish world only. It was not until Acts 11:18 that the apostles understood that the Gospel could be preached to Gentiles outside of the synagogues (in the synagogues there were many Gentile proselytes). James, the presiding elder in the Jerusalem church (Ac.12:17; 15:13), was considered one of the three major pillars of the Christian community (Gal. 2:9). If the early date is correct, this would be the first of the New Testament books.

The style is abrupt, firm, moralistic, and "black or white." Everything is right or wrong, light or darkness, of God or of the world, and there was no in-between. It is much like the Sermon on the Mount that was preached by the older Brother of James. This Epistle is sometimes called, "The Proverbs of the New Testament." Therefore, it is not easy to outline. The clear theme is Wisdom.

General Outline

- 1:1 - The Address
- 1:2-12 - The Purpose for Trials
- 1:13-18 - The Source of Temptations
- 1:19-27 - To be Doers of the Word, Not Hearers Only
- 2:1-13 - Against Partiality - Not Slighting the Poor and Favoring the Rich
- 2:14-26 - Insufficiency of Faith Without Works
- 3:1-12 - The Perfect Man (determined by the mastery of the tongue)
- 3:13-18 - The Nature of True and False Wisdom
- 4:1-12 - Humility—the Key to Receiving Grace and Becoming Godly
- 4:13-17 - Holy Dependence on God / Not Assuming Future Plans
- 5:1-6 - Warnings to the Godless Rich and their Miseries
- 5:7-12 - Exhortations to be Patient in Suffering
- 5:13-18 - Reminders of the Power of Prayer in Every Need
- 5:19-20 - The Conversion of Those Who Err

1:1 - In humility, James calls himself "a servant" of Jesus Christ, not a brother. He is addressing the epistle to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad." There were Jewish synagogues all over the world; and for many years after Pentecost, the Gospel was only preached in the synagogues. This epistle is highly Jewish and is loaded with quotes from the Old Testament.

1:2-12 - Trials are intended to purify our faith until we are perfect. Since we need wisdom to discern the meaning of life's trials, we should ask God for *abundance* of wisdom. However, wisdom is granted only to those who please God (cf. Eccl. 2:26). When we petition God for something, we should ask in faith. Often we lack faith because of doublemindedness. This means we love God, but we love the world too (cf. 4:4); and this is what dissipates our faith. In v9-11, the rebuke is not against wealth, but against trusting in uncertain riches. The underlying teaching of God's Word is not against riches, but where we place our expectations. A poor brother whose dependence is upon God will be exalted to a high degree. Those who "endure temptation" and the tests of life will receive a crown of life.

1:13-18 - On temptation — God does not tempt us. The power behind temptation is *wrong desire*. There is no temptation unless there is something in our heart. The strength of sin is in one's love for it. Sin begins in our thoughts, in our affections. Wrong thoughts and desires must be aborted or they will grow until they are *birthed* into an act. Ask God to cleanse your heart and to steer you away from temptations that are too powerful for you. Pray, "Dear Lord, please deliver me from temptation."

1:19-27 - The importance of being a doer and not only a hearer of the Word of God (Eze. 33:31-32). *Deception* overtakes a person who says "Amen" to the message and thinks by agreeing that he has discharged himself from doing it. To *hear* but not *obey* is like looking in the mirror and seeing something on our face and doing nothing about it. The Word of God is a mirror that shows us our need.

2:1-13 - Against Partiality — Wealth cannot be the criteria for having a prominent position in the assembly. The church cannot be run like a business; you cannot allow people to buy themselves into an office. We have to be fair in our dealings with people and not prefer the rich above the poor. We will all be judged by "the royal law"—for as we have done to others, so will God do unto us (2:7). If we have shown no mercy, we will receive no mercy (2:13).

2:14-26 - The Insufficiency of Faith without Works — Martin Luther considered James to be not inspired; he thought James contradicted Paul's doctrine of justification by faith alone without works. Paul taught, "they profess to know God but in works they deny him" (Ti.1:16); and James is saying the same thing here. He is coming against a prevalent Jewish notion that saving faith is a mere intellectual assent to a set of doctrinal propositions. James is saying that saving faith manifests itself in works, and that if works are not accompanied by faith, the genuineness of the faith may be questioned. If a person truly believes, there should also be evidence in his life by the way he lives.

3:1-12 - The Misuse of the Tongue — Most sins are committed with the tongue. Perfection is in the tongue (3:2), and is a revelation of the heart (Lk. 6:45). The greatest evidence of holiness is our speech, for our words reveal our heart. Spiritual forces are released from the mouth. It is the most powerful member of our body. The key to right speech is a pure heart and wisdom. The people who rank highest in the eternal kingdom of heaven are those with "no guile in their mouth" (Rev.14:5).

3:13-18 - True and False Wisdom — Worldly wisdom and heavenly wisdom are compared here. Both have a nature and both produce fruit. The wisdom of the world is ambition, which seeks to attain earthly honors and the praise of man. Worldly wisdom considers this life only, and disregards eternity. People who are inventors, scientists, doctors, billionaires, and have the honor and acclaim of man but have not prepared themselves for eternity—are desperately pathetic and are worse than poverty stricken. They will enter eternity unredeemed, and be lost forever. Heavenly wisdom produces purity of heart and peace with God and one another. It has no partiality or hypocrisy. These qualities are eternal.

4:1-12 - Humility and Grace — Humility is the key to receiving grace; grace is the only thing that changes us. In order to have bondages broken in our lives and be purged of flaws that cause disunity, the only true remedy is to receive new grace from God (and the spirit of repentance that softens our hard hearts). 4:13-17 are exhortations not to presumptuously plan ahead, but to take the humble attitude, "This will we do if the Lord wills." 5:1-6 – Once again are warnings not to trust in riches. 5:7-12 are exhortations to endure trials. "We count them happy which endure." There are marvellous eternal rewards for holding steady and being faithful to the end. 5:13-18 are reminders of the power of prayer for every need, including healing. 5:19-20 are exhortations, not to unbelievers but believers. We need to strengthen, confirm, and exhort other *believers* who are sinking in the snares of sin, iniquity and fornication, and rescue them from a multitude of sins. I am referring to *believers* here.

THE EPISTLES OF I-II PETER

The Epistles of I-II Peter were authored by Peter in Rome, in the maturity of his life. The first one was written around A.D. 65, the latter in 66, just prior to his martyrdom (2 Pet. 1:13-15). Both epistles are saturated with the Apostle's life experiences and reflect a polished and perfected Peter. These two inspired letters were his final admonitions to the younger, oncoming generations of the Church. The subject of "glory" is found no less than 16 times, a glory that is preceded by much suffering. In his first epistle, Peter sought to fortify the saints who had been undergoing persecution *from the world*, while in his second epistle he warns against the dangers *within the house of faith*.

Both epistles are very revealing of Peter. He was writing out of experiences wrought in his heart by the Spirit of the Lord. The issues he raises are those very areas of life in which he had found a key to personal victory. Although the Christians were facing affliction on many sides, Peter admonished them to *be sure they were suffering for the right thing*. This is because in his earlier years, Peter brought upon himself many *unnecessary* temptations and pressures. Some of our pressures are *self-induced* as well. Consider how frequently he brings up the matter:

2:19 - "For this is thankworthy, *if* a man ... endure grief, suffering wrongfully."

2:20 - "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?"

"But if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

3:14 - "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye ..."

3:17 - "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing."

4:15 - "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as a evildoer, or busybody ..."

4:16 - "Yet, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God ..."

4:19 - "Wherefore let them that suffering according to the will of God ..."

In the maturity of his life, Peter had become "established, strengthened, and settled" by the God of all grace (1 Pet. 5:10). Below is a summary of topics for Christian maturity in Peter's first epistle.

1:1-12 - The Great Salvation / The Purifying of our Faith

1:13-25 - The Call to a Life of Holiness

2:1-10 - Christ is the Cornerstone / We are Living Stones

2:11-12 - The Call to Self-Control and a Good Testimony

2:13-25 - Submission to Authorities for the Lord's Sake

3:1-7 - Responsibilities of Wives and Husbands

3:8-12 - The Appeal for Love and Unity

3:13-22 - Suffering for Righteousness

4:1-7 - Not to Live as the World / The Coming Judgment

4:8-11 - Using Our Gifts to Benefit Others

4:12-19 - Suffering for Christ, Not for Our Faults

5:1-11 - Exhortations to Ministers / Exhortations to Others

5:12-14 - Closing / Benediction

1:5 - It is a comfort to know that we are "kept by the power of God," and that we are not keeping ourselves saved. 1:6-7 - There are seasons when we pass through refining fires to purify our faith. This suggests that our faith has foreign elements that have to be purged, such as presumption and natural thinking. Peter was prompted to wrong actions by emotion and excitement in his youth, rather than true faith. In his second epistle, Peter exhorts us to add seven things to our faith.

Peter, whom Rome hails as the first pope, was a married man (Mk.1:29-31). Peter never claimed that he was the Rock upon whom Christ built His Church. He declared that Christ Himself was the Chief Cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:4-8). All the apostles and prophets had to align themselves with Christ and draw their dimensions and doctrines from Him. Peter never taught indulgences, but declared, “We are not redeemed with silver and gold . . . but by the precious blood of Christ” (1:18-20). Peter was very particular about the subject of money. He said that God’s gifts could not be purchased with money (Acts 8:20). He also commands ministers *not* to be in the ministry for “filthy lucre” which is a lust for money (1 Pet. 5:2). Peter and all the apostles would not receive worship and refused to be treated as deity (Acts 10:25-26). Please see our book on *The Life and Epistles of Peter*.

SECOND PETER

In the first epistle, Peter was fortifying Christians who were undergoing persecutions from the world, but in his second epistle he is warning against the dangers within the Church. These were final reminders to the believers, since he knew that he would be martyred soon (2 Pet. 1:12-15). Thirty-six years after the resurrection, he was now going to fulfill the words of Christ and lay down his life for the Gospel (cf. Jn. 21:18-19).

Fortify Yourselves for the Coming Apostasy

Peter understood that a great “falling away” was approaching. There would be many false prophets and teachers infiltrating the church (2 Pet. 2:1). This is prophetic of our times as well. Therefore, Peter is warning the believers “to be established in present truth” (1:12), and prepare themselves.

Study: – Grace and peace are multiplied through (exact, precise, correct) knowledge of God (1:2).

God’s divine power has provided us with all things that pertain to life and godliness (1:3).

Great and precious promises give strength to escape the lust and corruption in the world (1:4).

Also, these great and precious promises enable us to partake of the divine nature (1:4).

We are to add seven things to our faith (1:5-7).

If these things are added to our faith, we will never be barren and we will never fall (1:8-10).

Even though we are God’s elect, we must “make our calling and election sure” (1:10).

Do not listen to cunningly devised fables, myths, and speculations (1:16).

Peter saw God’s glory and heard the voice of the Father on the Mount of Transfiguration. In spite of this, he says the Scriptures have more authority than any vision or revelation or voice (1:16-21).

In chapter 2, Peter warns of corruption that is coming into the house of faith. He warns that “*many shall follow*” the evil ways of the false prophets and teachers (2:2). God did not spare the angels who sinned, and they were believers. God did not spare the old world from the flood, but saved only Noah and his family. Many who drowned were believers and knew the flood was coming. God only spared Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah (2:4-7). Believing is not enough; we have to live right in order to be saved. Yet, “the Lord knows how to deliver the godly from temptation” (2:9). 2:13-22 are people in the Church who have “forsaken the right way and gone astray.” Peter says, it would have been better not to have ever known the way of salvation (2:20-22).

In chapter 3, Peter prophesies of many scoffers in the last days (3:1-9), but assures us that the Lord will keep His Word and He will come again. He ends with a promise that there will be a new heaven and new earth, and the old earth will be destroyed. Therefore, we should be diligent to be found in peace [without hardness or hate], without spot, and blameless (3:10-14). Are you ready for the new earth? Fellow believers, let us take heed to ourselves and not be swept away with the spirit of this world.

THE EPISTLES OF I, II, III JOHN

John lived in Ephesus during the last years of his life. (See map on p.195b for the location of Ephesus.) These three epistles were written some time in the 90's A.D. and were probably circular letters for the churches around Ephesus. Undoubtedly John ministered to these churches, and later wrote to "the seven churches of Asia" when he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos (Rev.1:9-11). These churches were within a one-hundred mile radius of each other.

God is Light / God is Love

John had extraordinary experiences with God. Not only had he heard Him and seen Him with his eyes, he had touched Him with his hands (1:1). The main theme of these letters is that God is Love, but first he emphasizes that God is Light. Light is truth; and by walking in the light we are brought to love (1:5-7). The purpose of his first epistle is to protect the churches of that region from a doctrine that denied that God had come in the flesh. This is the spirit of antichrist.

John is termed, "the apostle of love," but he is also the apostle of discernment, for he frequently delineates between error and truth. Fellowship with one another is really not possible unless we are walking in the truth. Obeying the truth is what changes our hearts and remedies the issues that cause disunity (1 Pet.1:22). Love for the things of the world also destroys our love for God (2:15-17).

Love is only produced in our lives as we obey. As we keep his Word, truly the love of God is perfected in us (1 Jn. 2:5). If we say that we do not have a sinful nature (1:8), we deceive ourselves; and if we harbor hatred in our hearts, we are in darkness (2:9-11). Therefore, when a person is not listening to God, instead of growth in his spiritual life, there is regression.

Three Stages of Growth

In 2:12-14, John portrays three levels of spiritual growth for us. *Little children* only know that their sins are forgiven. Someone who is just born again is an infant in Christ and understands very little about the Heavenly Father. A *young man* is quite different—he has had significant growth in his spiritual life. He is strong, the Word is abiding in him, and to an extent, he has overcome the wicked one. But a *Father* is mature; he understands and knows God. The Corinthians were still spiritual *children* (1 Cor. 3:1-3), as were the Galatians (Gal. 4:19), and the Hebrew believers (Heb. 5:12-14). The Philippians and the church of Philadelphia were more spiritual (Rev. 3:8-10).

The Spirit of Antichrist

2:18 - The spirit of antichrist was in the world in John's time, but will fully manifest itself in our times (cf. 4:3). The spirit of antichrist denies that Jesus is God in the flesh (2:22-23). Anyone who denies the deity of the Son of God is cutting himself off from eternal life. "He who has the Son has life, and he that has not the Son of God has not life (5:12). God laid down His life for us. To refute His sacrifice is to deny oneself of forgiveness and life everlasting (1 Jn. 3:16). To disbelieve the record and testimony that God gave of His Son is to call God a liar (5:10-12).

Error is not only a wrong idea or concept, it is actually an evil spirit (4:1-6). John had the Spirit of Truth, which is the Holy Spirit, but the false teachers had the spirit of error. Those who tried to contradict John, were contradicting the Holy Spirit (4:6). God had made John *a standard* to the people. Those who were of God discerned the truth in John.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

John is addressing “the elect lady” and her children.” In Scripture, a woman is symbolic of a church. This “lady” is a local church; her children are the members. A “sister” church and her members, along with John, are sending their greetings—“The children of thy elect sister greet thee” (1:13). John is writing to people who know him very well. He is “rejoicing greatly” upon hearing that this church was “walking in the truth” (1:4). But John beseeches these who are *walking in truth* to go even higher and also *walk in love*. Love is the result of obedience (1:5-6; cf Jn.14:21-23). Obeying the truth leads us eventually to unfeigned love for the brethren (1 Pet.1:22).

John is well aware of the dangers of the times, saying “many deceivers [or false teachers] are gone forth into the world” (1:7). Therefore, he exhorts them to take heed to themselves and not to listen to these “deceivers,” or they could throw away all for which they have labored. John wanted them to lose nothing but rather to receive “a full reward” (1:8). The false teachers were denying that Jesus was God in the flesh. Thus, John warns this local church not to heed them, not to receive them into their “house” or church, and not even to say, “God bless you and your endeavors” (1:9-11). Every false religion *depreciates* Christ, making Him less than God, Creator, and the only Savior.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

John is writing a personal letter to Gaius, an honorable member of a local church. John praises him for walking in the truth and being hospitable to visiting evangelists (sent apparently by John) to the church of which Gaius is a member (1:1-8).

Another member named Diotrephes, was a talkative, overbearing man. He not only refused to receive the visiting ministries but did all he could to get the whole church to follow his course. He even threatened excommunication to anyone who disagreed with him in taking this action. John had written a letter to the whole church, but had little hope that it would resolve the headstrong opposition of Diotrephes. Therefore, John was going to visit the church and call Diotrephes to account for his evil behavior (1:9-10). Men who are evil like Diotrephes, do not know the Lord (1:11). Demetrius, another disciple mentioned by John, had a good report of all (1:12). Let us be like Gaius and Demetrius, men of hospitality and truth.

1:2 - This verse substantiates divine healing and divine health. “I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” Sometimes we have to pass through seasons of affliction, but God is using it to do something eternal in our hearts. When we are weakened with illness, often it is to destroy something evil in our nature such as pride and arrogance. But after the work is accomplished in our hearts, God wants to restore good health to us.

1:4 - John was “an elder,” a father. This is what John had to say about his spiritual children whom he had trained and carefully instructed over the years: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” It is so rewarding and heartwarming to see those whom we have instructed *continue* to walk in God’s truth. Sometimes we are sad when we see former students wandering aimlessly and not being obedient to the truths we have taught them. But the Apostle John is rejoicing to find some of his spiritual children, like Gaius, still walking in the truth and exhibiting the beautiful fruits of the Spirit. Are we bringing joy to our spiritual fathers and mothers?

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

Jude was the younger brother of James, and both were half-brothers of the Lord Jesus Christ. See Matthew 13:55, Mark 6:3. In humility, both men make reference to themselves as “servants” of the Lord Jesus. A reasonable date for the writing of Jude’s epistle is some time in the 60’s A.D. Jude appears to be addressing the Church at large, not any particular group of people.

Theme

By constraint of the Spirit, Jude urges believers to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto them.” False teachers had wormed their way into the Church and mingled themselves among the believers. They were teaching *an unlawful theme of grace* that permitted and excused sin and immorality. Indeed they had “turned the grace of God into lasciviousness” (1:3-4). There is a teaching today that God loves and accepts you unconditionally, no matter how you live. It is not so.

Jude begins and ends his epistle with God’s keeping power. First, that we are “preserved in Jesus Christ” (1:1), and then that He is “able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (1:24). However, in between these two affirmative declarations, Jude gives examples of some who were *not* preserved and kept.

1:5 - The Israelites who were redeemed from Egypt – Many of these who were saved by the blood of the lamb were later destroyed by the Lord in the wilderness for their terrible sin and unbelief.

1:6 - The angels which kept not their first estate – The angels who joined Lucifer’s rebellion, God has reserved in everlasting chains ... unto the great day of judgment. These angels were believers. They all knew the Lord and saw his glory, but they “left their habitation” to follow a liar and deceiver.

1:7 - Sodom and Gomorrha – These cities gave themselves over to fornication and homosexuality. Abraham interceded for them and Lot testified to them, but there was no repentance. Their judgment is to “suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.” Judgment is eternal. A Christian could lose his soul for practicing these things and not repenting. The Antichrist will excuse and justify all such things.

Characteristics of the False Teachers

1:8 - “Dreamers” who corrupt the body; scorn and reject authority; and speak evil of dignitaries.

Even Michael the archangel did not rail and revile Satan, and neither should we (1:9).

1:10 - They scoff and sneer at anything they do not understand; they are like irrational animals.

1:11 - They are unrepentant and hard-hearted like Cain; and greedy for money and prestige like Balaam.

They are rebellious and gainsayers like Korah, who wanted a position God had not granted.

Cain, Balaam, and Korah were all *believers* who turned from the path of righteousness.

1:12 - “Spots in your feasts” - They are among us. Shepherds who fleece the flock / no fear of God

“Clouds without water” - no anointing; “Carried about of winds” (Winds speak of doctrines.)

“Without fruit” - no fruit of the Spirit; “Twice dead” - They were alive in Christ, but dead again.

1:13 - “Raging waves” - no peace; “Wandering stars” - They have gone off course. Hell awaits them.

1:16 - Murmurers, complainers, walking in lust, flatterous of others in order to gain advantage

1:18 - Mockers of good men and good teaching; walking in their own ungodly lusts

1:19 - They “separate themselves.” They are *exclusive* and divisive, and are prompted by a wrong spirit.

1:20-25 - But we are to fortify ourselves by praying in the Spirit often, and keeping ourselves in the love of God. This means we have our part. We must keep bitterness and contamination out of our hearts. The Lord is well able to keep us from falling and to present us to Himself blameless. Amen

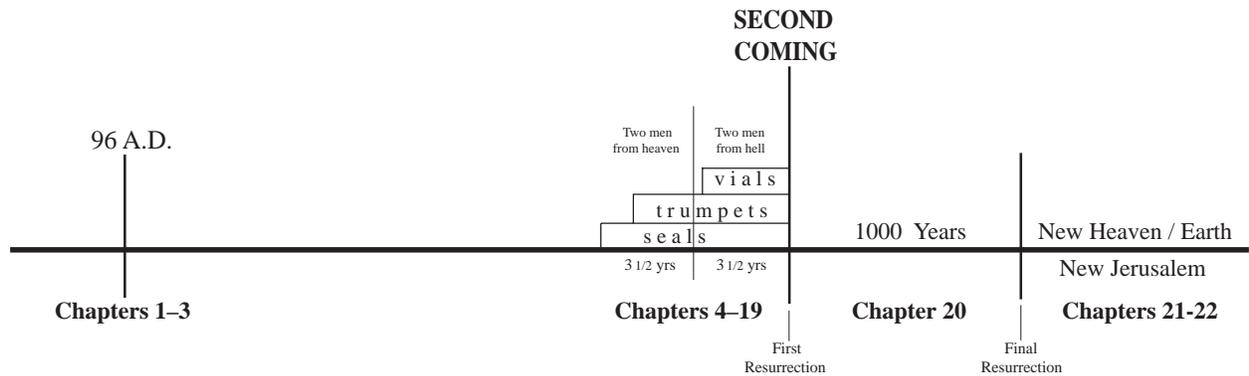
THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The Book of Revelation is perhaps the most profound series of visions ever accorded to man. John had been banished to the Isle of Patmos by the emperor Domitian in 95 A.D. The tiny island was about 35 miles off the southwest coast of Asia Minor, near Ephesus. John remained here for about 18 months, during which time he received the Revelation. Most of John’s visions focus on the end of the Church Age. The time element of Revelation can be broken up primarily into four parts:

General Outline

- Chapters 1–3 - John’s time (96 A.D.)— The messages to his seven churches in Asia
- Chapters 4–19 - “Things hereafter” — The *end* of the Church Age / The Second Coming
- Chapter 20 - The Millennial Age — After Christ comes and Satan is bound
- Chapters 21–22 - The new heaven and earth, and New Jerusalem; after the Millennium

Revelation in Four Major Divisions



Introduction and messages to seven literal churches that existed in John’s time - These messages are even more pertinent to us today because they are warnings to repent and be ready for the Lord’s coming.

See your map (p.195b) for the location of the seven churches and Patmos. They were within a 100 mile radius, near Ephesus.

4:1 - “things hereafter” - John is taken by the Spirit out of the first century to the end of the Church Age. Most of ch. 4–19 centers around the time of the Lord’s coming and the judgments just prior. Two men from heaven, the two witnesses, have a 3 1/2 yr ministry, and then two men from hell—the beast and false prophet have a 3 1/2 year reign. After God has finished using them to test the nations, they are hurled into the lake of fire at Christ’s Coming.

When Christ comes, Satan is bound for one thousand years. Christians who qualify for the first resurrection will rule and reign with Christ for 1000 years (Rev. 20:4-6). Not every believer will partake of this resurrection. All the others will be raised at the end of the Millennium. The wicked are not resurrected until the thousand years are ended. This is the final resurrection.

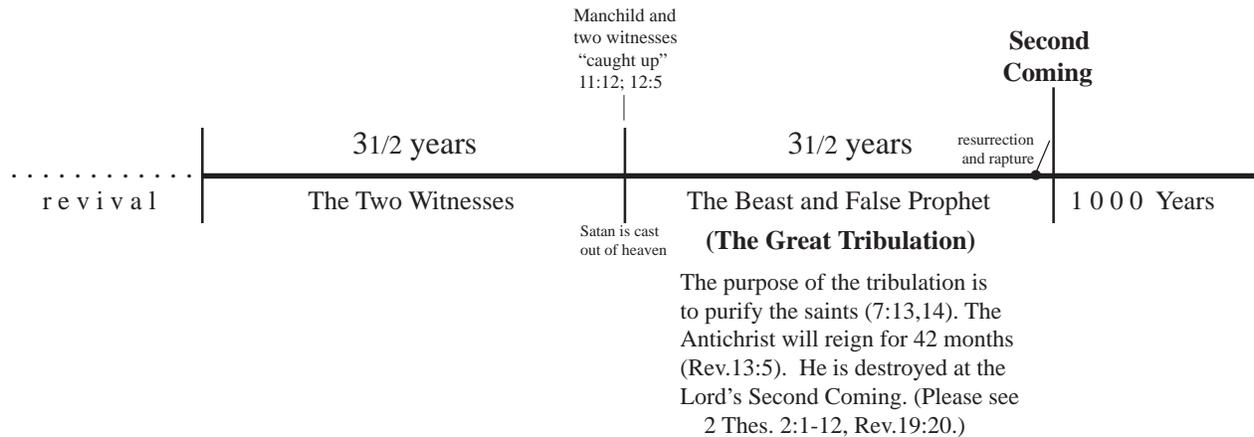
This present earth will pass away (Rev. 21:1). There will be a new heaven and earth. New Jerusalem is a real city; it is the place where all the redeemed dwell eternally. See 2 Peter 3:12-14; Isa. 65:17; Matt. 24:35

God has the future in His hands. Everything has been carefully thought through and planned before the foundation of the world. Therefore, we have nothing to fear. God has placed limits upon Satan, and has already announced his eternal doom. Thus, the only one we should fear is the Lord.

God has a plan in mind, and the end objective is to produce a beautiful Bride (Rev.19:7-8). But to purify and perfect His people, God must bring the whole world into a major crisis. First, He is going to send a worldwide harvest; the whole earth will be reaped (Rev.14:14-16). Everyone will see the power and glory of God and be given the opportunity either to choose God’s gracious gift of pardon, or to reject it. Then the Lord will provoke Satan to jealousy to bring up from hell two imposters—the beast and the false prophet. They will employ such deceptive, persuasive powers that anyone who is not committed to Christ will be swept away by the deception. God will use the followers of the devil to hammer into shape the children of God (Rev. 7:13-14).

Most of Revelation is at the End of the Church Age

After the introduction and messages to the seven churches in chapters 1–3, John is beckoned to “come up hither” to be shown things thereafter. Thus, John is taken from the first century into the future. In heaven, he is shown the throne of God and the inhabitants of heaven who love and worship God intensely, in chapters 4–5. From chapters 6 to 19, John sees the triple judgment of God poured out upon the earth—the seven seals, trumpets, and vials. Basically, these are the last seven years of the Church age, especially the last 3 1/2 years, culminating in the Second Coming of Christ.



The purpose for God allowing an imposter (the Antichrist) is “to try all them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev. 3:10). The Lord permits counterfeit miracle-workers to test the hearts of His people (Deut.13:1-5). In Revelation 13:1, John stood on the sand of the Mediterranean Sea in his vision and beheld a beast coming up out of the sea. This *beast* is a kingdom having 10 horns (10 nations around the Mediterranean); but it is also a man, for in 13:3, he receives a deadly wound but is resurrected. He rules for 42 months and has great animosity for the saints. Most of the saints are still on earth.

A special *son* (the man child of 12:1-5) is “birthed” out of the Church and taken to heaven. But Satan is hurled down to earth and knows he has only a short time (3 1/2 years) before he is bound. Thus, he vents his full rage upon the saints (12:7-12). The “woman” or Church is preserved to a certain extent through the great tribulation, but some are exposed to persecution. We should pray to be accounted worthy to escape these things and be hidden and preserved from what is coming (Lk. 21:36).

Satan seeks to imitate everything God does. The coming beast is a man “who was, is not, and shall be.” According to Revelation 17:8, he lived before John’s time (96 A.D.) and will ascend out of hell and go into perdition. Every person whose name is not written in the Book of Life will follow this imposter. This *beast* of past ages, died at age 33 and was buried on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Over the centuries his tomb has sunk into the sands of the sea, and thus, John sees a beast rising up out of the sea. Then John beheld another man coming up from hell; and he is the False Prophet (13:11-17). Evidently he had not been born yet (John’s time), for it does not say that he “was.” The characteristics of this man of past centuries are: intimidation, control of the economy, and the murdering of anyone who disagrees with him or does not yield to his commands. The purpose of this second man is to enforce worship of the first beast, and to glorify him, using signs and wonders. Remember, these are the two most wicked men of human history. *The beast* was a man of extraordinary charisma who aspired to outdo and be greater than all gods. To be worshipped was his consuming passion. Satan’s heart is totally compatible with his; he will indwell this man and receive worship. *The false prophet* and his spirit has for centuries pointed millions to the wrong god, using intimidation.

The Counterfeit Trinity

Not only will the beast die, be resurrected, and have a 3 1/2 year ministry, he will also be the second member of the unholy trinity. Satan's trinity is mentioned in 13:4-18, 16:13, 19:20, and 20:10. Satan is termed "the dragon." The Antichrist is called "the beast" "the man of sin" and "the son of perdition." The third member is the False Prophet. Let us compare the true and false trinities:

THE HOLY TRINITY

God the Father — gives His power and glory to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God the Son — the Lord Jesus Christ

God the Holy Spirit — The Holy Spirit seeks to direct all people to worship the Son and the Father, using miracles, signs and wonders, and persuadings.

THE UNHOLY TRINITY

Satan (the Dragon) gives his power and abilities to a man—the beast (13:4).

Beast (the Antichrist) Satan's special "son" *

False Prophet directs all the unredeemed to worship the Beast and Satan, using signs and wonders, miracles, rationalizations, and much devilish persuasiveness (Rev.13:12-15; 19:20).

*Alexander the Great claimed the serpent as his father.

When Christ comes, He will consume these two men (the beast and the false prophet) with the spirit of His mouth. They are the first to be thrown into the lake of fire (2 Thes. 2:8, Rev.19:20). Hell is in the lower regions of the earth, but the lake of fire is at the bottom. The horrors of the lake of fire are reserved until the end of the Millennium (20:14), except for the two most evil men of history, who will be cast into the lake of fire at Christ's appearance. Satan is put in another place.

Satan will be bound with a "great chain" and locked up in hell (Rev. 20:3, 7-10). The Lord still has an important purpose for Satan. When the Millennial reign of Christ is finished, Satan will be released one more time *to test all the nations of the world*. Amazingly, a large percentage of the human race will follow him and go into destruction with him. Once again, we want to emphasize that the real problem with man is not ignorance, but rebellion in his heart. For all eternity, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet will be *the lowest down* in the lake of fire and suffer the most hideous torment of all, day and night forever and ever (20:10). These three who sought to be the highest and who wanted to control the entire earth, will be hurled down into the lowest regions of the lake of fire.

God truly "works all things after the counsel of his own will," in heaven and in earth, and under the earth (Eph.1:11). God maneuvers everything in life so that everyone will have what he wants. Those who love the truth will come to the light (Jn. 3:19-21), and those who love a lie will inherit a lie (2 Thes. 2:10-12). He will "give to every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

Those whom John saw seated with the Lamb on Mount Zion (Rev.14:1-5) have been totally conformed to the image of the Lamb. The Lamb is the Light; and they have been thoroughly searched with His light. There is no darkness or deceit in lives. In heaven, there are many levels; some are closer to the Lord than others. Let us pursue a nearness to the heart of God, whose throne is upon Mount Zion. The supreme purpose for being created is to bring pleasure to the One who made us, and to be a close lover and friend (Rev. 4:11). Let us fulfill that purpose in our personal lives.

VI. OTHER CLOSING COMMENTS

We have just concluded our survey of each book of the Bible. A survey is only an outline, and certainly much more could be said; yet our outline helps to serve as a foundation upon which to further build. I would like to conclude our study on Hermeneutics by offering a few guidelines for teachers.

The Impact of Teachers / The Power of Words, Thoughts, Concepts

The importance of the office of a teacher is often overlooked. Christ was a Teacher sent from God, above all His other ministries. The majority of His three-and-a-half year ministry was spent as a Teacher. Even His miracles, such as raising Lazarus from the dead, the feeding of five thousand, or turning water into wine were used for signs by which He instructed the people. In every place and city, Christ was imparting a new mind to His adherents, and putting their feet on good paths.

If we want society to ever change, minds must be molded into another form, and that is accomplished by the quality of good teachers. The quality of the Church (or of a nation) depends on the superiority of its teachers. I have always believed that when people are taught the right truths, it will produce good fruit. And when the people live right, then God's face will shine upon the land. King Jehoshaphat sent competent teachers into all the cities of Judah and it changed society. God then defended the nation so that no one dared to make war with them. (See 2 Chron.17:7-10.)

The Intangible Becomes Tangible / The Battle is Spiritual

Life consists of motives, thoughts, desires, attitudes, and words that lead to decisions and actions. The intangible becomes tangible. The battle in life is *spiritual* more than it is physical. Debt is a spiritual problem. It is often the result of mismanagement, overspending, unwise investments, and borrowing, and disobedience to God's laws; but it can lead to the destruction of many marriages. Likewise, when *any* of God's moral laws are broken, it brings a curse upon the land (Isa. 24:4-6). A number of years ago I was watching a presidential debate, and the question was posed to the incumbent, "Why don't you spend more money on research for a cure for aids?" The president answered, "Aids is directly associated with a lifestyle and behavior!" In other words, the president was getting to the root of the problem. Of course, his answer was ignored, and all the opponents said "He is evading the question." Aids, though it is a physical problem, stems for a spiritual source.

Compromise From the Pulpit Brings a Nation Down

People act the way they do because of the way they *think* (Isa. 55:8); and believers get their thoughts and ideas from what the minister teaches them. If a minister dilutes the Gospel or handles the Word of God deceitfully, he will introduce worldliness, adultery, divorce and remarriage, and rock music into the Church. So often the Holy Spirit has to compete with the worldliness that is in the Church to get the attention of His people. Today, there is compromise flowing from the pulpits of many churches; and overall, it is bringing the nation down. Terrorism, therefore, is the result of a spiritual problem. These enemies are "stirred up" and sent against backslidden nations to get their attention and to bring them to repentance. The message of the prophet Samuel to a backslidden nation is going to be repeated over and over again in our times: "If you return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods...and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the [terrorists]" (1 Sam. 7:3).

The Great Commission — To Go and Teach All Nations

Christ commanded us to *preach* the gospel to every creature, but also to go and *teach* all nations (Mk.16:15; Mt. 28:19-20). Preaching and teaching are very different. An evangelist can preach and perhaps turn thousands to salvation in one day; but “turning many to righteousness” and producing kings and priests to reign with Christ takes time, and it takes teaching. After new birth, it requires the teaching ministry to “divide soul and spirit” and to expose and cleanse the heart of wrong motives, pride, vanity, confusion, and other bondages. It is the teacher who imparts vision, direction, wisdom and understanding, and leads people into pure worship. Right teaching brings grace and knowledge, and helps marriages to function properly and stay together. The godly precepts of a teacher array the saints with beautiful garments. It is the teaching ministry that brings unity and perfection to the Church (Col.1:28, Eph. 4:11). Have you ever considered having a Bible school in your local church?

Many revivals around the world have eventually dissolved because of the lack of good teaching. Unless new converts are grounded in the truth after new birth, our fruit will not remain. Paul stayed 18 months in Corinth, teaching the new believers (Acts 18:11), and two full years in Ephesus (see Acts 19:9-10). The key to producing solid believers is to train them well in the ways of the Lord.

For Those Who Aspire to be Teachers

- Have a heart that is fully committed to Christ. Love the truth, and then you will know the truth.
- Ask God for understanding and the spirit of wisdom and revelation (Eph.1:17, Lk. 24:45).
- Select the right teachers. They are *a shortcut* into learning the ways of the Lord (Ac. 8:30-31).
- Diligently study the Scriptures (1 Tim. 4:13). Ask God to lead you to the right resources of study.
- Be careful whom you open your spirit unto—teachers, books. You receive their spirit / mentality.
- Allow God to change your opinions. Ask Him to give you a pliable, teachable spirit (Lk. 9:55).
- Do not exalt your traditions and sentiments above the Word of God (Mk. 7:8-9).
- Be reduced to the true message. Allow God to delete all hobby horses and *causes* of our own.
- Realize we have only *scratched the surface* of all God has to show us (Rev. 3:17-19, 1 Cor. 8:2).
- Intense study of Hebrew / Greek is not the paramount solution. Rely more on grace and revelation.
- Do not be as the scribes of old, who studied all the differing opinions and views of theology.
- Avoid studying false religions in order to refute them. Study truth; major on the light (Jer.10:2).
- Be cleansed of all envy and hardness, etc. These things distort our understanding (Mt. 27:18).
- Perfectly balance each truth, using all Scripture. Do not *overemphasize* a truth (2 Tim. 2:15).
- Emphasize the whole body of truth. Paul taught the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20,27).
- Experience and pay for the truths you teach. Some are very costly (Prov. 23:23, Job 3:20).
- Become your message (Eze. 3:1-4, Rev.10:9-10). Your whole being will speak with authority.
- God is light. He will continue to give us *further light* as we draw closer to Him (Isa. 6:5-7).
- Those who alter God’s Word and teach it to others, lose eternal rewards (Mt. 5:19).
- Those who teach the Word have a far greater responsibility and accountability (Jas. 3:1-2).
- The office of a teacher is extremely important (1 Cor.12:28). God has set in the body *teachers*.
- Teachers can turn a nation unto God, or away from God (Ezek. 44:10-16).
- “Those who turn many to righteousness” shall shine as brilliant stars forever and ever (Dan.12:3).

Procedures for a Competent Teacher

- Pray for your students. God perfectly understands their needs and knows how to find a way into their hearts. Ask the Lord, “How would you teach this class?” And ask for a teaching anointing.
- Discern the level of your listening audience and adjust your message to their level. Do not start on level 6, if they are only on level 2. Start on their level and bring them up to a higher plane.
- Be simple and clear. The greatest teacher is the one who can make a child understand. Paul was able to make all men see the mystery...in a few words (Eph. 3:2-3, 3:9). Teachers must be good explainers. Take what is complex and make it simple; it should be palatable for everyone.
- Make your subject interesting. Use illustrations that speak directly to the heart; employ object lessons that vividly drive home the truths you are presenting.
- Be prepared. Study your textbook or material weeks in advance; do it slowly and meditatively. Underline important points and outline sections you will be teaching. Ask the Lord to give you additional Scriptures to confirm and bolster your subject.
- Study the test and answer key. If your course has a textbook with a test, study the test and answer key, because the test is a review of the most critical points you will want them to remember.
- Repeat important points for emphasis and impression during class time.
- Have your students take good class notes, and at times give them additional hand-out sheets that reiterate what you have taught them. People remember about 5 percent of what they hear, and 90 percent of what they see, but they remember 100 percent of what they write down and review.
- Have good eye contact with your students; speak from your heart, and pace yourself. Do not spend too much time on one topic, unless the Holy Spirit is leading you to do so.
- Remember, “more is not always better.” It is counterproductive and even demoralizing when courses are overloaded with too much homework. Although research requires hard work, we must not take the enjoyment out of studying the Scriptures by requiring arduous “busy work.”
- Sometimes, class participation is good. If you are talking about money or financial integrity, ask the attendees to make a list of things they can live without. Ask provoking questions: One teacher asked his class to write down the five things they desired most in a spouse, or a prospective one. After they wrote them down, the teacher then said, “Now, *you* go and practice it first.”
- If you have your own Bible school in your church, find the time schedule that best suits your people. The schedule that worked for one church may not be best for your church. Our school meets every Monday evening, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Some may wish to study on Wednesday evenings or Sunday mornings with the adults, or both. Other churches study in their cell groups.
- Never use unclean graphic illustrations (1 Thes. 2:3, Eph. 5:12). It is best to avoid talking about the personal things of others. It paints unclean pictures in the minds of your hearers. People should feel “washed” by the water of the Word, and not feel contaminated when they walk out of class.

Goals of a Godly Teacher

Forming People into Christ's Image

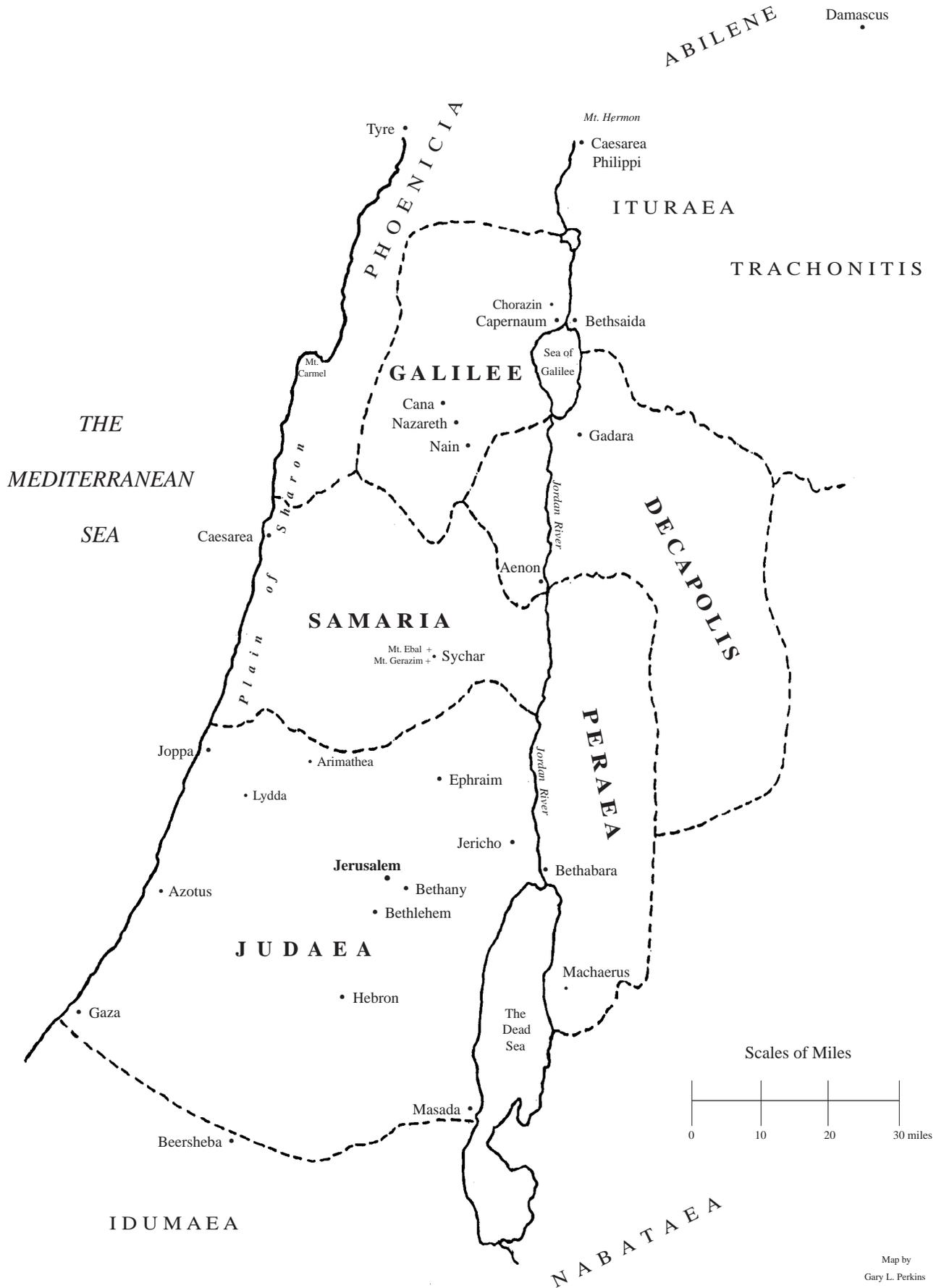
A teacher is forming a “seed” for eternity. Therefore, being a teacher is a serious matter, for once people's lives have been shaped, it is very hard to change them. Let us endeavor, in the fear of God, to mold men and women into God's image and not our own. A teacher is a sower—whatever is planted in people produces fruit. In order to see righteousness and praise “spring forth” (Isa. 61:11), we have to be very particular what we sow in others. Below are some goals to strive for as a teacher:

- Give people an eternal vision (the goal is not just to go to heaven but to finish our mission in life): to seek a better resurrection; a place closer to the Lord; and a crown. (We can lose it, Rev. 3:11.)
The most important thing in life is doing God's will. This is real Christianity (Heb.10:5-7, Lk. 22:42).
- Show them what to invest in, and the things we take with us when we die (Rev.14:13, Mt. 6:19-21).
(Invest in your heart. We take our character into eternity, and the good things we plant in others.)
Abram willingly lived in tents; having seen New Jerusalem, he lived for eternity (Heb.11:9-10).
Jesus *endured* the cross “for the joy set before Him” — He saw the eternal reward (Heb.12:2).
Teach your people *perspective*, and encourage them to live in the light of eternity.
Cause the people to realize that God has redeemed them for an eternal purpose (Eph. 2:4-7).
- Therefore, give your people *direction*. Use Israel's journey as a spiritual road map.
Show them where we are going, how to get there, and what to expect along the way.
- Bring your people to perfection (Col.1:28). Break every bondage and personal conflict.
- We should strive to make ourselves *attractive* to God. We are called to be His bride (Rev.19:7,8).
Our whole objective is to know God's heart and to be compatible with God.
- Have a prophetic anointing as you teach. It will pinpoint the students' needs as you teach.
- Instruct your listeners on how to have peace, and how to get along with others.
Teach them to have the proper attitudes toward adversity, and toward authority figures.
Remember, God has an answer in His Word for every situation we face.
- Show them how to receive new grace. First, they must humble themselves (Jas. 4:6, 1 Pet. 5:5).
- Teach them how to respond to injury, and how to keep bitterness out of their hearts (Heb. 4:16).
- A teacher must teach discernment between clean and unclean, holy and profane (Eze. 44:23).
- The teacher imparts wisdom—how to make right choices, avoid snares, and succeed in life.
- Our endeavor is to bring all our listeners to fruitfulness, and into God's purposes for their lives.
- Prepare people for what is coming in our generation. All the earth will be brought to a decision.
Antichrist will emphasize frivolity, entertainment, comedy, and everything that is sensual.

In closing, I would like to encourage every local church to have its own resident Bible school to prepare for revival and the coming storms. Your people can learn the same truths that are taught in seminaries and schools of theology without having to pay large fees or leave their employment. For further information, please contact:

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PALESTINE IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES



Map by
Gary L. Perkins

THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD OF NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

