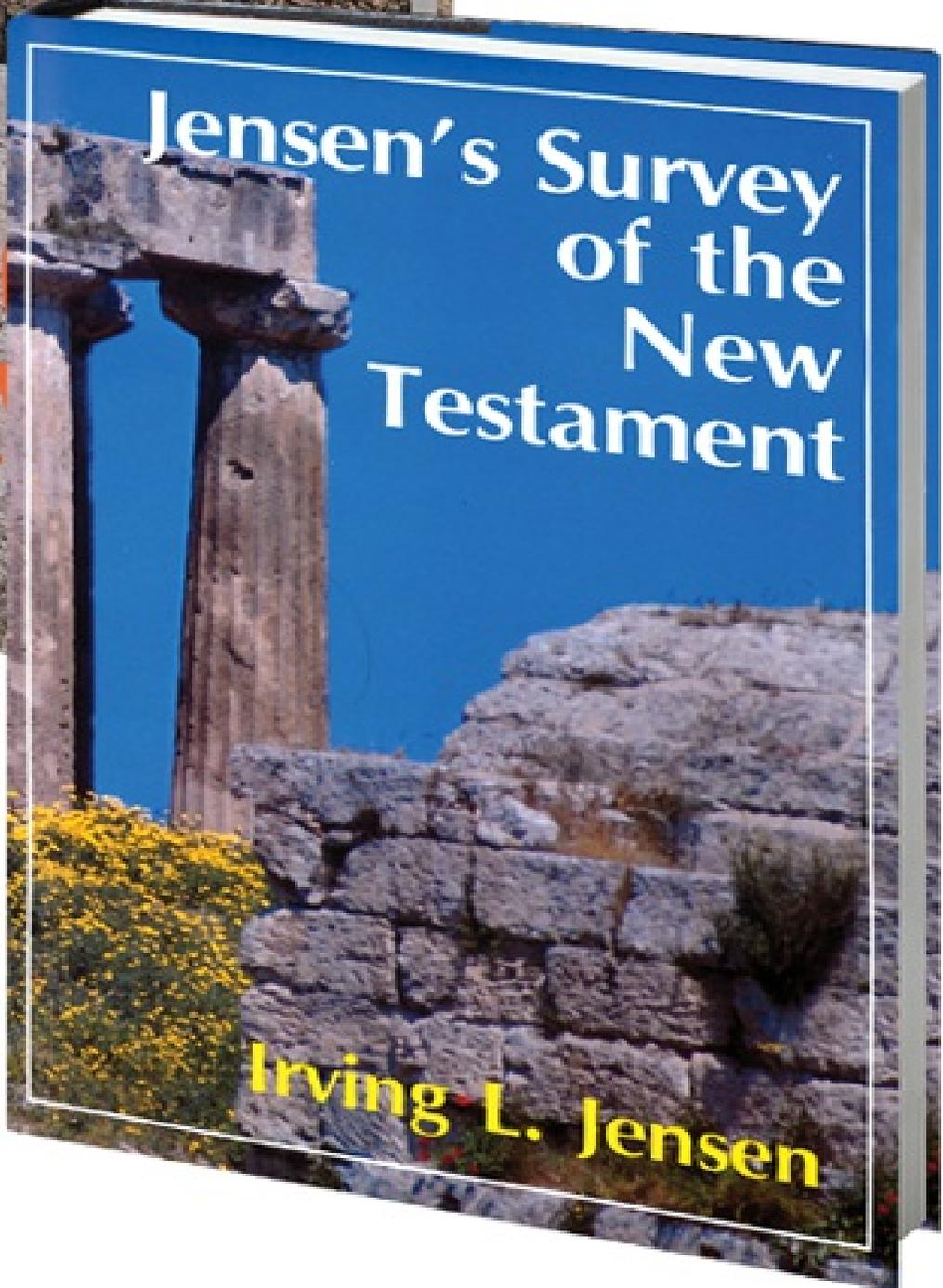


JENSEN'S SURVEY OF

THE TESTAMENTS

Irving



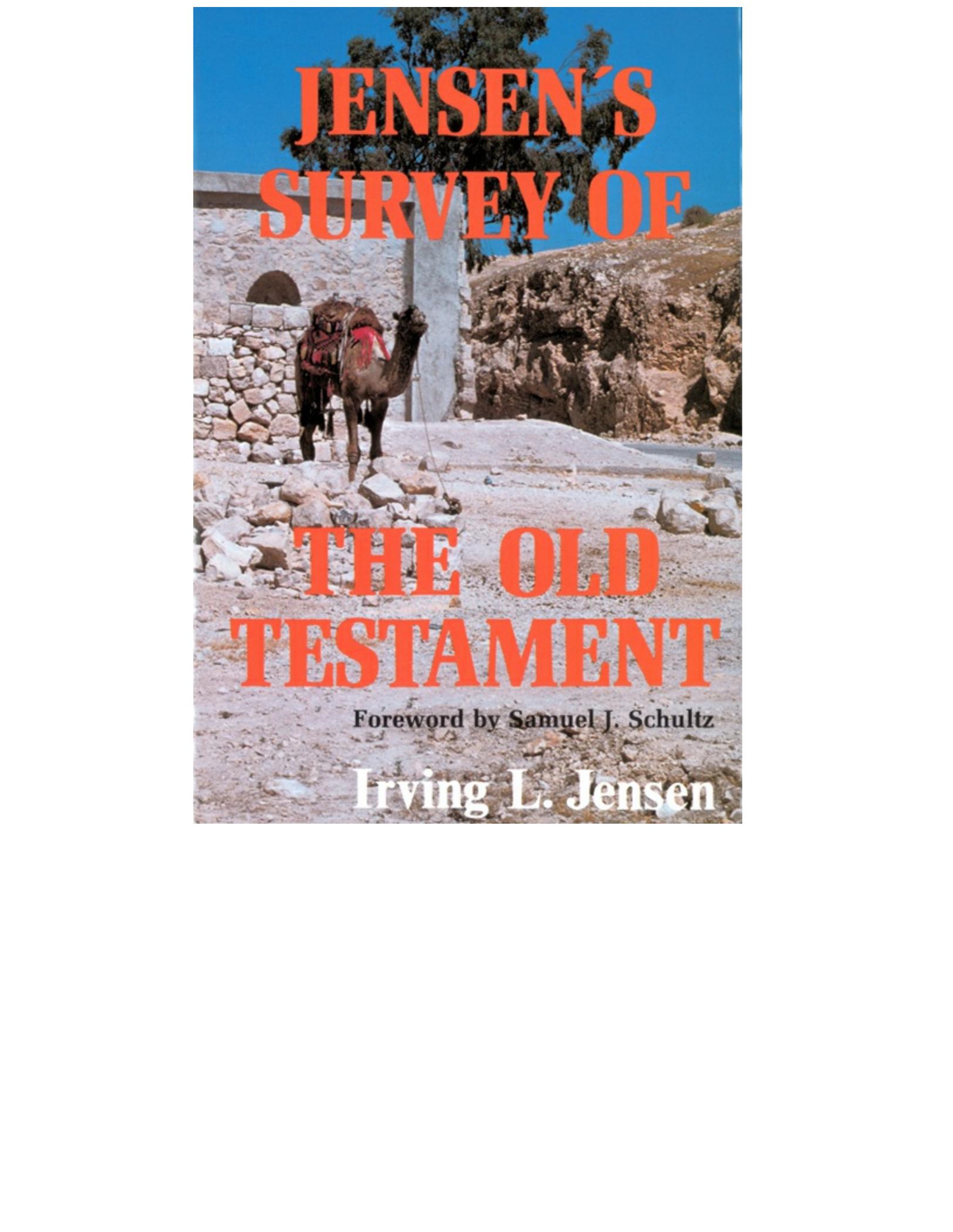
Jensen's Survey of the New Testament

Irving L. Jensen

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A photograph of a camel standing in a rocky, arid landscape. The camel is positioned in the middle ground, facing right. It has a red saddle and is tethered to a stone wall. The background features a stone building with an arched doorway and a large tree. The sky is clear and blue.

**JENSEN'S
SURVEY OF**

**THE OLD
TESTAMENT**

Foreword by Samuel J. Schultz

Irving L. Jensen

**JENSEN'S SURVEY
OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT**

Search and Discover
by
IRVING L. JENSEN

MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO

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Foreword

This survey provides practical guidance for reading the Old Testament. The overall perspective and the relationship to the New Testament delineated here stimulates the reader's interest in the biblical text itself.

To many people the Old Testament consists of thirty-nine fragmented literary units. Irving Jensen, in this volume, repeatedly provides the overview that is unfolded in the Old Testament as a whole, from the creation of man to the coming of Jesus Christ. Helpful insight is offered in presenting this development in its geographical

and historical context. For the student who wants a deeper involvement, the author provides an extended bibliography for further study.

Helpful suggestions in various methods of Bible study offered in this volume will undoubtedly lead the reader into a comprehensive use of the Old Testament. Consequently, those who read the Old Testament individually or study it in Bible classes will find intellectual and devotional enrichment in this survey.

May the author's purpose to involve the reader in a firsthand survey of the Bible text itself be realized by everyone who reads the following pages.

SAMUEL J. SCHULTZ

Preface

The main purpose of this Old Testament survey guide is to involve the reader in a firsthand survey of the Bible text itself. All too often students of Bible survey read what others say is contained in a certain book of the Bible and fail to spend time reading the Bible text for themselves. This book has been written to start the reader on paths of study in each Old Testament book, to *search and discover* for himself the great themes of those books. Throughout the chapters, much help is supplied (e.g., outlines) on what the Bible books teach, but these suggestions are

intended to confirm and amplify the reader's personal study and to maintain a momentum of study in the more difficult Old Testament portions. The reader is always encouraged to do his own independent study before dwelling long on help from others.

Another aim of this book is to guide the reader in seeing *how* the message of each Old Testament book is organized structurally, because, for a full understanding of the Bible text, one needs to know not only *what* God said, but *how* He said it. This partly accounts for the appearance of many charts throughout the book, since charts show structural organization clearly and vividly.

Students of Bible survey often overlook the application stage of their study, because in survey they do not analyze the Bible text in detail. But survey study should not rule out practical application. One of this book's purposes is to lead the reader into a time of personal reflection as he considers practical spiritual applications of the Bible book that he has just surveyed. Here the slogan is: *reflect and apply*. This is how all Bible study should conclude.

This survey guide also includes other important helps for study, as seen in the following descriptions of the parts of each chapter.

I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

The opening pages of each chapter prepare the reader for his survey of the Bible book assigned to that chapter. This is a crucial part of one's study, because here is where motivation and momentum are gained.

II. BACKGROUND

Every book of the Bible was originally written in a particular local setting. This section of the chapter discusses that background, much information of which is not always supplied by the text of the Bible book itself. Some important items are intentionally repeated from time to time to help impress them on the reader's mind.

III. SURVEY

The actual survey process is the main part of each chapter and should occupy most of the reader's time. The basic Bible version used throughout the studies is *the New American Standard Bible*. chapter 2 is devoted entirely to a discussion of the survey method of study. Here the reader will learn what procedures are recommended in the stage of surveying a book of the Old Testament.

IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

Immediately following the survey section is a discussion of prominent subjects of the Bible book. Technical subjects or problems of the Bible text are not included, since these are not part of survey study. The comments which are

shared are intended to round out the student's survey and to give suggestions for further study at a later time.

V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

Certain words and verses can usually be identified with the particular theme of each Bible book. Suggestions are made here, but the reader is urged to look for more.

VI. APPLICATIONS

The questions asked here will help the reader apply the teachings of the Old Testament book to his own life and times.

VII. FURTHER STUDY

Suggestions for further study are intended for those who want to pursue various themes of the book in greater detail. This study is not a part of the survey process.

VIII. SELECTED READING

Three types of books are cited here: general introduction, commentary, and special subjects. For the most part, the lists are of books in print, written from a conservative, evangelical viewpoint. (Exceptions are not identified as such.)

IX. SURVEY CHART

I hope that this survey guide will introduce the reader to many fascinating and inspiring journeys

through this wonderful book of God, the Old Testament. Priceless are the promises to him who delights in the Scriptures. In the words of the psalmist, such a believer “will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers” (Psalm 1:3).

Introduction to the Old Testament

The Survey Method of Study

Introduction to the Old Testament

Many pleasant surprises are in store for the one who embarks on a study of the Old Testament. Not the least of these is the discovery of its contemporary application to everyday life. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to offer some motivation and direction for the reader's survey study of this part of God's wonderful Book. Regular studies in the Bible text begin with the [next chapter](#).

I. WHY STUDY THE OLD TESTAMENT?

There are many compelling reasons why every Christian should study the Old Testament. Consider the following:

A. THE BIBLE IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT THE OLD

TESTAMENT

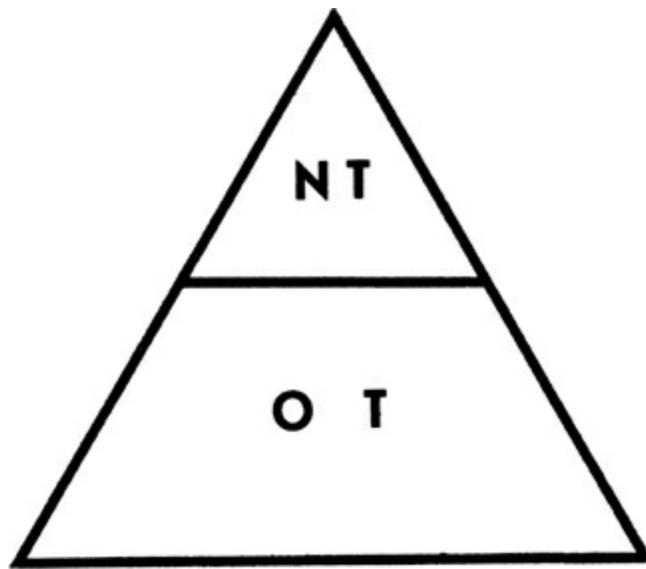
Both Old and New Testaments make up the inspired Scriptures. The New Testament was never intended to replace the Old Testament. Instead, the New was given to complement the Old, to complete its story. For example, the Old prophesies the coming of the Redeemer; the New reports the fulfillment of that prophecy in Jesus. The New Testament is the sequel to the Old Testament's origins, heir of its promises, fruit of its seed, the peak of its mountain. The diagram on page 16 illustrates various relationships of the two Testaments.

What associations between the Old and New Testaments do you see suggested by the illustration?

B. THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST WOULD BE AN ENIGMA WITHOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT

For example, why did Jesus say, "I was

sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 15:24)? In what sense was Jesus the promised Messiah and King, long awaited by the Jews?¹ And why did He have to die? Are His cross and crown irreconcilable? Read Isaiah 53:10-12 for an example of how the Old Testament answers such questions.



C. THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF CHRISTIANITY IS FURNISHED BY THE OLD TESTAMENT

Christianity did not emerge mysteriously out of a vacuum. God had been moving among the peoples of the world, especially Israel, for many centuries before Christ.

Then, “when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Gal 4:4-5). Erich Sauer connects the Old Testament with the New in these words:

The Old Testament is promise and expectation, the New is fulfilment and completion. The Old is the marshalling of the hosts to the battle of God, the new is the Triumph of the Crucified One. The Old is the twilight and dawn of morning, the New is the rising sun and the height of eternal day.²

Even though the last book of the Old Testament was written about four hundred years before Christ’s birth, our knowing the Old Testament is to know the religious, social, geographical, and, in part, the

political setting of the New. Besides, the Old Testament was the Bible of Jesus, the apostles, and New Testament writers. When they spoke or wrote, they often quoted or referred to the Old Testament's history and teaching. This in itself is reason enough for every Christian to be acquainted with the Old Testament.

D. KEY REVELATIONS OF GOD ARE TO BE FOUND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is mainly history, but it is *sacred* history. That is, it reveals especially how God moves in and through the lives of people and the courses of nations. We might also say that the Old Testament is *redemptive* history, for “God actively directs human history for the purpose of redeeming men to Himself.”³ The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Old Testament to record what would adequately reveal that redemptive purpose.

Thus, the writers have much to say about such crucial facts as these:

1. God is the sovereign Creator.
2. Man is a sinner in need of salvation.
3. God is holy, and He judges sin.
4. God is love, and He offers salvation to sinful man.
5. A Saviour would be born to die for the sins of man.
6. Man is saved by faith, not by works.
7. Israel was sovereignly chosen to be God's channel of the redemptive message to the world.
8. All history will culminate at the throne of the sovereign Lord.

The Old Testament is especially valuable for its inspired record about origins. Consider, for example, the historical record

of the first man and woman; the first sin committed by a human; the first communications of God with man; and the first revelation of the way of restored fellowship to God.

Miracles are also a key part of the Old Testament, preparing the reader for the climactic event of the Great Miracle, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. John Raven rightly concludes that “Christ and the Old Testament are so united by mutual testimony that a low view of the credibility of the latter must result in a low view of the credibility of the former.”⁴ The factuality of miracles rests solidly on the person of the miracle-worker. This is one of many reasons why so much is revealed in the Old Testament about *who* God is.

E. THE OLD TESTAMENT IS SPIRITUAL FOOD FOR THE CHRISTIAN

Paul was referring directly to the Old Testament when he wrote, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). The different parts of the Old Testament reach the reader in various ways:

1. Its indictments bring conviction of sin (Jer 2).
2. Its laws and counsel show the way to please God (Exod 20).
3. Its psalms encourage praise and prayer (Psalm 107).
4. Its testimonies inspire the reader to walk in paths of righteousness (Deut 31:24—32:47).
5. Its historical facts give perspective and direct the reader to learn from the God of all history (Psalm 78).

6. Its prophecies warn of danger and plant hope in the hearts of all believers (Zech 14).
7. Its story of Israel's kingdom gives background for our understanding of the millennial reign of Christ and His kingship (2 Sam 7:4-17; Zech 14:9).

Read the passages cited above to see the relevancy of the Old Testament to the twentieth century.

II. THE OLD TESTAMENT FROM GOD TO US

The plan of writing Scriptures originated with God (2 Tim 3:16–17; 2 Pet 1:21). So, from its very source, the Bible is a supernatural book. It is the revelation of God, written by divinely inspired human authors. Through the subsequent stages of transmission, canonization, and translation, God has preserved His Word so that today,

as we hold a copy of the Bible in our hands, we may be fully confident of its trustworthiness. Let us look briefly at the overall history of the Old Testament. The starting point of such a history is divine revelation.

A. REVELATION

Revelation is God's communication of truth to man, without which man cannot know God. Before the first Old Testament book was written,⁵ God revealed Himself to man through such media as conscience and nature (*general* revelation) and direct conversation with people (*special* revelation). (Read Rom 1:18-21 for an application of general revelation, and Gen 3:8-19 for an example of special revelation.) But God also wanted to reveal Himself in the form of permanent writing, so that there would be a clear and fixed record of this

revelation for all the succeeding generations. So He commissioned chosen men to write on various subjects. In the words of Gleason Archer,

If there be a God, and if He is concerned for our salvation, this is the only way (apart from direct revelation from God to each individual of each successive generation) He could reliably impart this knowledge to us. It must be through a reliable written record such as the Bible purports to be.⁶

B. INSPIRATION

Two crucial questions at this point are: How did the human authors know what God wanted them to write? and Were their writings without error? We cannot explain the supernatural process of inspiration, which brought about the original writings of

the Bible. Paul refers to the process as *God-breathing*. (Read 2 Tim 3:16, where the phrase “inspired by God” translates the Greek *theopneustia*, which literally means “God-breathed.”) Peter says the Bible authors were undergirded, or carried along, by the Holy Spirit. (“Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit,” 2 Pet 1:21, Berkeley.) These verses, along with many others, assure us that when the Bible authors wrote, their words expressed perfectly and infallibly the truths which God wanted to convey to mankind. In the original autographs, all the words were infallible as to truth, and final as to authority. Such accuracy applies to every part of the originals—to matters of history and science as well as to spiritual truths. If the Bible student does not believe this, his study of the biblical text will be haunted by confusing and destructive doubts.

C. THE ORIGINAL AUTOGRAPHS

The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament were written over a period of about a thousand years (c. 1500-400 B.C.), by about twenty-five to thirty different authors. All but a few portions were written in Hebrew.⁷ The writing material of most of the autographs was paperlike papyrus. (Some autographs may have been written on animal skins.) Sheets of papyrus about ten inches high were attached together to make a long, rolled-up scroll, easy for reading. (The page-type codex, or book, did not supplant the roll until the second or third century A.D.) The Bible text was written with pen and ink in vertical columns, with no space between words, sentences, or paragraphs. Only the consonants of the words were recorded.⁸ Read Jeremiah 36 for an example of how a portion of Scripture originated. How did Jeremiah receive the

message from God? How did the scribe receive it from Jeremiah?

Practically nothing is known about the history of each individual autograph of the Old Testament. During the years of Solomon's Temple, it is likely that some autographs were among the Scriptures deposited there (cf 2 Kings 22). Probably all of the original papyrus scrolls perished within a century or two after they were written, due to such causes as fire and rotting.

D. TRANSMISSION

Transmission is the process by which the biblical manuscripts have been copied and recopied down through the ages. God allowed each of the original Old Testament autographs to disappear from the scene, but not before copies were already in the hands of His people.⁹ Handwritten scribal copyings

of the Hebrew text were made up to the time of the printing press (fifteenth century A.D.).

No ancient writing has been so carefully preserved in the process of scribal copying as have the Old Testament Scriptures. This was due in part to the Jews' almost superstitious veneration of their written Scriptures. During the fifth to sixth centuries of our era, a group of Jewish scholars, now referred to as Masoretes, produced a standard edition of the Old Testament by comparing the existing manuscripts available to them. Minor scribal errors had crept into the manuscripts along the way,¹⁰ and the Masoretes wanted to put into circulation one standard text which would be as close to the originals as possible. When they completed their work to their own satisfaction, this text (later known as the Masoretic text) was the basis of all future

scribal copyings, and the existing, not so accurate manuscripts were withdrawn from circulation. Various checkpoints were recorded in the margins of the new manuscripts, to insure that no letter or word would be deleted or added in future manuscripts. The Hebrew Old Testament was so meticulously preserved through the remaining centuries that when the Dead Sea Scrolls (c. 150 B.C.) were discovered in 1948 and subsequently compared with extant (existing) Hebrew manuscripts of A.D. 900-1000, they were almost identical. Thus was confirmed the dependability of our English Old Testament, which had been based mainly on the Masoretic manuscripts of that tenth century.¹¹ Also, this preservation of the text accounts for the fact that there are relatively few differences between modern versions of the Old Testament, if they are exact translations (not paraphrases).

So although some scribal errors were committed from time to time in the copying process, God has preserved the Old Testament text so that no doctrinal truth is jeopardized by such errors. Archer writes:

Do we have any objective evidence that errors of transmission have not been permitted by God to corrupt and pervert His revelation? Yes, we have, for a careful study of the variants ... of the various earliest manuscripts reveals that none of them affects a single doctrine of Scripture.¹²

As divine Author, God wrote an infallible Book (inspiration); as divine Protector, He has preserved the text down through the ages from doctrinal error (transmission).

E. CANONIZATION

Canonization is the identification of a writing as being one of the divinely inspired

Scriptures. It was not enough that God inspired the *writing* of each book of the Bible. He also gave to His people, in a collective sense, the spiritual perception to *recognize* in each of those books the genuine marks of divine inspiration and authority. With the Holy Spirit's guidance, they knew what spurious writings to reject, as well as what genuine writings to accept. Thus, over the centuries as the Old Testament books were being written, the Old Testament canon (list or group of inspired books) kept growing until it reached its completed form. It was God who foreknew and determined what books would comprise the complete Old Testament. The details of the long human process are veiled in obscurity. But it is clear that God's supernatural hand, working through humans, brought His inspired writings into the canon, while He excluded other writings.

By the time of Christ and the apostles, the Old Testament was a complete set of books that were usually referred to as Scripture(s). (Refer to an exhaustive concordance to see the many New Testament references to this name.)

The total number of books in the *Hebrew* Old Testament is twenty-four. Actually, those twenty-four books are the equivalent of the *English* Bible's thirty-nine, due to various combinations. For example, the Jews regard the twelve books of the minor prophets as one book, which they call "The Twelve." Also, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are each one book, and Ezra is combined with Nehemiah.

By the time of Christ, the Jews had grouped the Old Testament books into three major sections: Law, Prophets, and Writings. This threefold division is probably what

Jesus had in mind when He said that “all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44).¹³
 Study the groupings shown on [Chart 1](#).¹⁴

CHART 1

THE HEBREW OLD TESTAMENT ARRANGEMENT		
LAW (Torah)	PROPHETS (Nebhiim)	WRITINGS (Kethubhim)
1. Genesis ¹⁵	A. <i>Former Prophets</i>	A. <i>Poetical Books</i>
2. Exodus	6. Joshua	14. Psalms
3. Leviticus	7. Judges	15. Proverbs
4. Numbers	8. Samuel	16. Job
5. Deuteronomy	9. Kings	B. <i>Five Rolls (Megilloth)</i>
	B. <i>Latter Prophets</i>	17. Song of Songs
	10. Isaiah	18. Ruth
	11. Jeremiah	19. Lamentations
	12. Ezekiel	20. Ecclesiastes
	13. The Twelve	21. Esther
		C. <i>Historical Books</i>
		22. Daniel
		23. Ezra-Nehemiah
		24. Chronicles

15

15. These book titles originated with the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. In the Hebrew Bible, however, the books were named by the first few significant words appearing in the text. For example, Genesis is called *Bereshith* (“In the Beginning”); Exodus is *Shemoth* (“Names”); Numbers is *Bedmidhbar* (“In the Desert”).

Note the following concerning the books listed on [Chart 1](#):

1. The books of “Former Prophets” are historical in content, and yet are classified

under “Prophets.” The reason for this may be that their authors had the official status of a prophet, or, as F. F. Bruce holds, they reported events “to illustrate the great principles on which the prophets insisted.”¹⁶

2. Each of the five “rolls” was read at an annual Jewish feast or commemoration, in this chronological order: Song of Songs at Passover (first month); Ruth at Feast of Weeks (Harvest) (third month); Lamentations at the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem (fifth month); Ecclesiastes at Tabernacles (seventh month); and Esther at Purim (twelfth month).¹⁷

3. Chronicles appears last in the Hebrew Bible. This is why Jesus used the expression “from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah” (Luke 11:51) to sum up all the martyrs whose blood had been shed in Old

Testament times. Abel was the first and Zechariah was the last martyr appearing in this order of the Hebrew Bible. Read the account of Zechariah's martyrdom in the last book of the Hebrew Bible: 2 Chronicles 24:20-21.

CHART 2

THE PROTESTANT OLD TESTAMENT ARRANGEMENT ¹⁸				
LAW (Pentateuch) 1. Genesis 2. Exodus 3. Leviticus 4. Numbers 5. Deuteronomy	POETRY 18. Job 19. Psalms 20. Proverbs 21. Ecclesiastes 22. Song of Solomon			
HISTORY 6. Joshua 7. Judges 8. Ruth 9. 1 Samuel 10. 2 Samuel 11. 1 Kings 12. 2 Kings 13. 1 Chronicles 14. 2 Chronicles 15. Ezra 16. Nehemiah 17. Esther	PROPHECY <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> A. Major 23. Isaiah 24. Jeremiah 25. Lamentations 26. Ezekiel 27. Daniel </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> B. Minor 28. Hosea 29. Joel 30. Amos 31. Obadiah 32. Jonah 33. Micah 34. Nahum 35. Habakkuk 36. Zephaniah 37. Haggai 38. Zechariah 39. Malachi </td> </tr> </table>		A. Major 23. Isaiah 24. Jeremiah 25. Lamentations 26. Ezekiel 27. Daniel	B. Minor 28. Hosea 29. Joel 30. Amos 31. Obadiah 32. Jonah 33. Micah 34. Nahum 35. Habakkuk 36. Zephaniah 37. Haggai 38. Zechariah 39. Malachi
A. Major 23. Isaiah 24. Jeremiah 25. Lamentations 26. Ezekiel 27. Daniel	B. Minor 28. Hosea 29. Joel 30. Amos 31. Obadiah 32. Jonah 33. Micah 34. Nahum 35. Habakkuk 36. Zephaniah 37. Haggai 38. Zechariah 39. Malachi			

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18. The Catholic Old Testament includes all of these books plus seven apocryphal (noncanonical) writings, as well as apocryphal additions to some of the inspired books.

The books of our Protestant English Old Testament are grouped in a fourfold arrangement, different from the Hebrew threefold format. This fourfold arrangement

is traceable back to the Latin Vulgate version (c. A.D. 383-405), which derived its format from the Greek Septuagint (c. 280-150 B.C.) . [Chart 2](#) shows this familiar breakdown of the list of thirty-nine books.

The following facts apply to the books listed on [Chart 2](#):

1. The first seventeen books chronologically record selected highlights of man's history from creation to the marriage of Abraham (Gen 1-11), and from the birth of the nation of Israel to its return to Canaan after the Babylonian Captivity (Gen 12—Nehemiah).¹⁹ The section called History may be subdivided into these three groups:

a) Period of confederacy among the tribes: Joshua, Judges, Ruth

b) Rise and fall of the monarchy: 1 Samuel through 2 Chronicles

c) Captivity and return: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

2. The books of Law are so designated because of the prominence of God's Law in the experience of Israel during those centuries. (The name *Pentateuch* comes from the Greek, meaning "fivefold vessel." The name *Torah* is the Hebrew word for "Law.")

3. The five books of Poetry are mainly reflections, hymns, dialogues, and maxims, directed to the reader's inner life. They are classified as poetry because this is the prominent literary style of the books.

4. The distinction between major and minor books of prophecy is based only on length. Although Lamentations is not long, it is in the major group because it could be considered as an appendix to Jeremiah.

5. All of the prophets ministered in the period of about 900 to 400 B.C. Most of their

messages were directed to either Israel (Northern Kingdom) or Judah (Southern Kingdom), or to both. More is said about this later in the chapter. Chronologically, Malachi is the last Old Testament voice to speak.

F. TRANSLATIONS

If the Old Testament had never been translated, it could only be read and understood by students of Hebrew. But God intended the Scriptures to be everyman's Book; hence, the many translations (versions) made over the centuries.

The first translation of any portion of the Old Testament was the Greek Septuagint (LXX).²⁰ It was made for the benefit of Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria, who could not read Hebrew. The Pentateuch was translated around 280 B.C. Before the coming of Christ, the entire Testament was

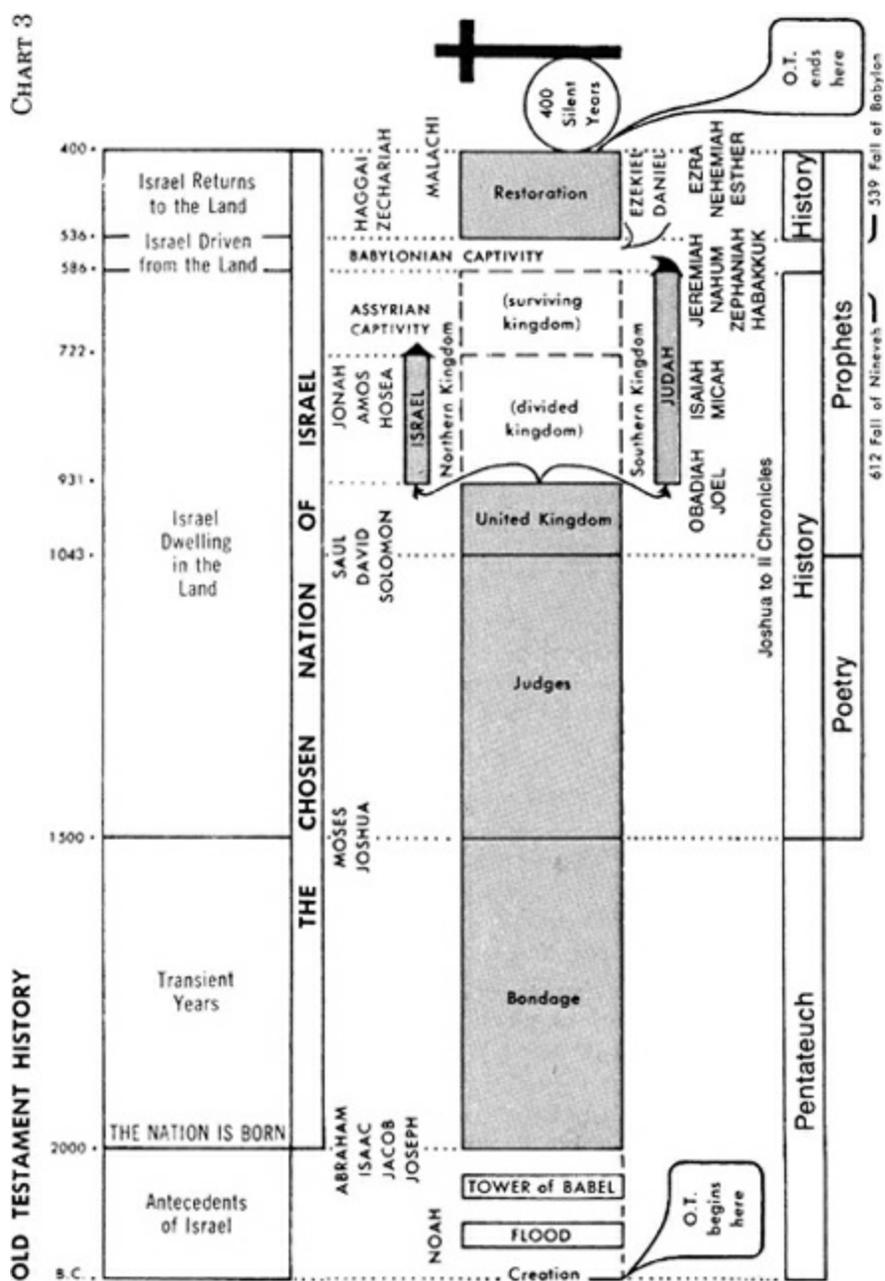
translated, and it became the Scriptures of many people throughout the Mediterranean world. Such timing was according to divine schedule. Greek was the universal language at that time, and because the New Testament was soon to be written in Greek, God was using this Greek Old Testament version to prepare the way for the New Testament. It must have been a very dependable translation, for out of thirty-seven Old Testament quotations credited to Jesus in the gospels, thirty-three are from this Septuagint version.

During the early centuries of the Christian Church, many translations of the Bible appeared as the natural outcome of Christianity's expansion to foreign lands. The Latin Vulgate (A.D. 383-405), the most prominent, was the official Bible of Christendom on the Continent for a thousand years.

The Reformation brought a revival of translation activity, spurred on by renewed interest in Hebrew and Greek Bible manuscripts, and by the recent invention of the printing press. These were the years when the famous early English versions were appearing, such as Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, Great Bible, Bishops, King James.

Then came the modern missions era of translation activity, beginning around 1800. It is aptly called *modern* because the era has not yet ended. In fact, one of the brightest aspects of the Christian witness today is the unprecedented production of new Bible translations. Portions of Scripture are reaching people of many languages and cultures in the remotest parts of the world. And in America, new English versions and paraphrases, written in contemporary style, are geared to such needy mission fields as homes without a church, and campuses with

drifting youth. For the serious Bible student today who wants to analyze a Bible text which is virtually the same as the originals minus the translation factor, various excellent versions are available, such as the *American Standard Version* (ASV of 1901), the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB of 1971), and the *New International Version* (NIV of 1978).



Thus, the Bible, with its Old Testament, has come a long way—from *God to us*. And the most thrilling part of it is that, not counting the translation difference, “we hold in our hands to-day a Bible which differs in no substantial particular from the originals

of the various books as they came from the hands of their authors.”²¹

III. THE SETTING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. HISTORICAL SETTING

All the books of the Old Testament are intimately involved in a historical strand that begins with the creation in Genesis 1 and ends with the last prophecy of Malachi (c. 430 B.C.). The first eleven chapters of Genesis report highlights of the beginnings of man and the world. At Genesis 12, the nation of Israel is divinely born at the call of Abraham; and for the remainder of the Old Testament, the nation or individual Israelites are in view.

Chart 3 shows how the different books of the Old Testament are related to this historical strand. Study the chart carefully. You will want to refer to it often as you

proceed in your survey study from book to book.

Use **Chart 3** to answer the following questions:

1. About when was Israel founded? What four patriarchs are identified with its earliest years?

2. The word *bondage* identifies the first crucial experience of Israel, which took place in Egypt. What words describe the next two periods? 1500-1043 B.C.; 1043-931 B.C.

3. What two men did God use to read Israel from bondage in Egypt to their homeland of Canaan?

4. The Jews were ruled by judges during the first few centuries in Canaan. Then the Jews demanded to have kings to be like their idolatrous neighbors, wholly independent of God. God let them have their

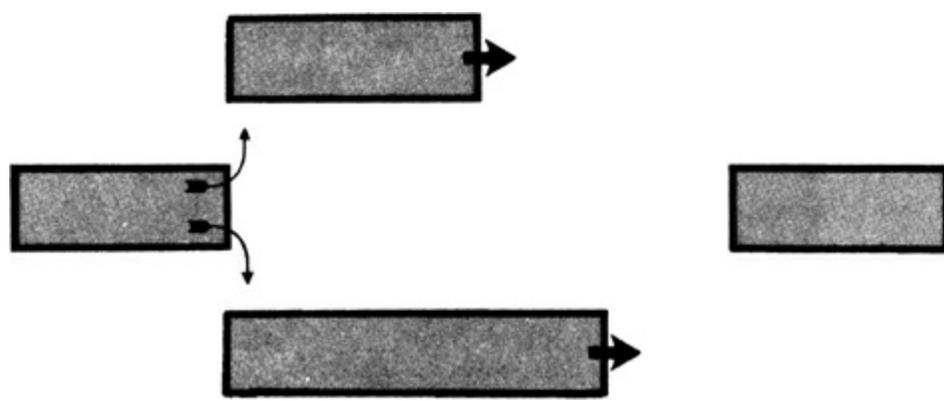
own way, but He warned them of future troubles because of such inroads of idolatry. Read 1 Samuel 8. Who were the first three kings of the united kingdom?

5. What are the names of the two kingdoms that resulted from the split of the united kingdom in 931 B.C.? [22](#)

6. At what dates did each of the two kingdoms go into captivity?

7. When did the captive Jews begin returning to their homeland of Canaan?

8. Without looking at the chart, see how much you can recall of the highlights of Israel's history in Old Testament times. As memory aid, visualize the four shaded blocks of the following chart.



It is not an overstatement to say that the above diagram of four blocks represents the heart of Old Testament history. This is why it is so important to thoroughly learn the outlines shown on [Chart 3](#).

9. Now you are ready to see how the books of the Old Testament contribute to this setting. Review the list of books that was discussed earlier, in this fourfold arrangement: Law (or Pentateuch), history, poetry, prophecy. Note at the bottom of [Chart 3](#) where these four groups appear. What is the time span of the five books of the Pentateuch? Read Genesis 50:26 and Deuteronomy 34:5. What deaths are recorded here? Locate the two names on the

chart.

10. The history books from Joshua to 2 Chronicles cover what periods of Israel's history? The last three history books (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther) are of what time?

11. Over what span of years were the books of poetry written? Note that David and Solomon, who wrote most of the biblical poems, lived during the middle of this period.

12. The names of the prophets appear on the chart approximately when and where they ministered. Who were prophets mainly to the Northern Kingdom? Who prophesied to Judah? Who was the first writing prophet? Who were the two prophets of the captivity period? What three prophets ministered during the closing years of the Old Testament?

13. Account for the designation "400

Silent Years” on the chart. Did God forget about Israel after He inspired Malachi to write the last book? Read the last chapter of the Old Testament for the answer.

Whenever you are studying in an Old Testament book, get in the habit of mentally locating it in this historical scheme of [Chart 3](#).

B. GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Most of the Old Testament is action, and action involves places. This is why geography is a key ingredient of Old Testament setting.

Someone has said, “To visualize is to empathize.” If you want to help yourself *feel* the action of ancient Bible history, visualize where it is taking place as you read the Bible text. This should be one of the strongest motivations for you to learn the geography of the Old Testament.

One basic Old Testament map and two related maps will be studied in this chapter. These maps show the large areas of setting. Other more detailed maps appear at appropriate places throughout the book. It is important to have a good grasp of the large, overall geographical setting before zeroing in on the details of the smaller areas.

1. Three major regions of Old Testament geography. The accompanying [Map A](#) shows where virtually all Old Testament history took place.

Observe the following on the map:

1. There are three major regions (encircled). The middle region is Canaan, the homeland of Israel. It is strategically located at the crossroads of international traffic. For example, the land route from Egypt in the west to Babylon in the east followed the Fertile Crescent through

Canaan because the desert lands of Arabia were impassable.²³

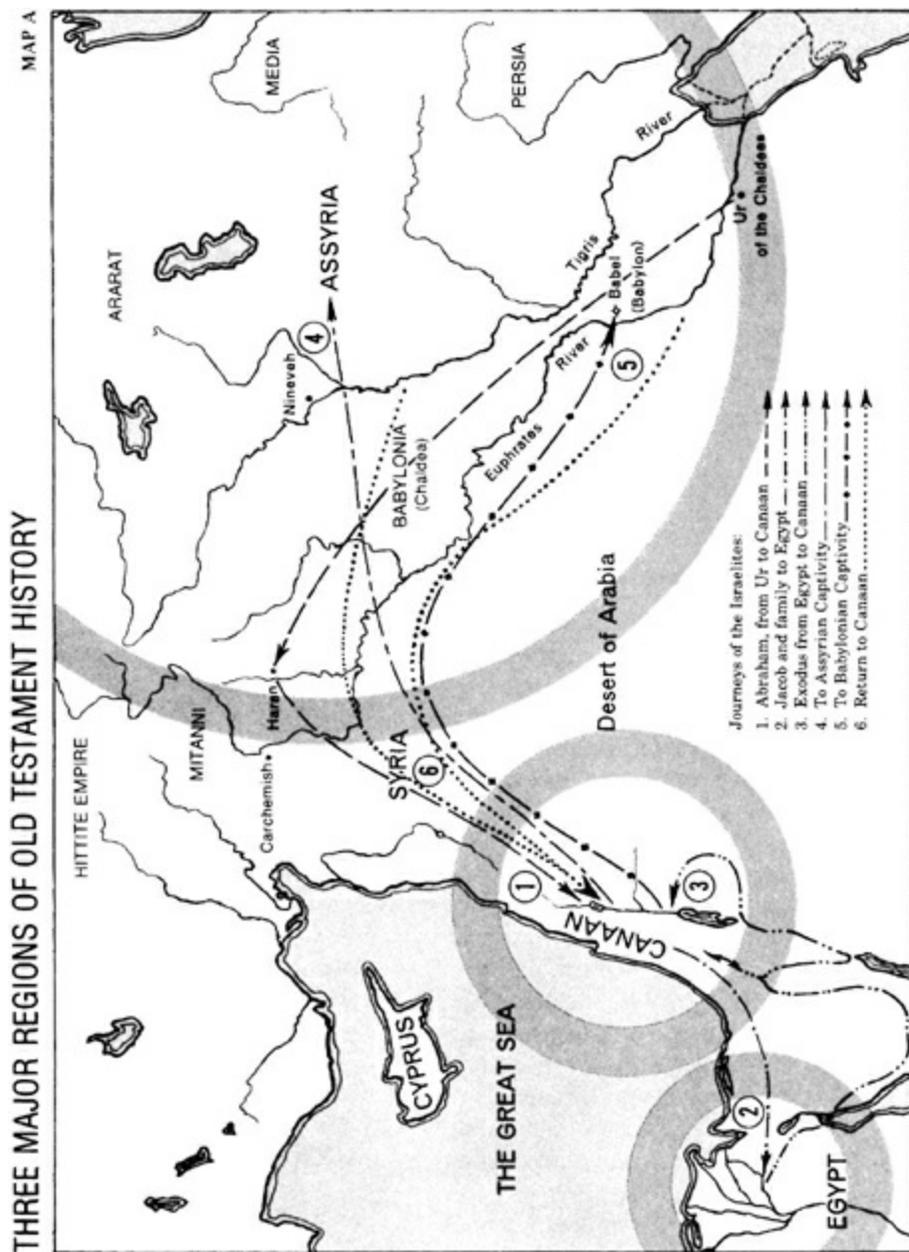
2. To the north and east of Canaan are the lands of Syria, Assyria, and Babylonia. All three nations were Israel's strongest and bitterest enemies at some time or other.

3. The ancient kingdom of Egypt was Israel's foe in the southwest. A quick glance at an exhaustive concordance shows that the name Egypt appears hundreds of times throughout the Bible. This indicates the important part the nation played in Bible history.

4. A number of small kingdoms (e.g., Edom, south of the Dead Sea), which were a constant threat to Israel's peace, were located around the southern and eastern borders of Canaan. These are not shown on this map.

5. There were six major journeys of the

people of Israel in Old Testament history. They marked turning points in the experience of God's chosen nation. Follow the journeys on the map, using the encircled numbers:



① The first journey of the first Israelite

family, Abraham's. From Ur of Chaldea to Canaan (c. 2000 B.C.). Read Genesis 11:27—12:9.

- ② Migration of Jacob and his relatives from Canaan to Egypt, to join Joseph (1875 B.C.). Read Genesis 37:28; 46:1-34.
- ③ Exodus of over two million Israelites from the bondage of Egypt to the promised land of Canaan (1445 B.C.). Read Exodus 12:40-41; Joshua 1:1-9; Galatians 3:17.
- ④ The Northern Kingdom of Israel carried away into exile to Assyria (722 B.C.). Read 2 Kings 18:9-12.
- ⑤ The Southern Kingdom of Judah taken captive to Babylon (586 B.C.). Read 2 Kings 25:1-12.
- ⑥ Two separate, large groups of Israelites return from Babylon to their homeland, led by Zerubbabel (536 B.C.) and Ezra (458 B.C.). Read Ezra 1-2; 7:1-10; 8:1-21.

2. *Physical features of Palestine.*²⁴ The best way to recall the locations of Old Testament cities is to picture the physical features of the land where they were started. Other values of learning this physical geography are understanding the strategy of battles and recognizing why journeys followed certain routes.

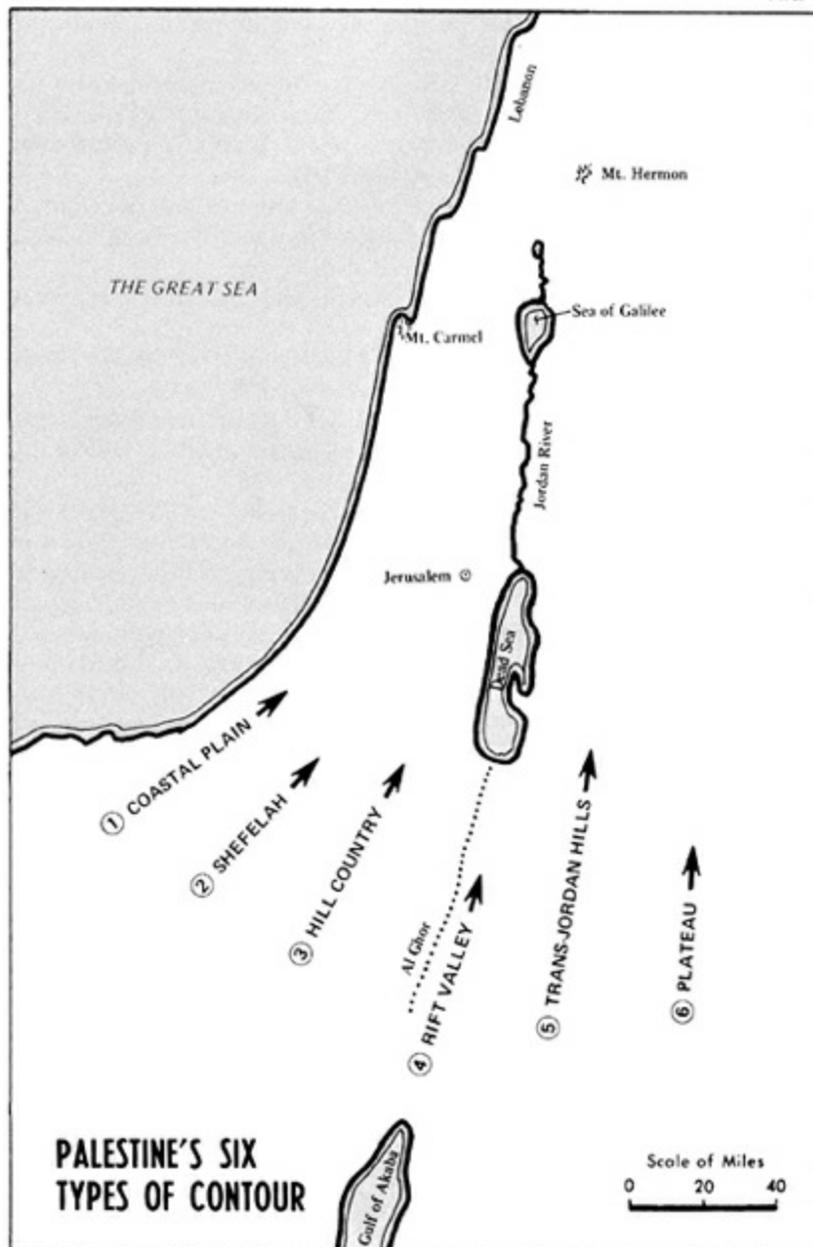
Study the general features of Palestine as shown on [Map B](#). The natural contours of the land run north-south. As you move from west to east on the map, you will observe six major types of contour.

Observe the following about each of these:

- ① *Coastal Plain.* This follows the coast up to the promontory of Mount Carmel. Relatively few cities were located here during Old Testament times, partly because of the absence of navigable

harbors.

- ② *Shefelah (also called Lowlands)*. Here the terrain begins to ascend from the low coastal plain. Many cities sprang up here, due in part to the semifertile soil.
- ③ *Hill Country (also called Cis-Jordan Hills)*. Follow on the map the prominent north-south ridge which bisects these hills, especially in the southern half of the country. Many cities were built along this ridge, especially because of the natural fortifications. Jerusalem is on the ridge, just west of the northern tip of the Dead Sea. The one major break in this ridge is at the Plain of Esdraelon, just southwest of the Sea of Galilee.



- ④ *Rift Valley.* This is the most consistent feature of the north-south contour. Its average width is about ten miles. For the entire length of Palestine, the depression is below the level of the Great Sea (Mediterranean). Follow this depression from north to south on [Map B](#) as you

read the descriptions given below.

Valley west of Mount Hermon. The Jordan River originates here, north of the Sea of Galilee. Between the Lebanon and Hermon ranges, the rift valley is very prominent.

Lake Chinnereth (New Testament name: Sea of Galilee). The sea is 685 feet below the level of the Great Sea. This beautiful area was not inhabited as heavily as in New Testament times.

Jordan River. The river is entirely below sea level, from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. The hot and humid climate of this valley discouraged the building of cities. Jericho was an exception.

Salt Sea (Dead Sea). This is 1,286 feet below sea level. What main river flows into it? The sea has no outlet,

hence its dense mineral content. A few cities were located on its shores. See [Maps E](#) and [K](#).

Al Ghor (Araba). A hot, dry valley. No cities here.

Gulf of Aqaba. Solomon built a fleet of ships at the north end of this gulf (1 Kings 9:26).

- ⑤ *Trans-Jordan Hills*. The rugged hills rise sharply from the low rift valley to the high plateau. Few cities located here.
- ⑥ *Plateau*. From the fertile tableland of the north to the semidesert south, this plateau was the scene of no little Old Testament history. Its rolling land was used mostly for grazing livestock. See [Maps E](#) and [G](#) for the location of cities, such as Ramothgilead and Damascus.

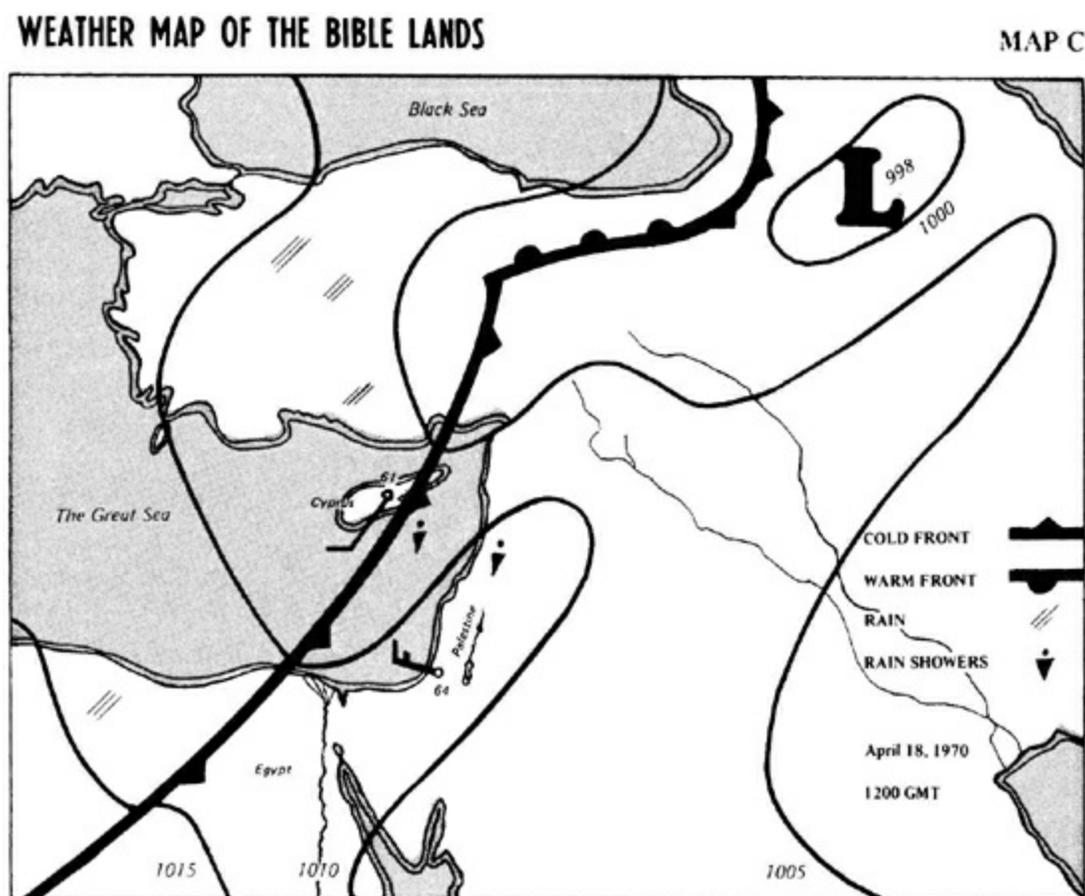
As you proceed with your survey of the Old Testament, visualize the topography

which you have just studied.

3. *Climate of Palestine.* Palestine is of the same latitudes as southern United States. Its climate is controlled generally by the prevailing westerly winds from the Mediterranean Sea. However, because of the diversity of topography, the climate varies considerably from place to place. Overall, there are two seasons: warm, dry summers, and cool, wet winters. The rainy season lasts from November to March. Average temperature ranges for Jerusalem, representing recent records, are forty-one to fifty-four degrees (Fahrenheit) in January and sixty-five to eighty-five degrees in August. The moderating effect is caused by the more constant temperatures of the Mediterranean Sea.

In the regions around the Sea of Galilee, the climate is more moderate and pleasant

than around Jerusalem. In Old Testament times, however, more people inhabited the warmer regions. Hot desert winds (*sirocco*) plague the plateau lands east of the Jordan. This is one of the main reasons for sparse population there in biblical times.²⁵



Climate is distinguished from weather in that the former is the prevailing atmospheric condition over a period of time, whereas weather is the condition at a particular time.

The accompanying weather map ([Map C](#)) of the Bible lands shows the weather pattern prognosticated for noon of April 18, 1970. The cold front over Cyprus is moving from west to east, and is about two hundred miles west of the coast of Palestine. When it has passed through Palestine, the sixty-four-degree temperature (Fahrenheit) at the Gaza Strip will not lower too much, because the front is not very strong, as shown by the Cyprus reading behind the front. Much of the rainfall of Palestine during the winter season is induced by oncoming fronts similar to the one shown here.

C. LEADING POWERS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WORLD

Throughout their career in Old Testament times, the Israelites were well aware of the universal truth that man does not live in isolation. We saw in earlier geographical studies that Palestine was located at the hub

of the world powers: Egypt to the southwest; and Syria, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia to the north and east. For the most part, this central location meant conflict, for each foreign nation coveted the strategic military position which Palestine offered, not to mention the economic booty. But such conflict was not outside divine providence, for God was sovereignly guiding even the foreign nations to fulfill His purposes with His chosen people. For example, when Israel persisted in rejecting God as Lord, He sent the Babylonian invaders into the land to take the people into captivity. It was a military encounter, but basically it was divine judgment.

Because the Old Testament has so much to say about Israel's relations with foreign powers, it is important at the outset of your studies to get an overview of each nation's history during Old Testament times, for

whatever bearing this had on Israel's experience. The discussion which follows stresses highlights rather than details of those histories. At a later time you should refer to comprehensive outside sources to fill in the details. Our present purpose is of a panoramic scope, so that we do not overlook the forest when viewing the individual trees.

First, review [Map A](#) "Three Major Regions of Old Testament History." Note especially the locations of Egypt, Syria, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia. These were the five most powerful nations which played such vital roles in Israel's history.²⁶ When you study history, always visualize the geography involved.

ASSYRIA

BABYLONIA

PERSIA

SYRIA

ISRAEL

EGYPT

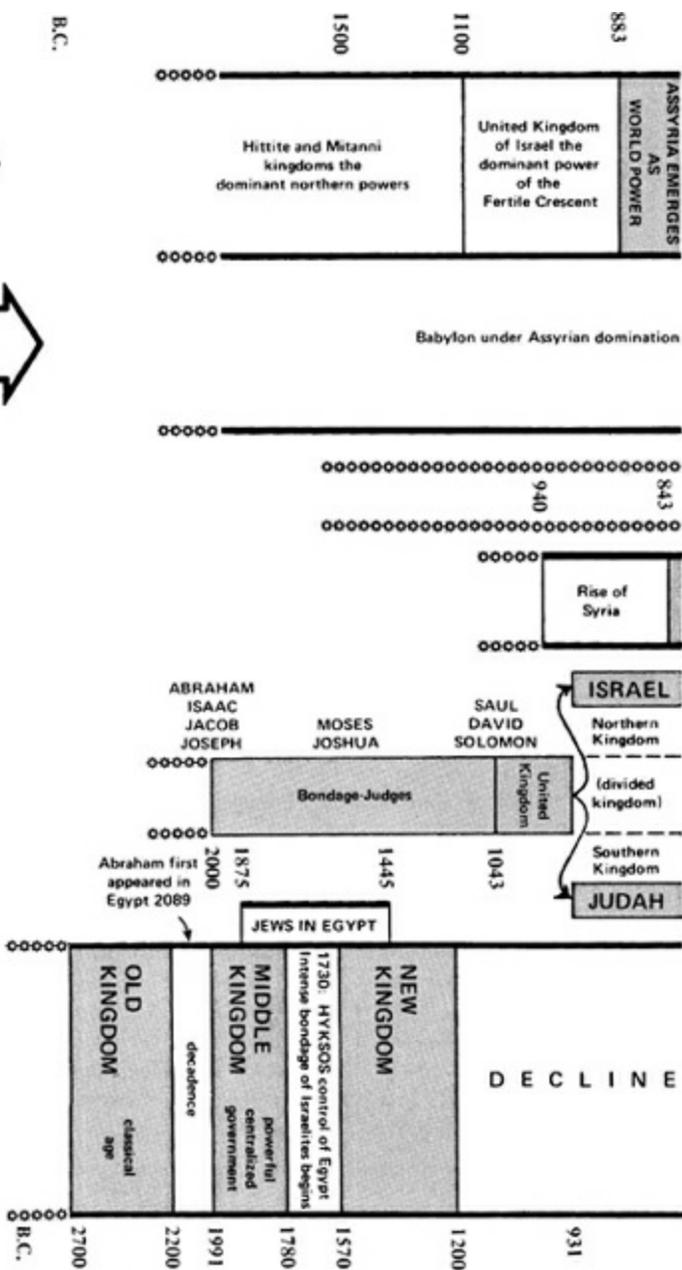
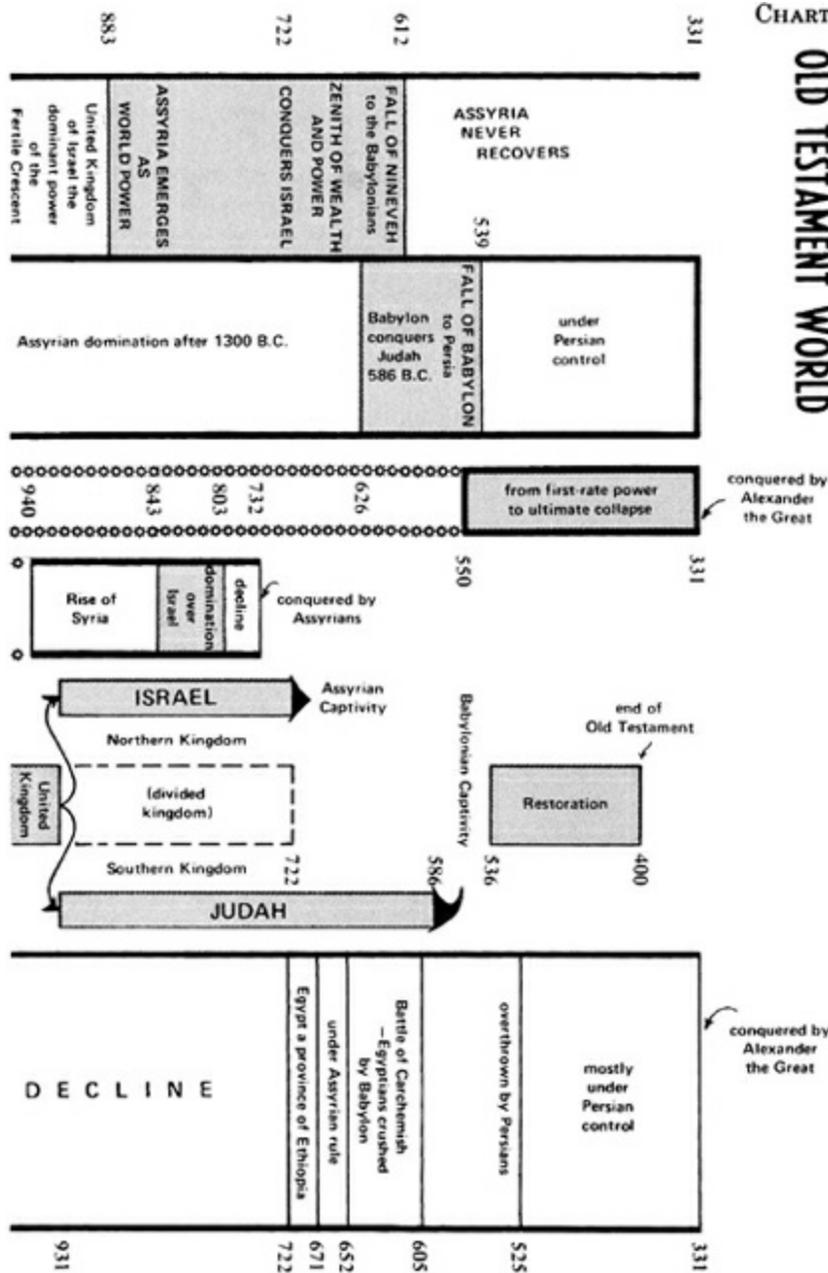


CHART 4

LEADING POWERS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WORLD



Now begin to acquaint yourself with [Chart 4](#), which shows the history of each of the leading Gentile powers in the Old Testament world. First, scan the chart to see its general organization, without pausing over any of the details. Israel's history shown in the middle of the chart is an excerpt of [Chart 3](#),

which you studied carefully earlier in the chapter. The major value of superimposing all the histories on one chart is that the total political picture of any particular year or era of the Old Testament world may be viewed simultaneously. To illustrate, note that when the united kingdom split into the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah (931 B.C.), Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt were not dominant world powers.

Follow the study suggestions given below as you learn the significant facts of [Chart 4](#).

1. The shaded block areas of the five foreign nations show the periods when those nations were at the height of their power and influence.²⁷ Note how the ascendancy moved from Assyria to Babylonia to Persia.

2. Note the three bright kingdom eras of Egypt between 2700 and 1200 B.C. How would you describe the two intervening

periods? Observe when it was that Abraham first visited Egypt (read Gen 12:10—13:4). For how many years were the Jews in Egypt? (Cf. Exod 12:40-41; Gen 15:13; Acts 7:6; Gal 3:17.)²⁸ When did their intense bondage begin?

3. How would you describe the political status of Egypt from 1200 to 331 B.C.? How many times does the chart show Egypt to be subject to another nation? (Read 2 Kings 25:22-26.) According to this passage, some Jews fled to Egypt soon after the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem. According to [Chart 4](#), to whom was Egypt subject at this time?

4. Study the section on Assyria. About when did the nation originate? When did it emerge as the reigning world power? What nearby kingdoms were strong prior to that?²⁹ Note that it was during Solomon's

reign that the united kingdom extended Israel's influence the farthest.

5. When did Assyria conquer the Northern Kingdom of Israel? When did it reach its zenith of wealth and power? How long after Israel was conquered did Assyria fall to the Babylonians?

6. Did Babylon arise as an independent nation about the time of Assyria? What was the relationship between the two from 1300 to 626 B.C.? The Chaldean (Babylonian) dynasty began in 626 B.C. with King Nabopolassar. The empire at this time is usually referred to as the Neo-Babylonian Empire, to distinguish it from the Old Babylonian Empire of about a thousand years earlier. What key Bible event happened in 586 B.C.? How soon after that was Babylon conquered by the Persians?

7. Around 1000 B.C., immigrants from

various lands were beginning to merge with the local inhabitants of the land of Persia to form what was to be a first-rate empire. Cyrus the Great began his reign in 550 B.C. How long after that was Persia conquered by Alexander the Great?³⁰

8. The Jews in Babylonian captivity were granted permission to return to Canaan during the ascendancy of what empire? In this connection, read Ezra 1:1-4.

9. What were the three periods of Syria's history, as shown on the chart? When were the Syrians conquered by the Assyrians? How soon after that did the Assyrians take Israel captive?

10. One of the important things to observe on the chart is that during the years when Israel was ruled by kings (1043-586 B.C.), the worst troubles for the Jews came by the hands of foreign powers: Syria, Assyria, and

Babylonia. Recall from your earlier reading of 1 Samuel 8 that the Israelites, in demanding kingly rule against God's will, wanted to be like their neighbors: "No, but there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Sam 8:19-20). Little did they know then what devastating battles would ultimately be fought when their God, whose lordship they rejected, would grant victory to their enemies!

D. EVERYDAY LIFE IN CANAAN DURING OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

The Old Testament was written by Orientals about Orientals. People of Western cultures need to keep this in mind to better appreciate the Bible stories and testimonies coming out of those ancient times. Fortunately the foundational doctrines which are taught in that Oriental setting are

timeless and universal, such as man's sinfulness and God's holiness. So the Bible is not a closed book to those not acquainted with the everyday life of the people of Israel. But it can be sharper and clearer if that setting is at least mentally visualized and felt.

Bible dictionaries and commentaries are among the best sources for learning the local settings of the Old Testament text. Also, there are books which specifically discuss this subject, such as E. W. Heaton, *Everyday Life in Old Testament Times*; H. F. Saggs, *Everyday Life in Babylonia and Assyria*; and Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*.³¹ It is beyond the scope of this introductory chapter to describe in detail the typical everyday life in Canaan during Old Testament times. The following list is included, however, to suggest a thumbnail sketch of such a setting.³² As you read the

list, use a little imagination and let a picture gradually emerge which will be etched upon your memory for later studies in the Old Testament. The most fruitful outcome of this short exercise may not be so much the learning of new facts as becoming alert to the Oriental flavor of the Old Testament.

An Oriental town or city—walls, gates, towers, narrow streets, and busy marketplaces—location of a city preferably on an elevated site, such as Jerusalem on Mount Zion—fields and grazing plots outside the city limits

Water supply—wells, cisterns, streams, and reservoirs

*Houses*³³—average size of houses of the common people: one room³⁴—roofs constructed of beams overlaid with reeds, bushes, and grass—earthen floors; mud-brick walls—few windows on the

street side—fireplace on the floor in the middle of the room—furnishings: mats and cushions, storage chest, lampstand, handmill for grinding grain, cooking utensils, goatskin bottles, broom

Domestic animals—dogs, donkeys, mules, horses, camels, sheep, goats

Foods—barley and wheat bread, oil, buttermilk, cheese, fruits (olives, figs, grapes, raisins, pomegranates), vegetables, grain, honey; eggs, meat, poultry, and fish were eaten, but not regularly; fish was a major food in the cities around the Sea of Galilee; generally, the people ate two meals a day: breakfast, and late dinner (about 5 p.m.)

Dress—both men and women: inner garment (tunic); girdle for the tunic; outer garment (mantle) used as shelter from

wind, rain, cold, heat, and as a blanket at night; turban (head); sandals—women only: longer tunics and larger mantles, veil (entirely covering the head in public), elaborate ornamentations (earrings, bracelets)

Education—children educated mainly by their parents: Hebrew religion and Scripture, reading and writing, practical skills—advanced training for leaders: such as in schools of the prophets, and by tutors

Worship—worship by the family in each home—called worship meetings in public areas³⁵—temple worship in Jerusalem: regular participation by residents of the vicinity; participation at the annual religious feasts by Israelites from far and near

Trades and professions—agriculture (grain,

grapes, olives, figs), sheep-raising, fishing, hunting, pottery, carpentry, masonry, metal work, tentmaking, merchants, physicians

Women's tasks—grinding grain, weaving, making clothes, washing, care of flocks, carrying water, cooking, housecleaning, rearing and educating the children—children of the home, especially girls, helped in these daily chores

Travel—usually in groups, for the sake of safety—mode: most often by animals, sometimes by foot—meals: lunch brought along, as the main source—overnight lodging: at homes, sometimes inns

The following two paragraphs illustrate how one writer has used his imagination, based on known facts, to describe the everyday life of the average Israelite. Do the

same in your own thinking as you study the stories of the Old Testament.

Tucked away along the winding streets of the town of Ramah, five miles north of Jerusalem, you will find the tiny one-roomed dwelling where Benaiah lives with his family. He lives much the same sort of life as the people round about him, never far from starvation level, cooped up in the city through the-cold rainy months of winter and longing for the springtime when he can get out into the fields and work his ground.

.....

For beds the family shared two straw mats which were laid on the bare, earthen floor; for blankets they used the cloaks which were their normal outdoor garb. The little oil lamp burned dimly on a ledge in the corner.

It was never allowed to go out except when the fire was alight in the daytime. It was the only box of matches they had! However, it gave very little light and so once you had settled down for the night it was impossible to get up without waking the whole household (farmyard and all!) and a caller late at night was never welcome.³⁶

E. THE HEAVEN-EARTH SETTING

As much as the Old Testament concerns people and nations, with all of their frailties and sins, it is unique along with the New Testament in that the dimension of miracle controls its story. In its pages, heaven touches earth, God comes down and works through man. This heaven-earth setting pervades the entire book. He who wants to know what God is communicating in the temporal, local setting must accept and

believe the supernatural dimension, for the message is meaningless without it. More will be said about this below, as we think about how to approach the Old Testament and what to look for in our study of its pages.

IV. HOW TO APPROACH THE OLD TESTAMENT

Without the right approach and clear guideposts, it is easy to get lost when studying the myriads of historical facts of the Old Testament. Also, it is easy to become discouraged and confused over difficult or obscure portions of the text. But these pitfalls can be avoided in various ways. One way is to keep in mind *the key revealed truths* which underlie all the details of the whole Old Testament story. You are on firm ground when you recognize these truths as you study a Bible passage. Some of the main ones are discussed below.³⁷

A. GOD ALWAYS ACTS IN CONFORMITY TO HIS NATURE

One of the main purposes of the Old Testament is to reveal *who* God is. He is eternal Spirit, alive and personal, “the first cause, Himself uncaused.”³⁸ He is holy, righteous, just, loving, merciful, gracious, true, omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-12); omniscient (Psalm 147:5); omnipotent (Job 42:2; Jer 32:17); and immutable (unchangeable, Mai 3:6). All of these divine attributes are absolutely perfect and eternally concurrent. When He sends awful judgment for sin, because He is a holy God, He does not thereby nullify His grace. For God never acts contrary to His *manifold* nature. In our human limitations we may not always understand His workings, and may even ask such questions as Why did a loving God permit the ravages of war in Old Testament times? By faith we must see God as the never changing One, who is holy but

always acts in love, and who is loving but never violates His holiness. There is absolutely no alternative to this approach.

B. ALL HISTORY IS IN GOD'S SOVEREIGN CONTROL

There are no accidents in world history. God directs or permits the course of events in a person's or nation's career according to His sovereign and perfect will. For example, He granted Israel's evil demand for kingly rule, and in righteous judgment He sent the Babylonian conqueror. In both diverse actions He was sovereign, and in both He revealed His own nature as well as man's.

Whenever you have unanswered questions about Old Testament history (such as Why?), rest confidently in the truth that God is Lord of all history, in whose will every event fulfills His perfect purposes.

C. ISRAEL WAS GOD'S DIVINELY CALLED AND FAVORED NATION

God called Abraham to be the father of the nation of Israel, and then God made the nation (Gen 12:1-2). Humanly speaking, it was not an act of favoritism in the sense that out of many existing nations God picked one of intrinsic superiority to be His exclusive favorite (read Deut 10:14-17). And yet it is true that He sovereignly chose from the world's population one man, Abraham, to be the nation's father. If you are disturbed about why God would elect one nation to be the object of special blessing (Gen 12:2), keep in mind that sovereign election also applies to His saving of individuals (Eph 1:4-5). Even though you cannot fully comprehend it, be assured that God, in the exercise of His rightful sovereignty over the entire universe, never violates His attribute of justice in the expression of His love.³⁹

D. GOD WANTED TO USE ISRAEL AS HIS CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION TO THE REST OF THE WORLD

God has always used people to communicate to others the message of salvation. In New Testament times, He started with a nucleus of believers in Jerusalem, to whom Christ gave the commission, "You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The same principle of believer reaching out to unbelievers applies today. Back in Old Testament times, God wanted Israel to enjoy the fullest blessings of fellowship with Him in this life, and thus be a living witness of this to the nations around them. Israel, for the most part, failed God's purposes during the fifteen hundred years of its Old Testament career, and that is one reason why relatively few stories of evangelistic outreach to foreign nations appear in the Bible text. God did not overlook these foreign nations, but neither

was He able to use His chosen nation, Israel, to the extent that He had desired.⁴⁰

E. REDEMPTION IS THE KEY SUBJECT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT REVELATION

There are other vital ingredients in the story of the Old Testament, such as the creation account (cosmogony). But from the time of Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve sinned and broke fellowship with God, to the last words of Malachi, the message centered on how sinful man can be redeemed and reconciled to God.⁴¹ Erich Sauer says this about the Old Testament: “Thus the whole pre-Christian history of salvation is a guiding of mankind to the Redeemer of the world. The people of Israel were prepared in advance by historical revelation; the peoples of the world by the happenings of politics and civilization.”⁴²

The Old Testament makes it very clear

that God seeks to save all lost sinners, not only Israelites. Also, because their spiritual deliverance is infinitely more important than any physical help, He uses even the severest of measures, such as war and captivity, to bring them to conviction of sin, repentance, and faith.

Another clear redemptive truth in the Old Testament is that man is saved by faith, not works. Abraham was an example (read Gen 15:6; Rom 4:1-3). If we find that a large portion of the Old Testament text is about the Israelites' attempts to appear religious, we may conclude that God wants us to see the futility of depending on works for salvation.

Because redemption is the key subject of the Old Testament, we may expect that each of the thirty-nine books contributes measurably to this theme. And we may also

expect that at times the biblical writers omitted details which had no direct relation to that theme. The Holy Spirit was responsible for such selectivity in inspiration.

F. THE OLD TESTAMENT CONSTANTLY POINTS FORWARD TO THE COMING SAVIOUR AND KING, WHO IS JESUS CHRIST

If redemption is the key subject of the Old Testament, and if Christ (the “anointed One,” the Messiah) is the Redeemer of the world, then we may expect to find many Old Testament passages pointing to Christ. These may prophesy solely of a glorious future for Israel as a nation under Christ’s rule, or they may point to the blessings of salvation to all who believe in the coming Saviour. Read Isaiah 53, which is a classic Messianic prophecy of Christ’s substitutionary death for sinners. It should be pointed out that Old Testament references to the person and

work of Christ often appear in the form of type and symbol (e.g., the Levitical offerings), not necessarily in direct predictive language.

Christ was literally, according to the flesh, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the promised seed, the Heir to David's throne (Matt 1:1; Luke 1:32; Gal 3:16; Isa 9:7; Jer 23:5). G. T. Manley writes of Jesus:

He is the second Adam, and there is not a name in the long line of His genealogy, nor any event in the Old Testament story of redemption which does not illuminate in greater or lesser degree His wonderful Person and work.⁴³

Norman Geisler has written very effectively about Christ as the theme of the Old Testament. He says:

Viewing the Old Testament Christocentrically is not an interpretive (hermeneutical) option; for the Christian it is a divine imperative. On five different occasions Jesus claimed to be the theme of the entire Old Testament: (1) Matthew 5:17; (2) Luke 24:27; (3) Luke 24:44; (4) John 5:39; (5) Hebrews 10:7.⁴⁴

Geisler sees in these verses four different Christocentric ways to view the Old Testament. These are shown on [Chart 5](#), adapted from his book.⁴⁵

Read the five New Testament passages as you study this chart, and you will see why the Old Testament must be studied with this Christocentric perspective.

FOUR CHRISTOCENTRIC VIEWS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT		
Christ's own words	Christ the Fulfiller of	Christ Viewed as
Luke 24:27,44	Messianic Prophecy	Messiah and King
Hebrews 10:7	Levitical Priesthood	Priest and Sacrifice
Matthew 5:17	Moral Precepts	Prophet and Teacher
John 5:39	Salvation Promises	Saviour and Lord

G. MIRACLES IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES WERE ONE OF GOD'S WAYS TO REVEAL HIMSELF

Jesus performed miracles during His earthly ministry to vindicate His claim to being the Christ, the Son of God, with the ultimate purpose that people might be saved through faith in Him (read John 20:30-31). In pre-Christian times also, the Lord revealed Himself through miracles, that men might turn their hearts to Him. Since the creation of man, a common purpose of all biblical miracles has been to manifest the nature of the Lord of heaven as He has been moving among people on earth. Any reader of the Bible who disbelieves miracles is refusing to listen to God's voice. This is where most Old Testament critics commit

intellectual and spiritual suicide.

H. THERE IS A PROGRESSION OF REVELATION IN THE BIBLE

The most obvious test of progression in the Bible is to compare the first book (Genesis) and the last (Revelation). Genesis records origins and God's first words to man. Revelation prophesies end times, and shows Christ enthroned forever as King of kings and Lord of lords. What happened in the intervening years, particularly up to the close of the first century A.D., is the progressing story of how God was revealing more and more of Himself and His redemptive work to men.

One progression of this revelation may be cited.⁴⁶ In the Garden of Eden, God first showed His authority over Satan and announced the coming of Christ, as the seed of the woman Eve, who would ultimately

deal Satan the deathblow (“He shall bruise you on the head,” Gen 3:15); with Noah, He established a covenant guaranteeing protection of the earth from any future universal flood (Gen 9:9-17); to Abraham, He promised blessing for the new nation (Israel) which He would make (Gen 12:2-3); through Moses, He instructed His people how to live pleasing to Him (Exod 20:1-17); through the prophets, He foretold in detail Christ’s birth and ministry (e.g., Isa 9:6); through John the Baptist, He announced the inauguration of Christ’s public ministry (John 1:6-36); to the apostles and New Testament writers, He revealed the full and deep truths of the new life in Christ (e.g., Eph 1-3); and final visions, which He gave to John at Patmos, were of Satan cast into the lake of fire and brimstone forever (Rev 20:10), and of Christ on the throne in the New Jerusalem, saying, “It is done” (Rev

21:6).

Earlier in this chapter we studied the progression of history unfolded in the drama of the Old Testament (e.g., [Chart 3](#)). Intimately involved in this historical progression were the ever enlarging and deepening revelations which God gave to man (doctrinal progression). When we study the Old Testament we must keep this in mind, otherwise we might force upon an early book a doctrine which is not there, or fail to see in a later book a truth that is really there. This does not mean, however, that in studying the Old Testament we should not interpret it in the light of events which took place hundreds of years later, during New Testament times. We who have been enlightened with the truth of the New Testament should always be looking for the anticipation of it in the Old.⁴⁷ This is how Jesus and the New Testament writers

applied the Old.

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT IS GOD'S VOICE TO US TODAY, ANCIENT AS THE BOOK IS

If we discard a message only because it is ancient, we would reject the New Testament as well. But God's Book—both Old and New Testaments—is timeless in its application. That is why the apostle Paul, writing to his friend Timothy about their ancient Bible, asserted dogmatically that “all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). In the same context, Paul had reminded Timothy that it was the sacred writings which had given Timothy “the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). So it is correct to say that all spiritual lessons derived from passages in the Old Testament

have something to say, directly or indirectly, about these two timeless, vital life truths: *way to* God, or *walk with* God. The Old Testament is that contemporary. And so we must open our hearts to its message. In the words of Edward Young,

In approaching the Bible ... we need to remember that it is sacred ground. We must approach it with humble hearts, ready to hear what the Lord God says. The kaleidoscopic history of negative criticism is but further evidence that unless we do approach the Bible in a receptive attitude, we shall fail to understand it. Nor need we be ashamed to acknowledge that the words of Scripture are of God.... The attempt to explain them as anything less than Divine is one of the greatest failures that has ever appeared in the history of human thought.⁴⁸

SOME REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the important reasons for studying the Old Testament?
2. In what ways is the Old Testament related to the New?
3. In your own words, describe the history of the Bible's coming from God to man.
4. What is revelation, as referring to God? What is the difference between general revelation and special revelation?
5. How were the original Scriptures inspired by God? Were the original autographs inerrant?
6. Do we have any portion of the original autographs? Are the existing ancient copies of the Bible inerrant in every letter and word? If not, how confident can we be that they accurately represent what the authors originally wrote?

7. What did the discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm?

8. How can we be sure that God intended the Old Testament canon to be no larger or smaller than the present existing group of books?

9. How does our arrangement of thirty-nine books differ from the Hebrew arrangement of twenty-four books? Is the text of one list longer than the text of the other?

10. What has been the history of the Old Testament as far as translation is involved?

11. What highlights of Israel's history formed the setting of the writing of the Old Testament books? How much of [Chart 3](#), "Old Testament History," can you recall? (Try putting this down on paper.)

12. When did the writing prophets first appear in Israel's life?

13. What were the three major regions of the world in Old Testament geography?

14. What do you recall about the topography of Canaan? In what regions did many towns and cities appear?

15. Describe the general climate of Palestine. What are the annual seasons?

16. What five foreign powers did Israel have contact with in Old Testament times? How did each one affect Israel's history?

17. Describe the setting of a typical house and family in a small town of Canaan during the days of King David.

18. How a person approaches the Old Testament is crucial in the study process. This chapter discussed nine recommended approaches. Recall as many as you can, and explain why each approach is so vital.

V. SELECTED READING FOR FURTHER STUDY

A. DIVINE REVELATION

Chafer, L. S. *Systematic Theology*, 1:48-60.

Henry, Carl H. *Revelation and the Bible*.

Kelso, James L. *Archaeology and the Ancient Testament*, pp. 13-19.

Manley, G. T. *The New Bible Handbook*, pp. 6-8.

Packer, J. I. "Revelation and Inspiration." In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 24-30.

Pinnock, Clark H. *Biblical Revelation*.

Warfield, B.B. "Revelation." In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 3:2573-82; and *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, pp. 71-102.

B. INSPIRATION

Allis, Oswald T. *The Old Testament: Its Claims and Its Critics*, pp. 1-171. These pages are on the facts, doctrines, and literary form of the Old Testament.

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 13-27.

Clark, Gordon H. "How May I Know the Bible Is Inspired?" In *Can I Trust My Bible?*, edited by Howard F. Vos, pp. 9-34.

Gausson, L. *Theopneustia: The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*.

Geisler, Norman L., and Nix, William E. *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pp. 26-124.

Hodge, C. *Systematic Theology*, pp. 151-86.

Manley, G. T. *The New Bible Handbook*, pp. 8-18.

Pache, René. *Inspiration and Authority*.

Payne, J. Barton. *The Theology of the Older Testament*, pp. 505-19.

Unger, Merrill F. *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 22-45.

Walvoord, John F. ed., *Inspiration and Interpretation*.

C. TRANSMISSION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 31-38; 47-58.

Bruce, F. F. *The Books and the Parchments*, pp. 114-24.

Geisler, Norman L., and Nix, William E. *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pp. 235-66.

Laird, R. "How Reliable Is the Old Testament Text?" In *Can I Trust My Bible?*, edited by Howard F. Vos, pp. 119-34.

Skilton, John H. "The Transmission of the Scriptures." In *The Infallible Word*, edited by N. B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley.

Unger, Merrill F. *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 115-47.

D. CANONIZATION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 59-62.

Bruce, F. F. *The Books and the Parchments*, pp. 95-104; 163-75.

Geisler, Norman L., and Nix, William E. *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pp. 127-78.

Harris, R. Laird. "What Books Belong in the Canon of Scripture?" In *Can I Trust My Bible?*, edited by Howard F. Vos, pp. 67-87.

Manley, G. T. *The New Bible Handbook*, pp. 26-32; 38-39.

Robinson, G. L. "Canon of the Old Testament." In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1:554-63.

Unger, Merrill F. *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 46-114.

E. TRANSLATION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 38-46.

Bruce, F. F. *The Books and the Parchments*, pp. 125-62; 191-94; 201-11; 219-38.

Geisler, Norman L., and Nix, William E. *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pp. 297-343.

Purkiser, W. T. *Exploring the Old Testament*, pp. 27-37.

Unger, Merrill F. *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 148-79.

F. HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Bright, John. *A History of Israel*, pp. 23-66.

Harrison, R. K. *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 147-63. Technical discussion.

Kline, Meredith G. "Is the History of the Old Testament Accurate?" In *Can I Trust My Bible?*, edited by Howard F. Vos, pp.

135-54.

Manley, G. T. *The New Bible Handbook*, pp. 77-106. Concise treatment of the historical background of all parts of the Old Testament.

Payne, J. Barton. *An Outline of Hebrew History*, pp. 13-15. Condensed summary.

Schultz, Samuel J. *The Old Testament Speaks*. Historical setting is interspersed throughout this excellent work.

Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Handbook*, pp. 8-17. Tabulation of dates and events.

G. GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Adams, J. McKee. *Biblical Backgrounds*, pp. 52-85.

Aharoni, Yohanan. *The Land of the Bible*.

Baly, Dennis. *The Geography of the Bible*, pp. 125-266.

Orni, Efraim, and Efrat, Elisha. *Geography of*

Israel. An excellent, large map of Palestine appears in a flap under the back cover.

Payne, J. Barton. *An Outline of Hebrew History*, pp. 15-19; 23-32.

Pfeiffer, Charles F. *Baker's Bible Atlas*.

Pfeiffer, Charles F., and Vos, Howard F. *The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands*.

The Sacred Land. Excellent topographical maps.

Smith, George Adam. *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*.

Wilson, Clifford A. *Exploring Bible Backgrounds*, pp. 39-47.

Wood, Leon. *A Survey of Israel's History*, pp. 19-26.

H. EVERYDAY LIFE IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

Bailey, A. E. *Daily Life in Bible Times*.

Corswant, W. A. *A Dictionary of Life in Bible Times.*

Freeman, James M. *Manners and Customs of the Bible.*

Gordon, Cyrus. "Biblical Customs and the Nuzu Tablets." *Biblical Archaeologist* 3: (February 1940).

Grosvenor, Gilbert, ed. *Everyday Life in Ancient Times.*

Harrison, R. K. *Old Testament Times.*

Heaton, E. W. *Everyday Life in Old Testament Times.*

La Sor, William Sanford. *Daily Life in Bible Times.*

Manley, G. T. *The New Bible Handbook*, pp. 428-38.

Miller, M. S., and Miller, J. L. *Encyclopedia of Bible Life.*

Pritchard, James B. *The Ancient Near East in*

Pictures.

Saggs, H. F. *Everyday Life in Babylonia and Assyria.*

Taylor, John B. *A Christian's Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 12-20.

Wight, Fred H. *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands.*

I. ISRAEL, GOD'S CHOSEN NATION

Douglas, J. D. ed. *The New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 578-83.

Sauer, Erich. *The Dawn of World Redemption*, pp. 89-120.

Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 541-43.

J. CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Baron, David. *Rays of Messiah's Glory.*

Baxter, J. Sidlow. *The Strategic Grasp of the Bible*, pp. 141-56.

Cooper, David L. *Messiah: His First Coming Scheduled*, pp. 136-56.

Geisler, Norman L. *Christ: The Theme of the Bible*, pp. 9-101.

Hengstenberg, E. W. *Christology of the Old Testament*, pp. 1-12.

Sauer, Erich. *The Dawn of World Redemption*, pp. 141-64.

Walvoord, John F. *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, pp. 36-95.

1. See John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, pp. 79-95, for an excellent discussion of the subject, "Christ in Old Testament Prophecy."

2. Erich Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, p. 186.

3. J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament*, p 3.

4. John H. Raven, *Old Testament Introduction*,

p. 6.

5. It is not known which was the first Old Testament book to be written. If Moses was the earliest Bible author, then there was no Scripture before around 1500 B.C.

6. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 15. Read this same source for a good discussion of the inadequacies of oral tradition as a sole transmitter of God's special revelation to man.

7. These were the exceptions, written in Aramaic: Genesis 31:47; Jeremiah 10:11; Daniel 2:40—7:28; Ezra 4:8—6:18; 7:12-26.

8. Vowels were added to copies of the Old Testament around A.D. 600-800, to help preserve the pronunciation of the Hebrew words.

9. One of God's reasons for not preserving the original autographs may have been man's proneness to worship material objects. Also, even if a genuine biblical autograph existed today, many people would still doubt any proofs offered of its genuineness.

10. Even Bibles printed in the modern twentieth century have printers' errors!

11. Among the major extant Hebrew manuscripts of this period are: Cairo Codex (A.D. 895); Leningrad Codex of the Prophets (916); Aleppo Codex (930); Leningrad Old Testament (entire Old Testament) (1008).

12. Archer, pp. 18-19.

13. Psalms was the first and longest book of the Writings, and so the name may have been used to represent the entire section.

14. At times Hebrew Bibles have appeared with minor variations from this arrangement.

16. F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p.92.

17. Consult a Bible dictionary for descriptions of these feasts.

19. The chronological pattern is not always followed in this order. For example, the account of Esther is between Ezra and Nehemiah, and the books of Chronicles parallel much of the

books of Kings.

20. The Roman numeral LXX (seventy) and the Latin word *Septuaginta* (seventy) were assigned to this version because of a story which said that seventy-two translators were engaged in the original work. Actually, the name *Septuagint* was not assigned to the whole Greek Old Testament until the time of the Church scholar Origen (early third century A.D.).

21. G. T. Manley, *The New Bible Handbook*, p. 19.

22. In the Old Testament, the name Israel usually refers to all of God's chosen people. During the years of the divided kingdom, however, it more often refers only to the Northern Kingdom. The context will usually indicate which meaning is intended.

23. The semicircular strip of habitable land from Canaan to Babylonia has been appropriately called the Fertile Crescent. It was the center of civilization from man's beginning to the golden age of Greece in the fifth century

R.C. The two key waterways of the long Mesopotamian Valley are the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

24. The name *Palestine* is derived from the Hebrew *eres Pelistim*, meaning “land of the Philistines.” Philistia was a small region in the southwest, but by the fifth century B.C. the name was applied to the entire land of Canaan.

25. The above observations are based on the reasonable assumption that Palestine’s climate has not changed much since Old Testament times.

26. Although Syria’s domain was not geographically extensive, that nation is studied here with the other four because of its direct relation to the Northern Kingdom of Israel for two centuries.

27. The blocks show *general* eras of ascendancy. Within an era, a nation could experience temporary decline, depending on such factors as who was king.

28. The duration of Israel’s stay in Egypt is

discussed in Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, pp. 83-109.

29. See [Map A](#), “Three Major Regions of Old Testament History” for the locations of the Hittite and Mitanni empires.

30. Alexander the Great was king of Macedonia from 336 to 323 B.C. He conquered the Greek city-states and the whole Persian Empire from the coasts of Asia Minor and Egypt to India. Palestine was under Persian control at the time, so it also fell into Alexander's hands.

31. An interesting chapter on this subject, written in narrative style, is “Israel at Home,” by John B. Taylor, in his book *A Christian's Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 12-20. This is highly recommended reading.

32. All of these items are described, at least briefly, in Fred H. Wight's *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*, from which this list is constructed. It should be understood that all of the items are not necessarily part of every setting. Also, the descriptions are of life *after* the

nomadic years of the earliest patriarchs, like Abraham.

33. Before settling down in Canaan, the Israelites dwelt in tents. The main purpose of tents and houses was that of shelter. The average Israelite spent less time in his abode than does the average person of Western culture.

34. Houses with more than one room were built around an open courtyard.

35. During the Babylonian Captivity the Jews began worshiping regularly in meeting places, later called “synagogues” (from the Greek *synagoge*, “place of assembly”). They probably continued this tradition upon returning to their homeland, though there is no specific reference to it in the postexilic books of the Old Testament. By New Testament times the synagogue was a well-established institution.

36. Taylor, pp. 12, 17.

37. The Bible itself is the revelatory source of these key truths. This will become more apparent to you as you survey the various books

of the Old Testament.

38. Compare this quote by the theologian Thomas Aquinas with the truth suggested by Exodus 3:14.

39. Read Sauer, pp. 90-92, for an extended treatment of God's sovereign calling of Israel.

40. The book of Jonah is the story of such a mission to foreign nations. Sauer writes that the Old Testament from end to end is "full of promises of salvation for the whole human race." Read *ibid.*, pp. 92-95, for a discussion of God's dealings with the Gentile world during Old Testament times.

41. The doctrine of salvation in the Old Testament is not confined to theological terms such as "redemption." More often it is designated by descriptive language, such as "delivered" (Joel 2:32); "life" (Deut 30:20); "walk in the light" (Isa 2:5); "his God" (Isa 50:10); "return to the LORD" (Isa 55:7); "heal" (Isa 57:18). Read Psalm 19:14 and Job 19:25 for two appearances of the word "redeemer."

42. Sauer, p. 186. This book is highly recommended for its analysis of the Old Testament's redemptive theme.

43. G. T. Manley, *The New Bible Handbook*, p. 14.

44. Norman L. Geisler, *Christ: The Theme of the Bible*, p. 31.

45. Ibid., p. 32.

46. Only selected highlights of the progression are cited here. You may want to pursue this further by citing other parts of the progression.

47. An example of this was cited earlier, where Christ is interpreted in Genesis 3:15 as being the seed of the woman Eve. An Old Testament Messianic passage is not always clear and specific in its reference to the story of Christ. For example, who would have seen Jeremiah 31:15 as a prophecy of the weeping mothers of Bethlehem, were it not for Matthew's interpretation in Matthew 2:17-18?

48. Edward J. Young, *Introduction to the Old*

Testament, pp. 10-11.

The Survey Method of Study

The method of study called *survey* is more than just reading a book. It is important to know what is involved in this method so we can use it to fullest advantage in our study of the Old Testament books. The next few pages discuss especially the purposes and procedures of survey study. More detailed directions and suggestions are given throughout the manual in connection with each Old Testament book. In the latter half of this chapter we will see how to use this book as a guide to our survey studies.

I. PURPOSES AND PROCEDURES OF SURVEY STUDY

A. THE FULL SCOPE OF BIBLE STUDY

Bible study is of three phases, in the

following order:¹

Observation—seeing what the text says

Interpretation—determining what the text means

Application—applying the Bible to life

In survey study we are especially engaged in the observation phase, though the other two phases are also involved.

Survey, as applied to the study of a book of the Bible, is an overall view of the book, made from various perspectives. Other names given to this method are synthesis, overview, panoramic study, skyscraper view.

Survey should always precede analysis. This follows the standard rule, “Image the whole, then execute the parts.” That is, first survey the whole book to see the overall picture; then analyze each of the small parts in detail. This study manual does not involve

analysis; hence, we will always be in the survey process for all thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. At times we will tarry over details, but only in connection with the survey at hand.

B. PURPOSES AND AIMS OF SURVEY STUDY

The fact that survey should be made before analysis reflects two main purposes of survey study.

1. To see each part in its intended emphasis. Making a survey of the highlights of a book before analyzing the details is a guard against the two extremes of overemphasizing *or* minimizing the point of any one part of Scripture.

2. To see each part in its relation to the other parts. Knowing one's bearing in the forest of many facts is a tremendous help in Bible study. This is illustrated by an experience of Charles Lindbergh. On one of his early

flights, he lost a valuable instrument overboard. He watched it fall and land in the dense fields below. Later he landed a smaller plane in the general vicinity, and scoured the area by foot in search of the instrument, but to no avail. He resorted to a simple expedient. Taking off his coat, he spread it on a bush, and returned to the air. From the air he saw both the coat and the instrument. So he moved the coat to another bush, and repeated the sighting from the air. With this additional bearing he finally was able to locate the instrument.

Many questions on the interpretation of a verse in the Bible are answered when the location of the verse in the book, with reference to its context, is recognized. Survey study brings out this overall context.

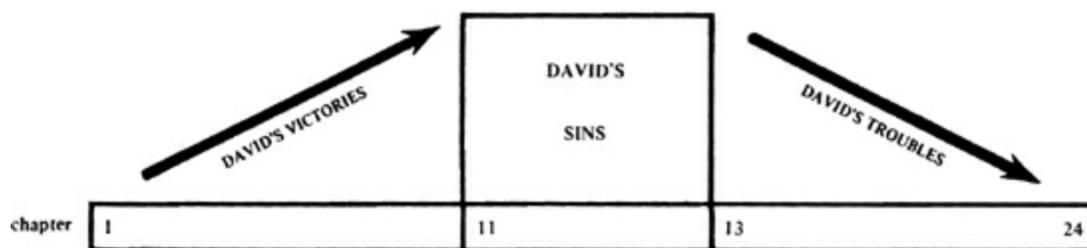
Related to the above purposes are some other important things that survey study

aims to accomplish.

1. Observing the total structure of the book.

A book of the Bible is not just a mass of words. The words are meaningful because their writer organized them around themes in such a way as to express the intended truths and impress the inquiring reader. For example, what impresses you about the overall structure of 2 Samuel shown in the accompanying diagram?

THE BOOK OF 2 SAMUEL



The apostle Paul was aware of structure in the text of his Scriptures, as evidenced by such comments as Ephesians 6:2. Read this

verse. What was Paul observing about the structure of the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17) when he said, “which is the first commandment with a promise”?

2. *Observing the content of the book.* In survey study we are interested in *what* the Bible says (content) as well as *how* the Bible says it (structure). But in surveying the content we do not tarry over details, as we would do later in analyzing the text. Here we keep our eyes open to highlights, such as key events, prominent persons, emphasized truths. These are the best clues for us in determining the book’s main theme.

3. *Getting the feel of the book’s atmosphere.* Your personal involvement in the Bible text will greatly help to make your study effective. Survey study helps you catch the tone of the book you are studying, as though “you were there.”

4. *Relating each book to the others and to the Old Testament as a whole.* This is best and most easily done after a survey of the books has been made.

5. *Deriving spiritual lessons from the book's overall thrust.* In survey study we especially see what the *important* issues of life are, because we are constantly observing *emphasized* truths. We should never lose sight of this practical goal as we proceed with our survey studies.

C. PROCEDURES OF SURVEY STUDY

After you have studied the background of the writing of a particular book of the Old Testament (e.g., date and authorship), you are ready to survey the Bible text itself. There are various possible procedures to follow in survey study. Basically, however, three main stages are involved: (1) making the initial acquaintance of the book; (2)

scanning the individual segments; and (3) seeing how the book holds together. The progression within each stage, and from stage to stage, is this: *from obscurity to sight*. Stated in other ways, the progression is: from first impressions, to repeated impressions, to enduring impressions; or, from the random and indefinite, to the organized and defined.

Some of the things which you will be doing in these stages are described below.²

1. Stage One: Making the Initial Acquaintance.

a) Scan the book in one sitting if possible. It is not necessary to read every word or line at this time. If your Bible has paragraph divisions, reading the first sentence of each paragraph will suffice. If your Bible has chapter or paragraph headings, note these as you scan the

book.

- b) Write down your first impressions of the book.
- c) Try to identify the atmosphere of the book as a whole. This is not always detectable at this early stage.
- d) List any key words and phrases that stand out as of this first reading.

2. Stage Two: Scanning the Individual Segments.

- a) Using the set of segment divisions supplied by this manual, scan each of the segments and determine the main subject of each. (A segment is a group of paragraphs which represent a unit of thought. A segment may be longer or shorter than a chapter.)³
- b) Assign a segment title to each unit, and record these on paper. (A segment title is

a strong word or short phrase, preferably taken from the text, intended to serve as a clue to at least one main part of the segment.) The value of this step of survey is not in the segment title itself, but in the mental process of beginning to identify parts and movements of the book.

c) Record any new observations and impressions of the book, now that you have begun to look at smaller parts.

3. Stage Three: Seeing How the Book Holds Together.

Up to this point most of your observations have been about individual items. In this last stage you should be especially interested to observe how those individual items blend together in a pattern. This will help you see the theme more clearly and in more depth in its full scope. Again, remember that it is

important to learn not only *what* God said (content) but *how* He said it (structure).

- a) Look for groups of material. Such groupings might be about places, people, things, doctrines, speeches, events, and so forth. For example, Exodus 25-31 is a group of chapters giving specifications for the tabernacle.
- b) Compare the beginning and end of the book. This will tell you much about the book, especially if it is narrative.
- c) Look for a key turning point in the narrative. Not every book has such a pivotal point. The example of 2 Samuel cited earlier illustrates the principle of pivot.
- d) Look for a climax. If the book has a climax, try to observe a progression in the story leading up to that point.

- e) Read your list of segment titles a few times, and see if you can detect any movement in the action, if the book is historical; or in the discourse, if the book is nonhistorical. Keep working on this until you can formulate an outline of the book. Use paper and pencil freely. The observations you made earlier in this stage will be of great help here.
- f) Try to state the book's theme in your own words.

II. USING THIS MANUAL AS A GUIDE FOR SURVEY STUDY

The main purpose of this study guide is to help you see for yourself what each book of the Old Testament says. This independent-type study is aptly represented by the word *discovery*. When your personal experience is discovery, the Old Testament will come

alive to you in many ways. Dr. James M. Gray, who mastered in the developing and teaching of the book survey method of study, rightly maintained that one's own original and independent study of the broad pattern of a Bible book, imperfect as the conclusions may be, is of far more value to the student than the most perfect outline obtained from someone else. This is not to minimize the work of others, but to emphasize that recourse to outside aids should be made only *after* the student has taken his own skyscraper view.

In serving as a guide, however, this book also includes instructive material to support and supplement your own independent study. The book is neither a commentary nor a so-called introduction to the Old Testament; yet it includes a little of the kind of material found in both of these types of writings.

The various guides and supporting materials of this book are described below.

A. GUIDES

The suggestions for survey study vary throughout the book, depending on which Old Testament book is being studied. The kinds of guides remain constant, however, from book to book.

1. *Directions.* Specific directions about such things as what to look for, and where, constitute the major part of your survey. You will be constantly urged to record your observations, of whatever kind they are, on paper. Your faithfulness in doing this may make the difference between mediocre and excellent study. As someone has well said, “The pencil is one of the best eyes.”

2. *Questions.* Answering questions is an effective learning experience. Whenever possible, write out your answers. If you

faithfully answer the questions and follow all the directions, you will be subconsciously establishing habits and methods of effective Bible study.

3. *Uncompleted charts.* Occasionally you will have opportunity to record observations on an uncompleted chart which appears in the manual. If you prefer to record these on paper instead, be sure to refer to the chart as you record. Charts as visual aids are effective in representing a panoramic view of Scripture, which is what survey is all about.

4. *Applications.* Ways to apply the messages of the Old Testament books are suggested at the end of each survey. For example, biblical laws will be seen as defining God's timeless standards; history as furnishing "examples ... written for our instruction" (1 Cor 10:11); testimonies and

prayers (like those of Psalms) as inspiring and challenging; and prophecy as warning and comforting the reader. Also, it is highly recommended that you spend time meditating over key words and phrases, which you will underline in your Bible during the course of your survey. This is one of the best fruits of marking your Bible.

5. Further study. Some readers using this study guide will want to look further into the subjects suggested at the end of each chapter. The continuity of the study guide will not be jeopardized, however, if these optional studies are passed over.

B. SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Along with suggestions for your own survey of the Old Testament books, various kinds of instructive material are given to support your study.

1. Background. The background and setting

of each Old Testament book is given at the beginning of each study unit. Much of this information (e.g., date written, authorship) is not always provided in the Bible text; hence, its inclusion here. The treatment can only be brief, due to limitations of space. You may want to refer to supplementary sources for more extensive research.

2. *Comments.* Much of each study unit includes comments and descriptive notes to furnish substantive positions from which you may launch your surveys.

3. *Maps.* Much of the Old Testament is history, so it is important to visualize the locations of action. Maps will appear from time to time to help you in the mental focusing.

4. *Historical charts.* Historical charts similar to [Chart 3](#) show the settings of Bible passages and books. You will find this visual

aid valuable for survey study.

5. *Completed survey charts.* At the end of the survey of each Old Testament book, a completed survey chart appears. It is recommended that you postpone looking at each chart until after you have completed your own survey of the particular book. This will keep the door open for you personally to experience the joys of discovery. Actually, the survey charts which are shown are not exhaustive. You may want to add your own observations and outlines to them.

6. *Bibliography.* For each book of the Old Testament a few selected works, such as commentaries, are cited as recommended reading.

C. TOOLS FOR SURVEY STUDY

Here is a basic list of recommended study tools:

1. *A good study version of the Bible.* This

should have easy-to-read print, and include cross-references. An edition without commentaries and outlines is best for independent study. This will encourage you to focus on the Bible text itself. Unless otherwise cited, all quotations in this book are from the *New American Standard Bible*. It would help you to have access to a modern speech paraphrase, such as *The Living Bible*, for quick help in obscure passages.

2. *An exhaustive concordance.*⁴ Often you will want to see how many times (and where) a particular word appears in an Old Testament book. Such a concordance shows the pattern with one glance.

3. *A one-volume commentary.*⁵ You will use this mainly in connection with difficult passages or such things as customs, geography, and history.

4. *Pencil and paper.* Always keep a pencil

in your hand while studying, either to mark your Bible or to jot down observations on paper. This advice cannot be overemphasized. Some students like to use a notebook in addition to separate sheets of paper. Recording not only provides a permanent record of what has been observed in Bible study; it also initiates other lines of inquiry.

5. *Colored pencils.* Here is an illustration of how valuable a colored pencil can be: As you survey a book, you might underline in blue every reference to the mercy of God. You would do the same for a few other subjects, using other colors.⁶ A comparative study of these underlined references can then be very revealing.

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

The challenge of studying the Old

Testament is a thrilling one indeed. This is because of who its Author is, and what He has written. If you would gain much from the survey study which you are about to embark upon, determine now to spend *time* with much *patience*. The great naturalist Fabre always referred to his two best instruments as “time” and “patience.” Patience on the part of young Clyde Tombaugh is what led him finally to discover the planet Pluto. After astronomers calculated a probable orbit for this “suspected” heavenly body that they had never seen, Tombaugh took up the search in March 1929. *Time* magazine records the investigation:

He examined scores of telescopic photographs, each showing tens of thousands of star images, in pairs under the blink comparator, or dual microscope. It often took three days to

scan a single pair. It was exhausting, eye-cracking work—in his own words, “brutal tediousness.” And it went on for months. Star by star, he examined 20 million images. Then on February 18, 1930, as he was blinking a pair of photographs in the constellation Gemini, “I suddenly came upon the image of Pluto!” It was the most dramatic astronomic discovery in nearly 100 years, and it was made possible by the patience of an American.⁷

Full Bible study, whether survey or analysis, calls for reflection and meditation. Reflection requires time and concentration, and the good Bible student will give both. For his patience he will be rewarded, as was the astronomer Tombaugh, with the pleasure and excitement of discovering stars of divine truth that he had never seen

before.

SOME REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are the three phases of Bible study, in the correct order? Justify the order.
2. What basically is survey study? How does it differ from analysis?
3. Why should survey be made before analysis?
4. What are the three general stages of survey study discussed in this chapter? Can you recall some of the things which are done in each stage?
5. What are the values of firsthand, independent Bible study?
6. In what ways does this book serve as a guide to your firsthand study of the Bible? What supporting materials does it furnish to

supplement your own personal study?

7. What basic study tools are recommended for your survey studies?

8. Why is the habit of recording observations so important?

1. The order is very important. For example, one is not prepared to interpret a Bible text until he has first seen what the text really says.

2. The stages, as such, will not be identified in the survey studies of the succeeding chapters. Basically, however, the procedures will be followed as described here.

3 The nomenclature used in this book is as follows: a segment is a group of paragraphs; a section is a group of segments; and a division is a group of sections.

4. James Strong's *An Exhaustive Concordance* is recommended especially for survey study.

5. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* and *The New*

Bible Commentary, rev. ed., are two excellent sources.

6. The use of color loses its effectiveness whenever it is overdone. Hence, the advice here is to use this particular method of underlining for only a *few* major subjects.

7. *Time* magazine, April 1, 1966, p. 10.

Part 1

Origins of the Human Race

and

*The Early Centuries of
Israel's Life*

The first five books of the Bible, known as the Pentateuch, record the origins of the human race, of the chosen Hebrew nation, and of other related institutions and things. He who shrugs off these books as myths or obsolete stories is rejecting the foundations of God's written revelation about Himself and mankind. Every Christian should master these books, and unbelievers must come face to face with their miracle story.

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Genesis: Book of Beginnings

The first five words of the Bible are a very appropriate introduction: “In the beginning God created.” This was the first moment of time as we know it, and the coming into being of the universe. God had no beginning, for He existed from eternity, but this was the first work He did *outside of Himself*.¹ The opening subject of origin in Genesis is a clue as to what we may expect to read in the remainder of the book. Genesis is a book of beginnings, a revelation written by the only One qualified to write it—God.

I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

1. Your approach to Genesis and study of its text will set patterns for your study of the

other books of the Old Testament. Depend on the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and heart to the sublime truths of this great first book of the Bible. Genesis is rightly “the foundation on which the whole superstructure of Divine revelation rests.”²

2. Read John 1:1-5, and compare the opening words with those of Genesis 1:1. Also, read Colossians 1:13-20. According to these two New Testament passages, what part did Christ play in creation and redemption?

II. BACKGROUND

A. THE PENTATEUCH

Genesis is one of the group of five books called the Pentateuch. Let us look at the group as a whole before we concentrate our attention on Genesis.

1. *Titles.* The Jews have always referred to

the first five books of Scripture as the *ʾorah* (“Law”). Another title frequently assigned to the books is *Pentateuch* (literally, “fivefold vessel”). The theologian Origen (A.D. 185-254) may have been the first person to use this name.

In the Bible itself there are many references to this group of books. Read the following selected references, and make a list of the titles: *Old Testament*: Joshua 8:34; 24:26; 2 Kings 22:8; 1 Chronicles 16:40; 2 Chronicles 17:9; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 8:1; 9:3; 10:28; Daniel 9:11. *New Testament*: Matthew 12:5; Mark 12:26; Luke 2:23; John 7:23; Galatians 3:10. What do these titles indicate as to the main subject of the books; the form of communication; and authorship?

2. *Unity*. Both internal and external evidence support the view that the first five books of the Old Testament were written by

one author, with one unifying theme. In his book *The Five Books of Moses*, Oswald T. Allis has ably answered the denials of this view by liberal critics. At the close of his work he writes,

Despite the most confident denials of a rationalistically controlled literary and historical criticism, the majority of Christians throughout the world continue and will continue to believe and maintain that the Pentateuch is not a late, anonymous, untrustworthy composite, but is correctly described as “The Five Books of Moses,” the man of God.³

Writing on the internal evidence, Unger says,

The genuineness and unbroken continuity of its history, the consistency of its plan, the sublimity of

its purpose, the universality of its appeal, the omnitemporality of its message, the coherence of its subject matter, the naturalness and beauty of its literary quality and the spirituality of its meaning bind it together and demonstrate it to be the work of one great mind in vital contact with God.⁴

3. *Author.* Except for a few parts, such as the reporting of his own death (Deut 34), Moses wrote the five books of the Law.⁵ Such Mosaic authorship does not rule out the employment of preexisting documents for writing certain parts of the books.⁶ This is normal procedure for historians, and in the case of biblical authors, it did not rule out divine inspiration. (Read Deut 31:24-26 for an interesting reference to Moses' writing. Also, read Exod 17:14; 24:4-8; 34:27; Num 33:1-2; Deut 31:9.)

Moses does not appear in the Bible until

the book of Exodus, where specific mention is made of his writing “the words of the LORD” (e.g., Exod 24:4). But although there is no reference in Genesis to writing by Moses, the unity of the Pentateuch points to Mosaic authorship of this first book. Manley says, “No one has yet maintained that Genesis does not form a unity with the other four books. Hence, if Moses is accepted as the author of the legal sections, he may safely be accepted as the author of Genesis.”⁷ It may be observed here also that the narrative of Exodus is a natural continuation of that of Genesis (read Gen 50:22—Exod 1:7.)

4. *Theme.* The Pentateuch’s theme is historical, legislative, and spiritual. Historically, it records the origins of the human race and the origins and early fortunes of the Hebrew race. Legislatively, it records the laws that God gave to the

Hebrew nation, under which they should live. D. A. Hubbard identifies key points of its spiritual thrust:

It is the record of God's revelation in history and His Lordship over history. It testifies both to Israel's response and to her failure to respond. It witnesses to God's holiness, which separates Him from men, and His gracious love, which binds Him to them on His terms.⁸

A thumbnail sketch of Israel's history as reported in the Pentateuch could be represented thus:

Genesis	Israel's origin and early years	Beginnings
Exodus	Their deliverance from bondage in Egypt	Deliverance
Leviticus	Their worship, directed by the Levites	Legislation
Numbers	Wilderness wanderings in the Sinai Peninsula	Testing
Deuteronomy	Second giving of the Law, awaiting entrance into Canaan	Preparation

B. DATE AND PLACE OF THE WRITING OF GENESIS

There is no specific evidence about this setting. Moses wrote Genesis either during his stay in Egypt or Midian (before 1445 B.C.), or soon after the Exodus, during his wilderness journeys (after 1445 B.C.).⁹ The latter view seems more likely.

C. GEOGRAPHY OF GENESIS

Look at [Map A](#), “Three Major Regions of Old Testament History.” Note the three key journeys: (1) from Ur to Canaan; (2) from Canaan to Egypt; (3) from Egypt to Canaan. This is the geography involved in most of the Pentateuch, namely, from Genesis 11:28 to the end of Deuteronomy.

The location of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:8), which was the first dwelling place of man, is unknown. Some think it was north of Babel, where the Euphrates and Tigris rivers are closest to each other.

Note on the map where the region of

Ararat is located. According to Genesis 8:4, Noah's ark "rested upon the mountains of Ararat."

Note the location of the city of Babel. This is where the descendants of Noah were building "a tower whose top will reach into heaven" (Gen 11:4). It is in this [eleventh chapter](#) that the story of Abraham begins, at the city of Ur.

D. MAIN DATES OF GENESIS 12-50

[Chart 6](#) shows the main dates of the story of Israel as recorded in Genesis 12-50.[10](#) Study the chart and answer the following:

1. Who lived the longest of the four patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph)?
2. Was Abraham still living when Jacob was born? How many years passed between Abraham's arrival at Canaan and the moving of Jacob and his family to Egypt?

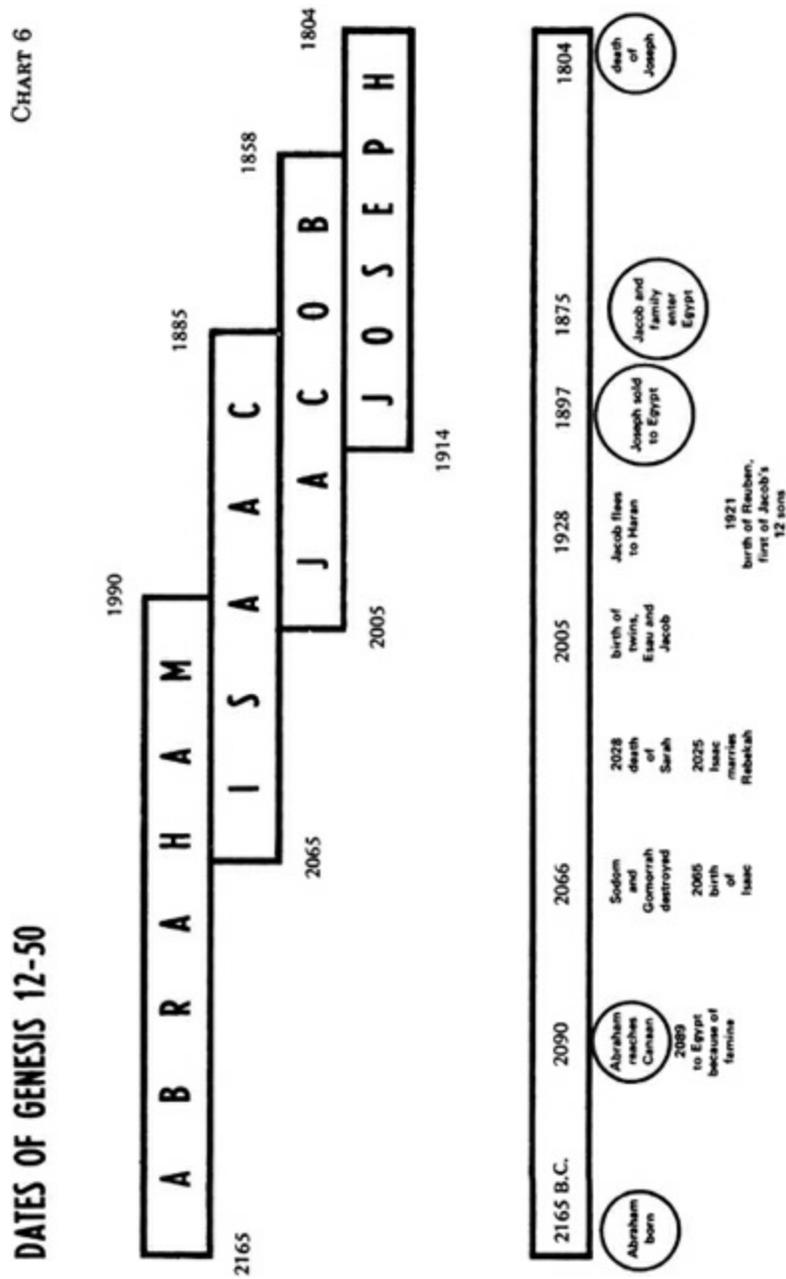
III. SURVEY

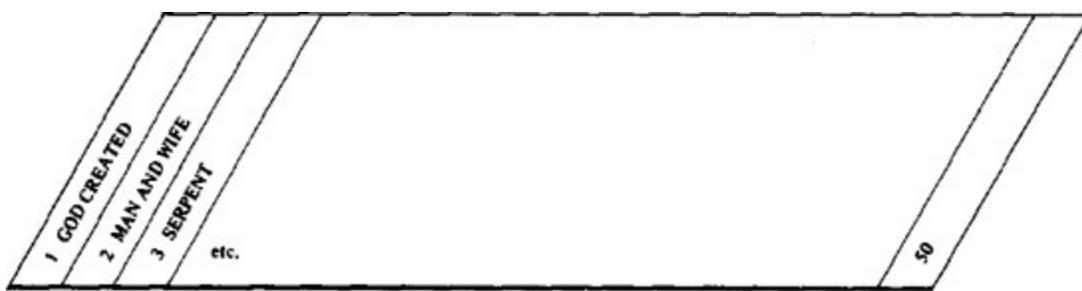
We come now to the heart of our survey study, involving the Bible text. Keep in mind throughout the survey process that you are aiming to see mainly the overall general patterns, and also highlights. To detect patterns you must observe individual items, but only as they are related to the other parts.

1. Note how many chapters there are in Genesis. Scan the whole book by reading the first verse of each chapter. Also, as you move from chapter to chapter, read the headings at the top of your Bible, identifying subject matter. What are your first impressions of the book? What persons and events are among the key parts of Genesis?

2. Next you will want to scan each chapter, not slowly, to observe its main content.¹¹ Record on paper a segment title

for each of the segments. (Examples are shown below.) One suggested way to record these titles is on the following oblique chart. What are some of your new impressions of the book after doing this? Do any key words or phrases stand out?





3. Compare the first chapter of Genesis with the last paragraph of the book (50:22-26). What are some of your conclusions, especially concerning the human race?

4. The story of Israel begins with Abraham, when God called him to leave his country and go “to the land which I will show you.” Read 12:1-3. (Note: Abraham’s name was originally Abram. Read 17:5 for the origin of the change.) From your survey thus far, what names of Abraham’s descendants are prominent in Genesis from chapter 12 to the end of the book?

5. What are the prominent events recorded in chapters 1-11? Compare your observations thus far with the outlines of [Chart 7](#). How was sin involved in the three

stories of the Fall, Flood, and Babel tower? How does such a setting introduce the story that begins with Abraham's call?

GENESIS 1-50

CHART 7

1	12	50
EVENTS PREDOMINANT	PERSONS PREDOMINANT	
CREATION—FALL—FLOOD— BABEL TOWER	ABRAHAM—ISAAC—JACOB—JOSEPH	
<i>The race as a whole</i>	<i>The family of Abraham</i>	

6. Scan the book of Genesis again and note generally what chapters are about the above four events and four persons.

7. Think more about the contents of chapters 1-11. In these chapters are recorded many *firsts*,—for example, the first man and woman. List on paper other prominent firsts or origins of these chapters. Compare your list with that shown on the survey [Chart 11](#).

8. A key phrase of Genesis is “these are the generations of.”¹² The phrase is always the heading of the section which follows. For example, “the generations of Shem” (11:10) introduces the section dealing with the offspring of Shem (11:10-12). Read each of the following references where the phrase (or a similar one) appears, and record on paper the names involved: 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2. The continuous chain of genealogical listings from Adam to the descendants of Jacob (37:2-4) shows the line in which the Saviour, Jesus, was to be born (cf. Luke 3:23-38). One of the main purposes of the formal genealogies of the Old Testament is to teach spiritual lessons, such as God’s faithfulness to the *heirs* of promise.¹³

At times in Genesis a parallel line is recorded, but the narrative returns quickly to that of the chosen people. (Examples of

such related lines are those of Cain, 4:16-24; and of Ishmael, 25:12-18.)

9. The interval of time from Adam to Abraham (chaps. 1-11) was over two thousand years,¹⁴ whereas it was only about three hundred years from Abraham to Joseph's death (chaps. 12-50). Stated another way, only one-fifth of the book of Genesis is devoted to such vital subjects as creation and the Fall, as compared with four-fifths devoted to the four patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. What does this quantitative distribution reveal, if anything, about the purpose and message of Genesis?

10. Relate the narrative of Genesis to the regions of [Map A](#). Where did most of chapters 1-11, involving the human race, take place? Where was the remainder of the action?

11. Study the survey [Chart 11](#). Observe how various outlines have been recorded on the chart, involving survey studies made up to this point. Note that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are the main characters, respectively, beginning at these references: 12:1; 25:19; 27:1; and 37:2b. A quick look at a concordance shows the births of these patriarchs at 11:26; 21:3; 25:26; 30:24. Hence, the overlappings on the chart.

In the next study unit, you may want to try recording your studies of Exodus by this chart method. What are some of the values of such a chart?

IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

The purpose of these studies is to focus on each of the prominent subjects of Genesis, without making any detailed analysis. Again, our interest is mainly in the highlights of the

passages involved, in keeping with the survey method.

The order of subjects to be studied is the order in which they appear in the Bible text.

A. CREATION OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH (1:1—2:3)

1. First, read the passage, observing key repeated words and phrases. Then scan the contents of 2:4-25. How are the following structural laws evidenced in the total passage?

Law of Particularization (moving from the general to the particular):

universe (1:1-5)

earth (1:6-31)

man (1:26-30; 2:7-25)

Law of Progression: What is the climactic creative work of the six days?

Law of Centrality: Who is the principal

person of the account?

2. Observe fiat¹⁵ and fulfillment repeated throughout the account.

3. Do you observe any pattern in the creations of the six days:

(1) light

(2) firmament, divisions of waters

(3) dry land, vegetation

(4) light bearers

(5) birds, fishes

(6) animals, man

(7) day of rest

B. GENERATIONS OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH (2:4-15)

The statement of 2:4 introduces the account, not of the creation of the heavens and the earth, but, rather, of man for whom they had been created as the stage.¹⁶

1. How was the first man created? How was the first woman created?

2. How do chapters 1 and 2 distinguish man from animal life? Consider his distinctives (cf. 1:27), his dominion, and his destiny.

3. The Bible text does not date the creation of man. It has been correctly observed that the *unity* of the human race is of far greater theological import than its *antiquity*. Does Genesis teach the unity of the human race?

4. What is revealed about God by chapters 1 and 2?

C. THE FALL OF MAN (3:1—4:26)

First, read the passage. Without telling where the serpent originated, the opening verse of chapter 4 narrates his spiritual attack upon Eve. Read 2 Corinthians 11:3, [17](#)

which confirms that this story is historical fact. Also read Revelation 12:9 and 20:2, where the serpent is identified as Satan.

1. Who are the main characters of chapter 3? Of chapter 4? How are the two stories related to each other?

2. What parts of the account teach the following:

a) the deceitful activity of Satan against man

b) the righteous indictment of God against sinful man

c) the gracious provisions of God

d) the bright promise of God to slay man's enemy (3:15; cf. John 12:31; Rev 12:9-11)

e) the ongoing propagation of the human race

3. Compare the relations of man to God at the time of these three verses: 3:8; 3:24;

4:26.

4. What do the two chapters teach about God? What do they teach about man's sin and guilt, and about how he may be restored to communion with God?

D. THE FLOOD (6:1—9:29)

1. What was the spiritual condition of mankind which brought on the judgment of the Flood?

2. Noah was spared because he “found favor in the eyes of the LORD” (6:8). What was the basis for that favor? (Cf. 6:22; 7:1,5; 8:20; Heb 11:7.)

3. How cataclysmic was the Flood? (7:11, 21-23; cf. 2 Pet 3:4-7). Does this suggest a universal flood?

4. The sequel to judgment is always significant. Evaluate these sequels:

Noah's altar (8:20; the first altar of the

These two chapters form a link between Noah and Abraham through the line of Shem. Shem was the second son of Noah, and the progenitor of the Semitic race.¹⁸ First read 10:1, followed by 11:10-27. The chronological order of events was: (1) Flood (2) new start of the human race in the family of Noah (3) migration to Shinar and the building projects (city and tower) at Babel (4) confusion of languages and geographical scattering. Now read 10:2-32. (Note the opening phrases of verses 2,6,22.) The earth's division cited in 10:25 may be a reference to the Babel tower scattering (11:3-9.) Refer to [Map D](#) and observe where the descendants of Noah were scattered. In what general direction were the sons of Japheth scattered? The sons of Ham? The sons of Shem?

1. What important spiritual lessons are taught by the Babel story (11:1-9)? Was this

judgment irreparable? (See Acts 17:26-27.)

2. The name “Abram” (Abraham) appears first in the Bible at 11:26. Abraham was the father of the nation Israel. In what ways do chapters 10 and 11 introduce the story of this great patriarch?

F. ABRAHAM, FATHER OF ISRAEL (12:1—25:18)

Up to this point the narrative of Genesis is about the human race as a whole. Beginning at chapter 12, and continuing to the end of the Old Testament, the story focuses on the family of Abraham, that is, the nation of Israel. This supports the conclusion that the Bible is not so much the history of man as it is *the history of the redemption of man*. Merrill Unger comments, “Heretofore the divine healing had been with the whole Adamic race, now sunk into universal idolatry. God purges off a tiny rill through which he will eventually purify the great river itself.”¹⁹

We should observe here that the world of Genesis 11 was in spiritual darkness, without hope. God's call to Abraham thus began a new chapter in world history.

1. Review your survey of chapters 12-25. You may want to scan the chapters once more to see their highlights. Follow Abraham's journeys with the help of [Map A](#) and [Map E](#).

2. God's call and promise to Abraham are milestones in Bible history. First read Acts 7:2-4 and note where Abraham was when God called him (cf. Gen 11:31). Then compare the promises which God gave to Abraham at these places:



Haran: 12:1-3

Shechem: 12:7

Bethel: 13:14-17

Hebron: 15:5,18; 17:1-8

3. One thing which is prominent in this story of Abraham is the many times God

tested his character. These were purifying and strengthening experiences, designed by God to build solid foundations for the family of Israel. Below is an outline of these chapters related to the topic, *Abraham's Tests*. Read each passage in the Bible text, observing the different kinds, purposes, and outcomes of the tests.

Test of Obedience (12:1)

Test of Values (13:5-18)

Test of Love and Loyalty (14:1-24)

Tests of Faith (15:1—21:34)

The Most Severe Test (22:1-19)

Final Years (22:20—25:18)

4. Read again God's call to Abraham (12:1-3). What does the last line of that call reveal about the ultimate purpose of Israel's calling? Then read the verses cited below, which reveal some of the ways Israel was to

perform its mission.

As custodian of divine revelation (Deut 4:5-8; Rom 3:1-2)

As witness to heathen in darkness (Isa 43:9-12)

As witness of the security of serving God (Deut 33:16-29)

As blood location (i.e., physical line) for the birth of the Messiah (Gen 49:10)

G. ISAAC, CHILD OF PROMISE (25:19—26:35)

Steven Barabas describes Isaac thus:

Of the three patriarchs [Abraham, Isaac, Jacob], Isaac was the least conspicuous, traveled the least, had the fewest extraordinary adventures, and lived the longest. He was free from violent passions; quiet, gentle,

dutiful; less a man of action than of thought and suffering.²⁰

1. First read 21:2-3 and 35:29, which record Isaac's birth and death. The span of Isaac's life thus covers fifteen chapters of Genesis. But he is the main character only in the short section 25:19—26:35, as shown on [Chart 11](#). Read this passage.

2. Isaac was a strong spiritual link in the chain of the earliest patriarchs. When Abraham died, God's blessing of Israel continued through Isaac. Read 26:24-25 for God's renewal of the promise given earlier to Abraham.

H. JACOB, THE TRANSFORMED BROTHER (27:1—37:2a)

The story of Jacob shows how God can lay hold of a selfish, willful, deceitful man

striving by his own efforts to gain material blessing, and so transform his life that in the end his character is noble and beautiful, with a new outlook on what is true blessing.

1. Review [Chart 11](#) and note that Jacob is the main character of ten chapters of Genesis (27:1—37:2a). [Chart 8](#) shows a general breakdown of these chapters. Record the outlines and divisions in your Bible. The geographical outline shows Jacob in three places, with a journey in between each.²¹ What does the two-part outline on *blessing* suggest about Jacob's career?

JACOB THE SUPPLANTER

CHART 8

27 1	28 5	29 1	31 1	33 18	37 2a
IN CANAAN	JOURNEY	IN PADDAN-ARAM	RETURN	IN CANAAN	
~~~~~	TO	~~~~~	TO	~~~~~	
<i>deceitful Jacob</i>	<i>Paddan-Aram</i>	<i>marriages of Jacob</i>	<i>Canaan</i>	<i>transformed Jacob</i>	
STRIVING FOR BLESSING			LEARNING TRUE BLESSING		

2. Read 25:19-34 for the story of the birth

of Jacob.

3. Read 27:1—30:43 with a view to seeing how Jacob strove to gain blessing. On paper, record the experiences of these passages: 27:1—28:9; 28:10-22; 29:1-30; 29:31—30:24; 30:25-43. How was the experience of 28:10-22 different from the others? Why was it crucial?

4. Jacob's four wives—Leah, Zilpah, Bilhah, and Rachel—bore twelve sons to Jacob. Most of these names later became the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.²² Read 29:32—30:24 and 35:18-26 for the names of the sons. Check the names with those shown on [Chart 9](#).

5. For how Jacob learned true blessing, read 31:1—37:2a. Briefly stated, this is a story of Jacob's immediate problems; of their solutions; and of his finally seeing who he really was and then surrendering

completely to God. The highlights of the chapters are the three times when Jacob had an experience with God. These were at Haran (31:1-16); at Peniel (32:22-32); and at Bethel (35:1-15).

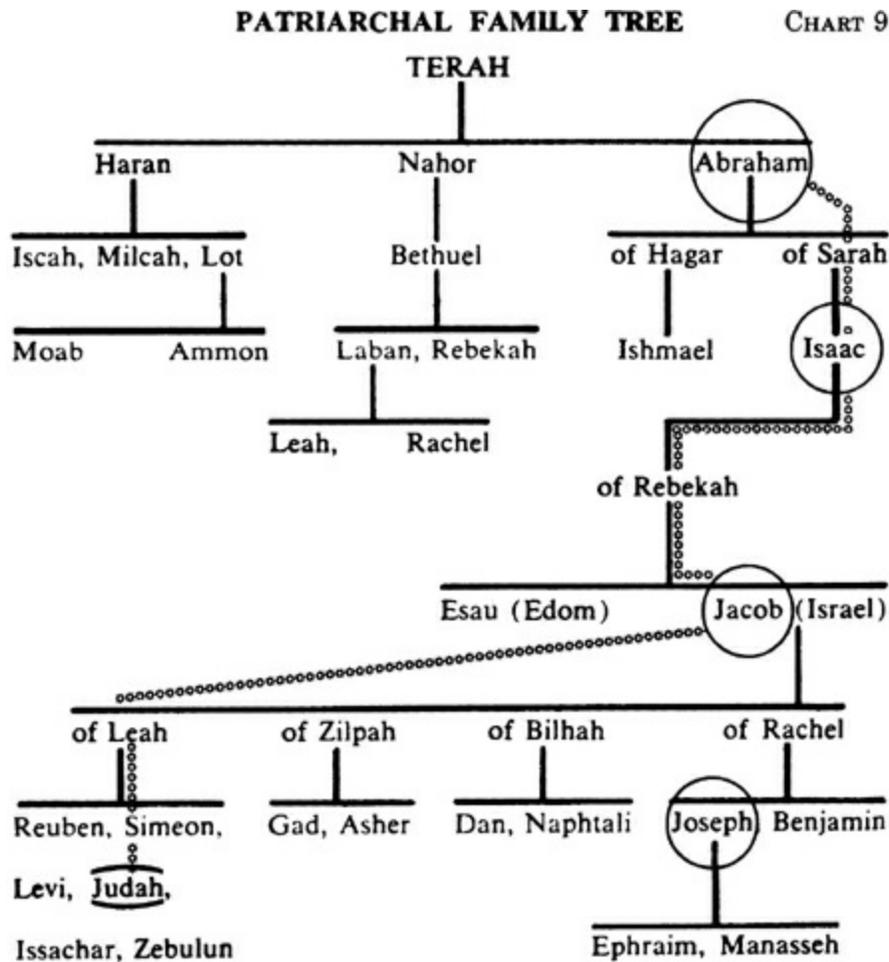
6. Read 32:22-32. In what ways was this Peniel experience a spiritual turning point in Jacob's career?

7. Jacob's experiences at Bethel (35:1-15) were the brightest of his life. Compare these with the earlier crisis experience at Bethel, as recorded in 28:10-17 (over twenty years earlier).

## **I. JOSEPH, BELOVED SON OF JACOB (37:2b—50:26)**

Even though Joseph was not of the Messianic line ([Chart 9](#)), of the twelve sons of Jacob, God sovereignly chose him to be the benefactor of Israel during the next crucial years of dwelling in Egypt. While in Egypt, the descendants of Joseph and his

brothers multiplied rapidly, and soon became a large nation. (See Exod 1:7, *The Living Bible*.)



1 . [Chart 10](#) shows a broad survey of Joseph's career. Read Genesis 37-50 with this overview in mind. What kind of a man was Joseph? Consider how some of his experiences were *types* of Christ's ministry. (An Old Testament *type* is a figure or

representation of something to come.) A type's fulfillment (antitype) usually is seen in the New Testament. About half of the Old Testament types foreshadow the person and ministry of Christ. The patriarch Joseph is considered by some to be the most complete type of Christ. For example, he was acknowledged to be the saviour and ruler of Egypt (Gen 47:25); and Christ shall be acknowledged as Saviour and Ruler of the world (Phil 2:10-11).²³

2. You may want to develop an extended outline of these chapters about Joseph.

JOSEPH'S CAREER (GENESIS 37-50)

CHART 10

37	41	46	50
PRISONER	BENEFACTOR	SON AND BROTHER	
<i>separated from his family</i>	42 <i>reunited with his family</i>	<i>dwelling with his family</i>	

3. One of the bright verses toward the end

of Genesis is the Messianic promise of 49:10. This is a promise of Judah's inheritance, to be fully realized in the person of Jesus Christ, of the line of Judah.

4. Read Genesis 50:24. How is this an appropriate conclusion to the book of Genesis? Relate it to 3:19 and 12:1-3.

## **V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES OF GENESIS**

1. Now that you have seen the highlights of Genesis, what verses would you consider as key verses in the book?

2. Write a list of key words and phrases.

3. In your own words, what is the theme of Genesis?

## **VI. APPLICATIONS**

Applications of the text of Genesis have been suggested from time to time in the previous studies. Here are a few more of the

prominent ones:

1. If you are a Christian, why would you appreciate the message of Genesis more than one who is not a believer? How is this book related to the ministry of Christ? In what ways is Genesis an important message for unbelievers?

2. God referred to Himself as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exod 3:6,15). Why would He use such a title?

3. In what ways is man distinct from animals? What are the implications of this, as related to man’s present life and his future destiny?

4. What does Genesis teach about the sins of man? What kinds of sins stand out in the Genesis account? What are the practical applications of these teachings?

5. How do Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians

15:21-22 interpret the account of man's first sin?

6. What have you learned from Genesis about the following (cite specific examples):

the omnipotence and omniscience of God

the holiness of God

the grace of God

the sovereignty of God

7. What traits of godly living are manifested in the stories of Genesis?

8. Why do you think Abraham was called the "friend" of God (2 Chron 20:7; Isa 41:8; James 2:23)?

9. Why has God chosen frail and sinful men to be His channels of communication?

10. How was a person saved during the patriarchal era? (Cf. Gen 15:6 and Rom 4:1-5.)

11. What sacrifices and altars do you recall studying in Genesis? Are sacrifices and altars part of Christian living? If so, what kind? (E.g., Rom 12:1.)

12. Divine electing grace, one of the Bible's great mysteries, is prominent in Genesis. Read Ephesians 1:4-6. Then consider these examples:



sons, Judah is elected to be the line of the Messiah (chapter xlix. 10). *Beneath and behind the historic redemption is the eternal election* (italics added).²⁴

## VII. FURTHER STUDY

Subjects suggested for extended study are:

1. The length of the days of Genesis 1.
2. The antiquity of the earth and man.
3. The origin of Satan.
4. Extent of the Noahic Flood: universal or local.
5. Messianic passages of Genesis.
6. Types of Christ in Genesis.
7. Names of God in these chapters: 1, 2, 14, 17, 31, 48, 49.
8. Character studies of the key persons of Genesis (a Bible dictionary is a good source book for this).

## VIII. SELECTED READING

### GENESIS AND SCIENCE

American Scientific Affiliation Symposium.  
*Modern Science and Christian Faith*, pp. 1-195.

Frair, Wayne, and Davis, P. William. *The Case for Creation*.

Harris, R. Laird. *Man: God's Eternal Creation*.

Kelso, James L. *Archaeology and the Ancient Testament*, pp. 20-32.

Lammerts, Walter E., ed. *Scientific Studies in Special Creation*.

Marsh, Frank Lewis. *Life, Man and Time*.

Whitcomb, John C. *The Early Earth*.

Whitcomb, John C., and Morris, Henry M.  
*The Genesis Flood*.

### HISTORICAL SURVEYS AND BACKGROUNDS

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament*

*Introduction*, pp. 169-208.

Baumann, Hans. *In the Land of Ur*.

Edersheim, Alfred. *The Bible History*, 1: 17-190.

Kelso, James L. *Archaeology and the Ancient Testament*, pp. 28-76.

Kitchen, K. A. *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, pp. 35-111.

Livingston, G. Herbert. *The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment*.

Payne, J. Barton. *An Outline of Hebrew History*, pp. 33-48.

Pfeiffer, Charles F. *Patriarchal Age*.

Sampey, J. R. *The Heart of the Old Testament*, pp. 15-41.

Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Handbook*, pp. 36-82.

Walvoord, John F. *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, pp.

36-95. Three chapters are about Christ in Old Testament history, typology, and prophecy.

Wood, Leon J. *A Survey of Israel's History*, pp. 27-82.

Young, Edward J. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 47-66.

#### COMMENTARIES

Carroll, B. H. *Genesis*.

Davis, John J. *Paradise to Prison*.

DeHaan, M. R. *Portraits of Christ in Genesis*.

Driver, S. R. *The Book of Genesis*.

Westminster Commentary.

Erdman, Charles R. *The Book of Genesis*.

Pfeiffer, Charles F. *The Book of Genesis*.

Pieters, Albertus. *Notes on Genesis*.

Ryle, H. E. *The Book of Genesis*.

Yates, Kyle M. "Genesis." In *The Wycliffe*

## *Bible Commentary.*

1. Theologians refer to this as creation *ad extra*.
2. W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 1:22.
3. Oswald T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses*, p. 288.
4. Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, p. 274.
5. This is the traditional view, strongly supported by both internal and external evidence.
6. There is archaeological evidence of the art of writing in the ancient Near East dated as early as the fourth millennium B.C., which was long before Moses' time.
7. G. T. Manley, *The New Bible Handbook*, p. 116.
8. D. A. Hubbard, "Pentateuch," in *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 964.

9. The first forty years (1525-1485 B.C.) of Moses' life were spent in Pharaoh's court. The next forty years (1485-1445 B.C.) saw him in exile in Midian (see [Map F](#)).

10. Dates are from John C. Whitcomb's chart, *Old Testament Patriarchs and Judges*.

11. Each full chapter of Genesis is a study segment, with these exceptions: chapter 25 has two segments, 25:1-18 and 25:19-34. Also, the segment of chapter 37 begins at 37:20. Mark these in your Bible now.

12. The word "generations" in this phrase signifies "that which is begotten."

13. Manley, p. 126.

14. There is no way of knowing how long this interval was, even though the genealogical listings include time data.

15. Latin for "let it be done."

16. See Edward J. Young, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 54.

17. Cf. John 8:44.

18. The word *Semitic* is derived from the name *Shem*. Some think the word *Hebrew* can be traced to Eber, great-grandson of Shem (Gen 11:14).

19. Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 63.

20. Steven Barabas, "Isaac," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 383.

21. Paddan-Aram is either the region where Haran is located, or another name for Haran itself. See [Map A](#) for the location of Haran.

22. In the land allotments to the tribes, the sons of Levi (Levites) were given no land inheritance. Also, Joseph was represented in two shares of territory by his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

23. See John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, pp. 62-78, for a good discussion of this subject.

24. Scroggie, 1:22.



## *Exodus: Book of Redemption*

The book of Exodus reports the first of God's deliverances of Israel, as He had promised Abraham. This second book of the Pentateuch picks up the story where Genesis left it, and so it is its sequel. In Genesis the divine purpose is revealed, and in Exodus the divine performance is exhibited.¹

This deliverance from bondage was a crucial event in the experience of the Israelites. Centuries later, many authors of the prophetic books and Psalms acclaimed it as the most significant miracle in their history. The deliverance is a beautiful type of the sinner's redemption from the bondage of sin. Thus Exodus is rightly called the "Book of Redemption."

# I. PREPARATORY FOR STUDY

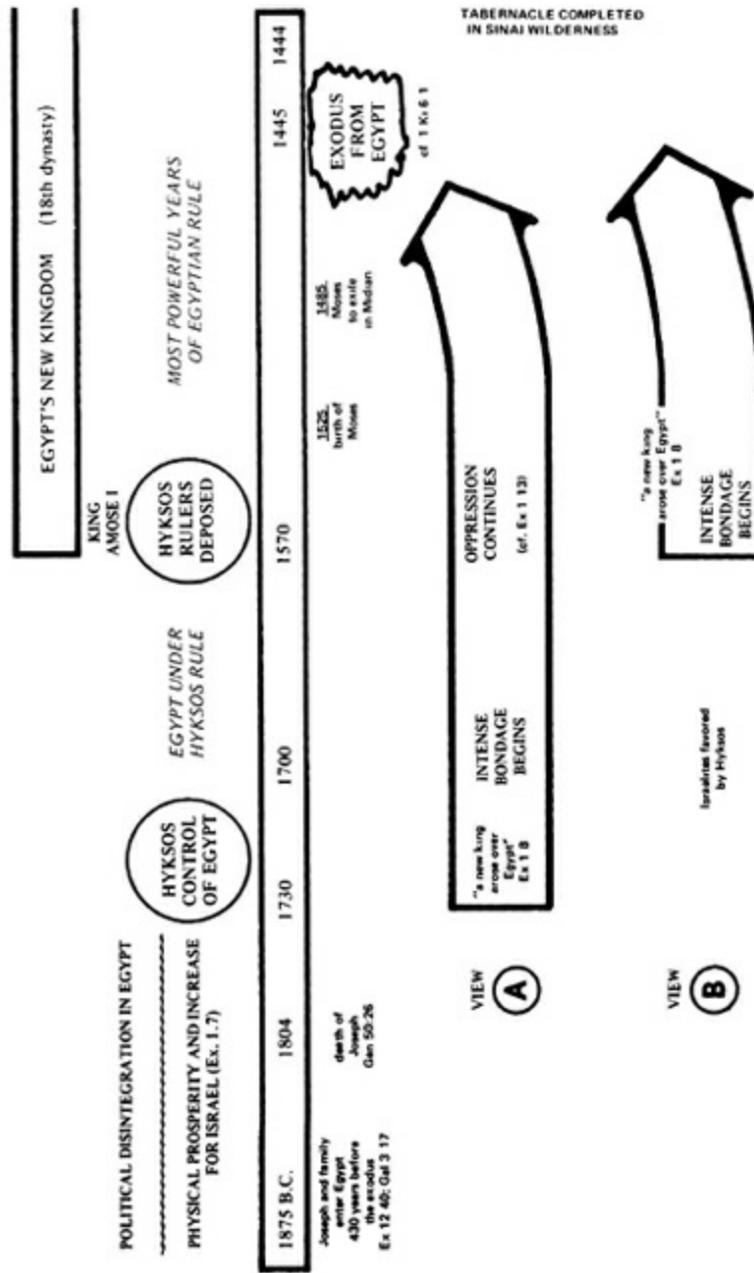
1. Recall the highlights of Genesis, as you surveyed that “Book of Beginnings.” Review especially the survey [Chart 11](#) and the chronology of [Chart 6](#).

2. Various comparisons may be made of Genesis and Exodus. Study the following comparisons, which will give you a general idea as to what to anticipate in the book you are about to study.²

GENESIS	EXODUS
human effort and failure	divine power and triumph
word of promise	work of fulfillment
a people chosen	a people called
God's electing mercy	God's electing manner
revelation of nationality	realization of nationality

## THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT

CHART 12



## II. BACKGROUND

### A. TITLE

The English title *Exodus* originated with the Greek Septuagint's *Exodos* ("departure," or "exit"). The title appropriately represents the key event of the book, the Israelites'

miraculous flight from bondage in Egypt.

## B. WRITING

Moses probably wrote this book soon after the completion of the tabernacle, described in Exodus 35-40. The date is in the last half of the fifteenth century B.C. (The tabernacle was completed in 1444 B.C. Cf. 40:17.)

## C. HISTORICAL SETTING

**Chart 12** shows the highlights of the historical setting of Exodus. Study it carefully to gain a clear historical perspective of this second book of the Bible.

Note the following on this chart:

1. A general survey of Egypt's political status is shown above the dateline. The two key events are the Hyksos invasion of Egypt (1730 B.C.), and the overthrow of this foreign group (1570 B.C.)³

2. References to Israel are shown below

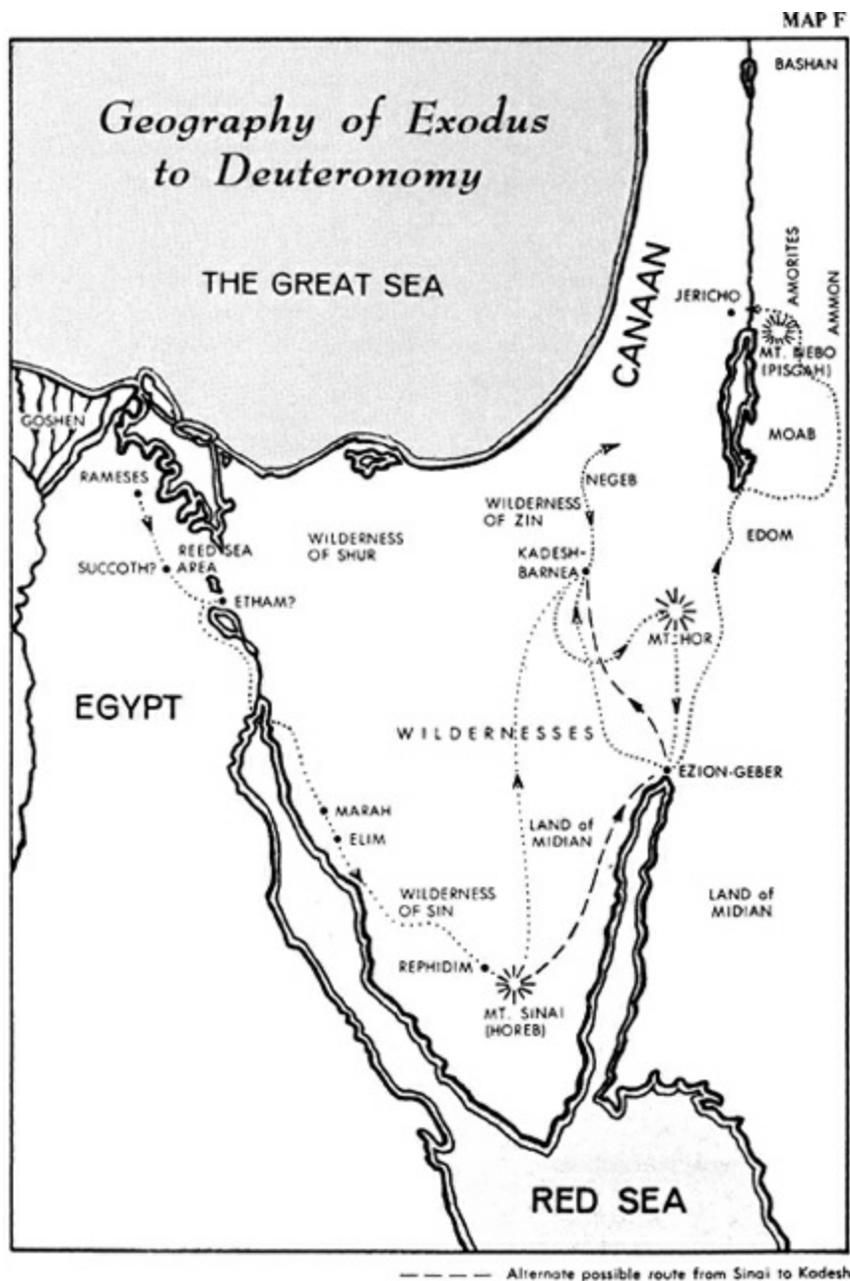
the dateline.

3. Read Exodus 1:7. Where on [Chart 12](#) is this verse dated?

4. Read Exodus 1:8. There are two different views as to the identity of this “new king.” View ^a identifies him as one of the Hyksos rulers. ⁴ According to View ^b, the “new king” was Amose I, the first of the eighteenth dynasty. ⁵ The main practical difference between the two views is the *duration* of Israel’s oppression.

5. The date of the Exodus is shown as 1445 B.C. ⁶ This is derived from two sets of facts:

Arrival of Jacob and his family in Egypt	1875 B.C.
Duration of stay in Egypt (Exod 12:40; Gal 3:17)	- <u>430</u> years
	= 1445 B.C.
<hr/>	
Beginning of Solomon’s Temple	965 B.C.
Interval since the Exodus (1 Kings 6:1)	+ <u>480</u> years
	= 1445 B.C.



6. How soon after the Exodus was the wilderness tabernacle completed?

7. Note how much Israelite history had transpired before the birth of Moses. Does this suggest to you any spiritual lessons?

#### D. GEOGRAPHY

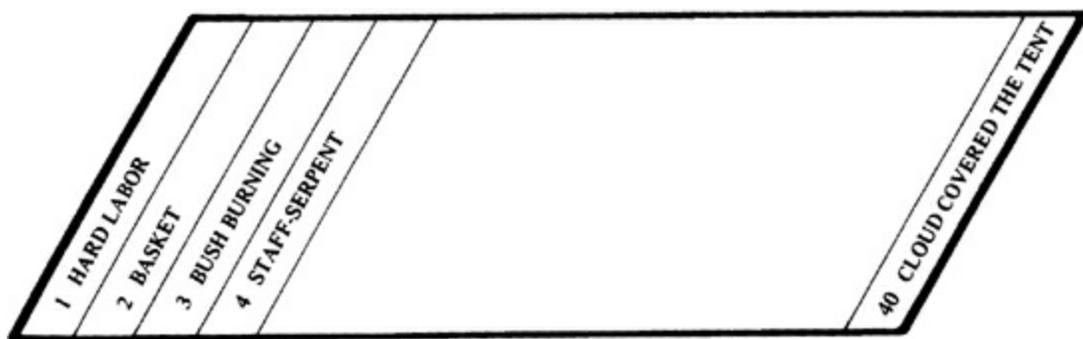
**Map F** shows where the action of Exodus took place. Learn this geography so that you can visualize the book's narrative. Note the location of Goshen. This is where the Israelites were dwelling in Egypt. Read Exodus 8:22 and 9:26.

### **III. SURVEY**

1. Begin your study of the text of Exodus by scanning the forty chapters of the book in one sitting. Look at each chapter just long enough to identify its general content. Don't read every verse, nor tarry over details. The first verse of each chapter is often a clue to the chapter's message. Also, your Bible may show general content at the top of each page. The purpose of this initial scanning is to get the "feel" of the book and observe its "flow" or progression. Always keep a pencil in your hand as you survey the text, and feel free to make notations in your Bible. Write

down on a sheet of paper your impressions thus far, and record any key words or phrases that have stood out from the text.

2. Now go back to each chapter and secure from the text of each chapter a picturesque word or short phrase which will represent a leading thought in the chapter. Record your forty chapter titles on a chart similar to the following:



When you have done this, you will have a fair grasp of at least the large movements or groups of material in Exodus.

For help in completing the remaining study suggestions and questions, refer to these chapter titles as well as the text of the

Bible.

3. Observe how the opening paragraph (1:1-7) records without fanfare the emergence of a large nation of Israel from the small, original nucleus.⁷ Compare the state of Israel in 1:8-14 with that suggested by the last five verses of chapter 40.

4. What are some of the major events in Exodus? Who is the main character? In what chapter is his birth recorded?

5. Often in the Bible a group of chapters (called a section) is about one common subject. In what sections are these subjects found (record approximate chapters):

plagues upon Egypt:

journey from Egypt to Sinai:

commandments of God:

specifications for the tabernacle:

construction of the tabernacle:

6. Geographically, Exodus is of three parts:

Israel in Egypt

Israel to Sinai

Israel at Sinai

At what place in the book (chapter, verse) do the Israelites begin their journey to Sinai? What verse reports the arrival of the Israelites at Sinai? (Note: An exhaustive concordance will answer this latter question quickly. Look up the word *Sinai*.)

7. The following two outlines represent the general contents of Exodus. At what chapter does the second division begin?

①	narrative	legislative
②	DELIVERANCE	WORSHIP

8. What chapter records the institution of the Passover sacrifices? Read the chapter and begin to ponder why this event was a

turning point in Israel's experience.

9. Before you complete your study of Exodus you will want to assign key words and key verses to the book. Have you decided on any of these yet?

10. Now refer to [Chart 15](#) and view the total structure of this book of Exodus. Compare its outlines with the studies you have already made. Observe among other things that the book is of two main parts *and also* of three main parts. Are any spiritual lessons suggested by the things recorded on the chart? For example, is there any significance that the Israelites had wilderness experiences before receiving God's Law?

11. The dates shown at the bottom of [Chart 15](#) are those used earlier in this chapter. How many chapters of Exodus represent about one year of Israel's

experience? How many about eighty years? What is the time spread in chapter 1? What does this unequal assignment of reporting tell you about God's purposes in His written Word? For example, why so many chapters about the tabernacle, as compared with the single-verse reporting of the success story of 1:7?

12. On the basis of your study thus far, how would you state the theme of Exodus? Try to include in that theme the message of each of the two parts of the book, namely, *deliverance* and *worship*. For example, as a book about Israel's deliverance, Exodus describes the nation's redemption *from* the bondage of Egypt and *unto* a covenant relationship with God (cf. 19:5).

It is in Exodus that Israel emerges as God's covenant nation. Here is Archer's summary of the book:

It relates how God fulfilled His ancient promise to Abraham by multiplying his descendants into a great nation, redeeming them from the land of bondage, and renewing the covenant of grace with them on a national basis. At the foot of the holy mountain He bestows on them the promises of the covenant, and provides them with a rule of conduct by which they may lead a holy life, and also with a sanctuary in which they may make offerings for sin and renew fellowship with Him on the basis of forgiving grace.⁸

13. You may want to refer to outside sources for detailed outlines of the Book of Exodus.⁹

#### **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

Eight words represent the multicolored

narrative of Exodus: bondage, Moses, plagues, Passover, exodus, commandments, idolatry, tabernacle. A few study questions and suggestions are given below in connection with each of these subjects. These are not exhaustive, but they are intended to touch on some of the highlights. Look for spiritual applications as you study. Be sure to read the passages involved.

#### **A. BONDAGE AND OPPRESSION (1:8-22)**

Compare God and the king of Egypt in these verses. How do you reconcile the sovereignty of God with the vast powers of evil rulers in the world?

#### **B. MOSES, LEADER OF ISRAEL (2:1—7:13)**

Moses has been called “one of the most colossal and majestic characters in the history of the world.”¹⁰ Read this interesting account of his early life and

ministry, and record the subject of each of these sections:

2:1-10

2:11-25

3:1-12

3:13-22

4:1-31

5:1—7:13

What prominent truths stand out in this story?

### **C. DEMONSTRATIONS OF GODS POWER (7:14—11:10; 12:29-36)**

As you read this story, try to arrive at answers to these questions: What was the real issue of the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh? What was the purpose of these miraculous signs? (Cf. 4:5,8, 30-31.) Why so many plagues? Why did the

judgments of the first nine plagues not soften Pharaoh's heart? (Cf. 11:9-10.)

The passages describing the ten judgments are listed below:

1. blood (7:14-25)
2. frogs (8:1-15)
3. lice (8:16-19)
4. flies (8:20-32)
5. livestock pestilence (9:1-7)
6. boils (9:8-12)
7. hail (9:13-25)
8. locusts (10:1-20)
9. darkness (10:21-29)
10. death of firstborn (11:1-10; 12:29-36)

#### **D. PASSOVER (12:1-28)**

The night of the Passover sacrifices was a

turning point in the history of Israel (see [Chart 15](#)). It was the beginning of a new era for the people of God, who had multiplied in number and now were about to be redeemed from the clutches of their oppressor (cf. 6:6-7). A new calendar was instituted (12:2), and the Israelites' experience was to be annually commemorated as a permanent ordinance (12:14). When the deep spiritual significance of the Passover is seen, one can well understand God's design in assigning crisis, pathos, awe, pageantry, and memorial status to the events beginning at the stroke of midnight.

The Passover chapter is also a key chapter of the whole Bible. As you read it, look for what is taught about divine holiness, election and grace, and man's sin and salvation. Why did God institute blood sacrifice as an atonement ritual? In answering this, relate blood to life (cf. Heb

9:22).

## E. RED SEA DELIVERANCE AND WILDERNESS JOURNEY (12:37—18:27)

We saw in our survey study that the first eighteen chapters of Exodus relate Israel's *deliverance*, while the remaining chapters concern their *worship*. The deliverance was not in one isolated event. It involved God's preservation through bondage; provision of a leader; promotion of a spirit of hope of deliverance through promises; protection in the midst of severe plagues; power over the obstacle of the Red Sea; and provision in a strange and hostile wilderness. Such were the varied experiences of Israel over those many years. The latter two experiences are the subject of the present passage. As you read the passage, observe the many things which God taught His people through such trying circumstances. Record your

observations on paper.

*Red Sea Deliverance* (13:1—15:21)

Instructions chap. 13

Deliverance chap. 14

Song of Praise 15:1-21

*Wilderness Journey* (15:22—18:27)

At Marah 15:22-26

At Elim 15:27

At the Wilderness of Sin chap. 16

At Rephidim 17:1—18:27

In what ways do you think the wilderness was a favorable place for God to mold and unify the hosts of Israelites into an organized nation of people before their journey onward to the land of Palestine?

**F. LAW GIVEN AT SINAI (19:1—24:18)**

This is the section of Exodus which contains the familiar Ten Commandments. [11](#)

chapter 19 begins the last half of the book which we have called *worship* ([Chart 15](#)).

Worship is intimately related to law. For, to worship is to acknowledge a higher authority, and there is no authority where there is no law. So after God delivered His people from bondage, He began to spell out in detail how they should worship Him publicly, privately, and even in everyday living. These instructions were His laws. Their importance to Israel is seen by the space devoted to them in the Pentateuch: about half of Exodus, most of Leviticus, the first part of Numbers, and much of Deuteronomy. The importance of the Ten Commandments to the world is demonstrated by the fact that the legal codes of every civilized nation are based upon them.

Read the passage with the following

outline in view. (You need only scan the long section of 20:18—23:19. Spend longer time with the other sections.)

### *The Setting*

Promise 19:1-6

Preparation 19:7-15

Phenomena 19:16-25

### *The Laws*

Basic Laws 20:1-17

Laws in Detail [12](#) 20:18—23:19

### *The Promises* 23:20-33

### *The Response* 24:1-18[13](#)

The Ten Commandments of 20:1-17 are foundational and all-inclusive. Observe that the first four commandments tell man's duty toward God, and the last six, his duty toward his fellowman. After you have finished your study of chapters 19-24,

answer this simple but basic question: Why did God impose these laws upon His people?

### G. IDOLATRY AT SINAI (32:1—34:35)

We are bypassing chapters 25-31 at this time so that they may be studied last, in connection with the other chapters (35-40) about the tabernacle. See [Chart 15](#) for the location of the idolatry section in the book's pattern.

Four words summarize the narrative chapters 32-34:

sin  
judgment  
intercession  
renewal

The people's sin was of the worst kind: spiritual idolatry and corruption (32:1-6). God's judgment was consuming, declared by a jealous Lord (32:7-10). Moses' intercession

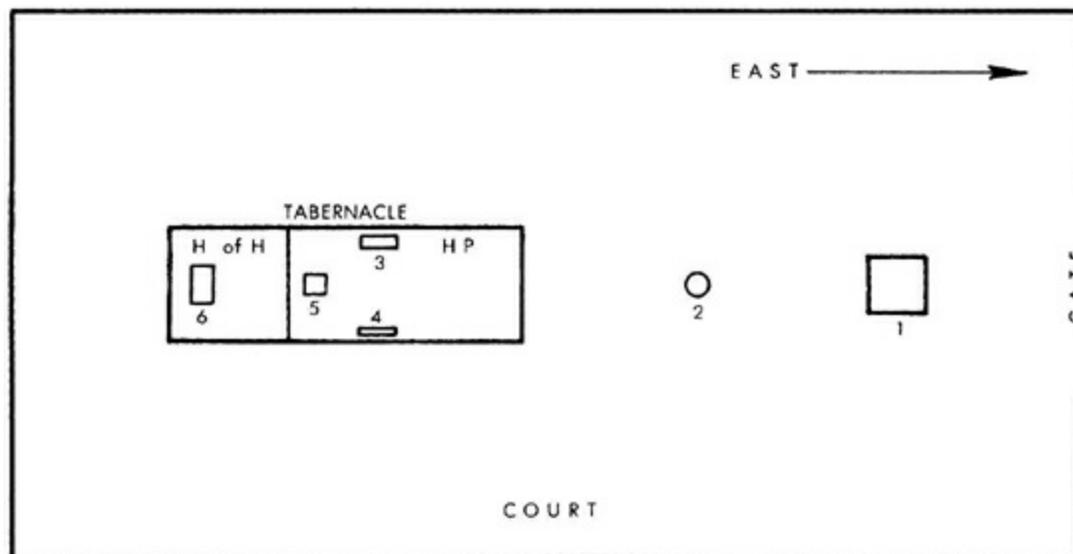
was desperate, appealing to God's mercy (32:11—33:23). And the consequent renewal of fellowship between Israel and God was conditional upon the people's repentance for sin and determination to obey the words of the covenant (34:1-35).

The cycle represented by the four words noted above was a constantly recurring sequence in Israel's history from this time forward. After coming to the place of renewal, the people would move back to the dwellings of sin again—and the cycle would repeat itself. That Israel was not ever utterly consumed is explained only by the mercy of God and by the ministry of prophets, judges, and men like Moses who pleaded with God in behalf of their brethren. That God was pleased to work through His chosen leaders is illustrated in these chapters by the experience of Moses, whose delay on the mountain was the occasion for his people to

sin at the beginning of the narrative, but whose presence at the end of the narrative was an occasion of awe and respect—all because Moses spoke for God.

PLAN OF THE JEWISH TABERNACLE

CHART 13



DIMENSIONS (one cubit equals approximately 1 1/2 feet)

COURT —100 BY 50 CUBITS

GATE —20 CUBITS.

TABERNACLE —30 BY 10 BY 10 CUBITS

H P = HOLY PLACE —20 BY 10 BY 10 CUBITS

H of H = HOLY OF HOLIES —10 BY 10 BY 10 CUBITS

FURNITURE

1 BRAZEN ALTAR

2 LAVAR

3 TABLE OF SHEWBREAD

4 GOLDEN CANDLESTICK

5. ALTAR OF INCENSE.

6. ARK OF THE COVENANT

INTRO: 25:1-9

TABERNACLE AND FURNITURE		
<i>chapters 25-27</i>		<i>chapter 30</i>
<i>Structure and furniture of Tabernacle and Court</i>		<i>Other Items</i>
	PRIESTLY MINISTRY	APPENDIX
	<i>chapters 28-29</i>	<i>chapter 31</i>
	<i>Priests' garments and ministry</i>	<i>Craftsmen, Sabbath, and Tables of stone</i>

After you have read these three chapters, record your impressions and reflections, especially about human nature and the character of God.

## H. TABERNACLE (25:1—31:18; 35:1—40:38)

Recall from [Chart 15](#) that chapters 25-31

record God’s specifications for the building of the wilderness tabernacle, and chapters 35-40 report the actual construction of that tabernacle.

The diagram of [Chart 13](#) shows the plan and furniture of the tabernacle. Your reading of the Bible text will be enhanced if you first acquaint yourself with the names shown on this diagram.

## **I. SPECIFICATIONS OF THE TABERNACLE (25:1—31:18)**

This section about the tabernacle is of four parts, shown by [Chart 14](#).

As you read these chapters, refer to this chart for orientation. Otherwise the organization of the passage will be very elusive. Do not tarry over the details of the specifications. Rather, watch for statements of purpose (e.g., “that it may be a memorial,” 30:16), and other phrases of

explicit spiritual lessons (e.g., “every man that giveth willingly with his heart,” 25:2, KJV).

According to Exodus 25:8, 22, what was the primary purpose of the tabernacle for the Israelites? Why do you think God gave such detailed specifications of the tabernacle, as far as the Israelites were concerned?

Read Hebrews 8:1-10:18. How is Christ shown here as the fulfillment of such Old Testament types as the tabernacle and the high priest?

## **J. CONSTRUCTION OF THE TABERNACLE (35:1—40:38)**

Here is a brief outline of this passage:

35:1	36:8	39:43	40:1	40:34 40:38
Preparations	Items Made	Inspection	Tabernacle Erected	Glory of the Lord

If we compare the account of the tabernacle construction (chaps. 36-39) with the specifications given to Moses (chaps. 25-31), we observe that they correspond accurately (e.g., cf. 26:31 and 36:35). All things were done obediently, without question.

When the workmen had finished making the parts of the tabernacle, they brought everything to Moses (39:32-43); and Moses set up the structure, just one year after the Israelites had departed from Egypt (40:17). He carefully assembled every piece as directed, each article of furniture in its exact position (see 40:18-33). When all was done, a wonderful thing happened: God came down and filled the tabernacle with His glory (40:34-35). He had kept His word given earlier (cf. 25:8), and from that time on He would speak to them not from the fiery Mount Sinai, but from the hallowed tabernacle (cf. Lev 1:1). Young shows how

the tabernacle pointed forward to Christ.

The completion of the Tabernacle is an external pledge of the permanence of the Covenant of Grace. The God of deliverance (the Lord) has taken up His abode in the midst of His people. Yet, they are excluded from immediate access into His presence by the vail which shut off the most Holy place to all but the high priest and to him also, save on the Day of Atonement. Through endeavor to obey the Sinaitic legislation the people would be taught their need of a Mediator, a Mediator who would combine the prophetic office of Moses and the priestly office of Aaron. Thus, the arrangements of the Tabernacle were typical, preparatory for the one Sacrifice that has taken away the sins of the world.¹⁴

The key phrase of the closing paragraph of

Exodus is “glory of the LORD.” Whereas the book had opened on the grievous note of bondage, the people’s groan has now been swallowed up in the Lord’s glory. In the opening chapter of Exodus, the pressing need of the people was deliverance; in the closing chapters, the need is that of fellowship—fellowship with God for assurance, sustenance, and protection. To provide for all three, God gave the wilderness experiences for their testing, the Law for their living, and the tabernacle for their worship. In all, He proved Himself the gracious Redeemer.

## **V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

One of the many key words of Exodus is “deliver.” A key expression is “as the LORD commanded Moses.” Two key verses suggested for this book are 3:8 and 12:51. What key words and key verses have

impressed you in the course of your survey study?

## VI. APPLICATIONS

You have been making spiritual applications along the way from time to time. Here are some further suggestions:

1. What New Testament verses come to your mind that teach that salvation is not only a *deliverance from* (negative) but also an *entrance into* (positive)? Compare Deuteronomy 6:23.

2. What is the difference between ceremonial law and moral law? Which type, unchanged, applies today? Cite examples for your answers.

3. What did Jesus have in mind when He summed up the whole Law in the words of Matthew 22:37-40?

4. What do the laws of Scripture have to

do with the person who is already saved?

5. Why did Christ have to die in order to save man? (See Matt 26:28; Rom 3:24-25; 5:9; Col 1:20; 1 Pet 1:18-19; Rev 1:5.)

6. What are some of the important truths which Exodus teaches about God? About man? Are these truths applicable today?

7. Why is it so important for God's authority to be recognized without reservation?

8. How would you describe the conversation between Moses and God? What lessons about prayer and fellowship can be learned from this?

9. God told Moses that He was the "I AM" (3:14). How does this identification relate to you, practically speaking?

10. What blessed truths about Christ and His ministry are foreshadowed in Exodus?

Spend much time thinking about this.

11. What spiritual lessons about leadership may be learned from the example of Moses?

12. What does Exodus teach about obedience?

13. What view of miracles is a prerequisite for an understanding of the book of Exodus?

14. How do you define *worship*? What important truths about worship does Exodus teach?

15. Read Psalm 105. Why is praise to God so vital for the believer?

## VII. FURTHER STUDY

Subjects suggested for further study are:

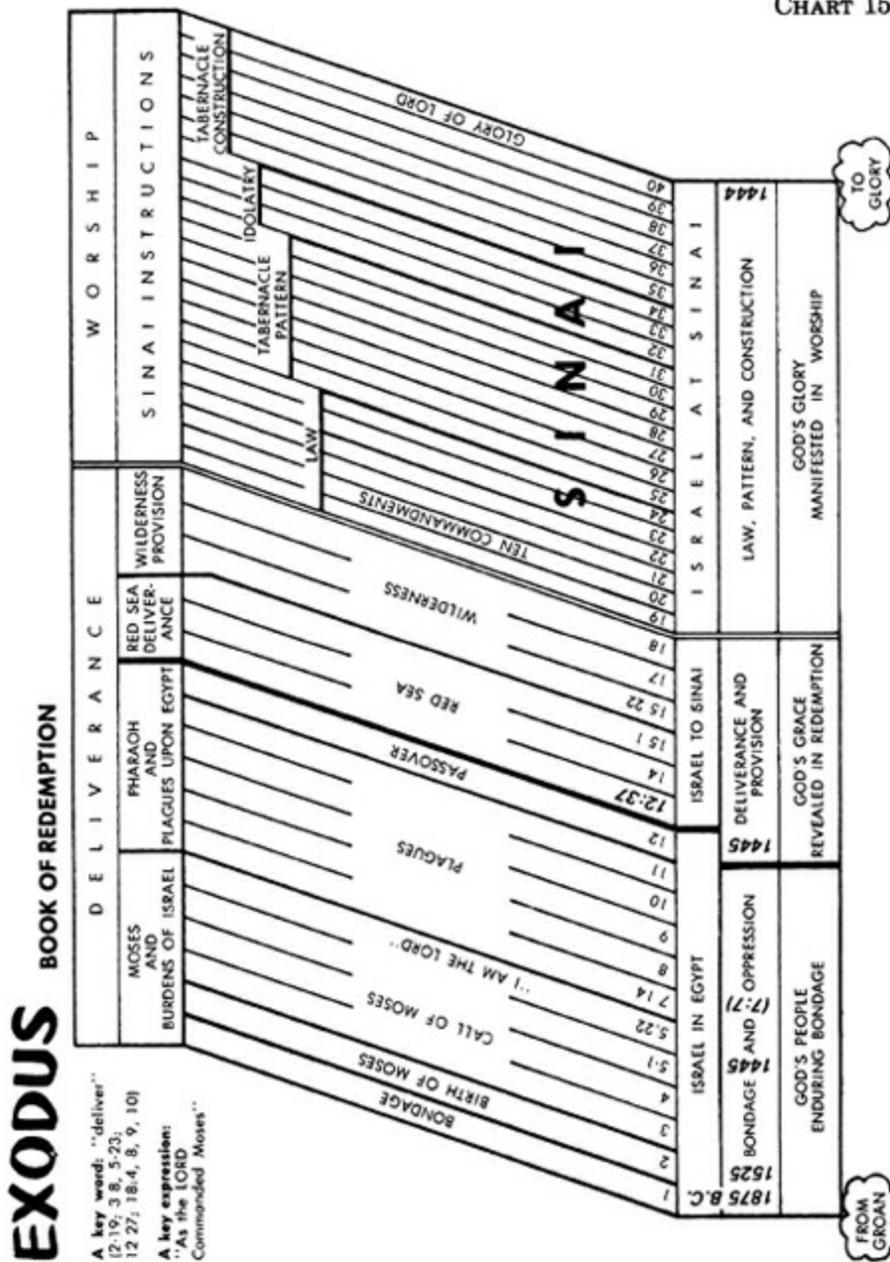
1. The chronology of the book of Exodus, including the date of the Red Sea crossing

2. The types and symbols of Exodus

3. God's laws and commandments

4. The ministry of Aaron

5. Word studies of the following key words of Exodus: covenant, manna, sign, harden, fear, Passover, memorial, sanctify, altar, obey, testimony, worship, consecrate, Lord, glory



A key word: "deliver" (2:19; 3:8, 5-23; 12:27; 18:4, 8, 9, 10)  
 A key expression: "As the LORD Commanded Moses"

6. Verse studies of the following: 1:7; 2:24; 3:5, 8,12,14-15; 4:11; 5:2; 7:3; 8:19; 12:13-14; 12:41; 13:17-18; 14:31; 16:35; 19:5-6a; 20:1-17,20; 24:7; 31:18; 32:8, 10, 26, 31-32; 33:11, 13; 34:10, 28; 35:21; 40:17, 34, 38

## VIII. SELECTED READING

### CHRONOLOGY OF EXODUS

Archer, Gleason L. *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 204-23.

Unger, Merrill F. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, pp. 140-52.

_____. "Exodus." In *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 331-34.

Wood, Leon. *A Survey of Israel's History*, pp. 83-109.

### HISTORICAL SETTING

Casson, Lionel. *Ancient Egypt*.

Free, J. P. *Archaeology and Bible History*, pp. 84-103.

Payne, J. Barton. *An Outline of Hebrew History*, pp. 49-51.

Pfeiffer, Charles F. "Exodus." In *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* pp.

267-69.

_____. *Egypt and the Exodus.*

Schultz, Samuel J. *The Old Testament Speaks*, pp. 43-47.

Unger, Merrill F. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, pp. 129-39.

_____. *Unger's Bible Handbook*, pp. 84-89.

#### LAWS OF GOD

Erdman, Charles R. *The Book of Exodus*, pp. 87-104.

Goddard, Burton. "Law." In *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, pp. 477-80.

Kelso, James L. *Archaeology and the Ancient Testament*, pp. 77-88.

Kline, M. G. "Ten Commandments." In *The New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 1251-52.

Manley, G. T. *The New Bible Handbook*, pp. 135-37.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Ten Commandments*.

Murray, J. "Law." In *The New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 718-23.

Sampey, John R. *The Heart of the Old Testament*, pp. 77-88.

Unger, Merrill F. "Decalogue," "Law," and "Law of Moses." In *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 256-57; 646-49.

Watson, Thomas. *The Ten Commandments*.

#### TABERNACLE

Erdman, Charles R. *The Book of Exodus*, pp. 105-44.

Gooding, D. W. "Tabernacle." In *The New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 1231-34.

Harrison, R. K. "Tabernacle." In *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, pp. 821-24.

Kelso, James L. *Archaeology and the Ancient*

*Testament*, pp. 88-98.

Levine, Moshe. *The Tabernacle*. Written from a Jewish non-Christian viewpoint.

Martin, W. S., and Marshall, A. *Tabernacle Types and Teachings*.

Soltau, Henry W. *The Tabernacle*.

Spink, James A. *Types and Shadows of Christ in the Tabernacle*.

Strong, James. *The Tabernacle of Israel*.

Unger, Merrill F. "Tabernacle of Israel." In *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 1059-66.

#### COMMENTARIES

Chadwick, G. A. *Exodus*. Expositor's Bible.

Driver, S. R. *Exodus*. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.

Johnson, Philip C. "Exodus." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

Mead, C. M. "Exodus." In *Lange's*

## *Commentary on the Holy Scripture.*

1. See The W. Graham Scroggie, Know Your Bible, 1.26.
2. The comparisons are from scroggie, *ibid*.
3. the hyskon were asiatic seminomads of semetic origin. Very little is known about them. Their use of a new weapon, the horse-drawn chariot, was the key to their conquest of Egypt.
4. This view is held by Gleason Archer and John Whitecomb.
5. Among the writers who hold to View B. are Samuel Schultz, J. Barton Payne, and W. T. Purkiser.
6. A later date of 1270 B.C is held by some. Read Leon Wood, A Survey of Israel's History, pp. 83-109, for a thorough discussion of the date of the Exodus.
7. By the time of their departure from Egypt,

the Israelites numbered over two million. This figure is based on Exodus 12:37 and Numbers 1:46. Here are the calculations, made with the two assumptions indicated by an asterisk (*):

603,550	(warriors over twenty)
+ equal number*	(all other males)
<hr/>	(total males)
= at least one million	(total females)
+ equal number*	
<hr/>	(total population)
= at least two million	

See C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 3: 5-15; and Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 88-89, for a defense of the two million plus population of Israel during the wilderness journeys.

8. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 209.

9. Excellent outlines appear in *ibid.*, pp. 209-10; Scroggie, 1:27-28; Philip C. Johnson, "Exodus," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 52; J. C. Connell, "Exodus," in *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 106-7.

10. Charles R. Erdman, *The Book of Exodus*, p. 7.

11. The term "Ten Commandments" is a Bible

term. See Exodus 34:28 and Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4.

12. Some see the phrase “the book of the covenant” (Exod 24:7) as referring to this body of laws.

13. Of the ratification ceremony (24:4-8), Wood writes, “If one were to pick out a particular day when Israel became a true nation, this would be the day” (p. 145).

14. Young, p. 77.

## *Leviticus: “Ye Shall Be Holy”*

The book of Leviticus is God’s manual for His people on how to approach Him and live pleasing in His sight. In the experience of the Israelites, encamped on Mount Sinai, the laws of Leviticus were the guideposts which they needed for life on the wilderness journey ahead, and for settling in Canaan. The key command, “Ye shall be holy,” pervades the book, revealing something of the awesome message which God always wants all His people to hear and obey.

### **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

1. Leviticus continues the story of Exodus, even though there is very little narrative in it. Read Exodus 40:26-33, followed by

Leviticus 1: 1-2a. What is the common setting?¹

2. Review the survey chart of Exodus ([Chart 15](#)). Where were the Israelites during chapters 19-40? What are the main subjects of those chapters?

3. The setting and contribution of Leviticus are suggested on [Chart 16](#). Study the entries.

It might be said that Exodus records how Israel became a redeemed nation, while Leviticus concerns the cleansing, worship, and service of that redeemed nation. W. Graham Scroggie says, “EXODUS begins with sinners, but LEVITICUS begins with saints, that is, as to their standing.”²

4. Sacrifice is a prominent subject in Leviticus. It will be very helpful for you to read about sacrifice in general, before studying the many sacrifices in Leviticus.

Consider such aspects as (1) meaning, (2) origin,(3) motives and purposes, and (4)types (recomonded reading: Steven Barbas, “sacrifice,” in The Zondervan Pictorial bible Dictionary, pp.737-40; Edward J. Young, An Inttroduction to the Old Testament pp.85-87; and Merill F. Unger, Unger’s Bible Hand book, pp. 106-8.)

LEVITICUS IN THE PENTATEUCH

CHART 16

GENESIS	EXODUS	LEVITICUS	NUMBERS	DEUTERONOMY
ORIGINS of the nation	DELIVERANCE of the nation	LIFE of the nation	TEST of the nation	REMINDERS to the nation
THEOCRACY BORN	THEOCRACY ESTABLISHED		THEOCRACY TESTED AND PREPARED FOR THE NEW HOME	
	<p>COVENANT IS AMPLIFIED            “Keep my covenant”            to be a “peculiar treasure”            “kingdom of priests”            “holy nation”            [Exodus 19.5-6]</p>	<p>LAWS ARE PRESCRIBED            “which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD”            (Lev. 18:5)</p>		

The sacrifices in Levitics. Consider such aspects many and varied. Keep the following classifications in mind as you study the book:

- a) blood; or non-blood
- b) for an individual; or for a group
- c) conforming to relationship to god (e.g., praising god); or restoring relationship to god (e.g., atonement for sin)
- d) animal; vegetable; liquid; or other object
- e) ministered by a priest; or not ministered by a priest
- f) wholly consumed on the altar; or partly consumed by the offerer
- g) restriction involved; or no restitution involved

5. The basic principle of law undergirds all of the book of Leviticus. Consult various outside sources (e.g., The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 3:1879-80) for read New Testament verses containing the word "law.") Why is a correct view of law necessary for an appreciation for an and

undestendig of leviticus?

## II. BACKGROUND

### A. NAME

It was the custom of the Jews to call each book of their Scriptures by its first word in the Hebrew text. For Leviticus this was *wayyiqra*, meaning “and he called.” Obviously this title does not indicate what Leviticus is about. The Greek Septuagint version, which was the first translation of the Old Testament, assigned the title *Leuitikon*, meaning “that which pertains to the Levites.” The reason for such a title is that much of the book concerns the ministry of the priests, who were an important segment of the tribe of Levi (cf. Heb 7:11). The Greek title was carried over into the Latin Vulgate as *Leviticus*, which was then adopted by the English Bible.

## B. AUTHOR

As discussed earlier, Moses wrote all five books of the Pentateuch. Fifty-six times in Leviticus it is explicitly stated that the Lord gave the laws to His people through Moses. (Follow the name “Moses” in a concordance.) That Moses wrote the instructions in a book is stated in Ezra 6:18. Compare Jesus’ reference to Moses in Matthew 8:2-4 with Leviticus 14:1-4.

## C. DATE

First read the passages cited on [Chart 17](#). Observe that God spoke the words of Leviticus during the first month of the second year after the Exodus. The Israelites were encamped on Mount Sinai (Lev 7:38; 27:34). Just when Moses wrote down the words we cannot be sure, but he may have done so before the wilderness journey of Numbers began, around the middle of the

fifteenth century B.C. (based on the 1445 B.C. date for the Exodus from Egypt).

DATE OF LEVITICUS

CHART 17

EXODUS FROM EGYPT	COMMANDMENTS GIVEN at SINAI	TABERNACLE (portable) CONSTRUCTED	LEVITICAL LAWS GIVEN	PREPARATION for WILDERNESS JOURNEY
Exodus 12:41	Exodus 19:1	Exodus 40:17	—————	Numbers 1:1
Beginning of the new calendar	First year, Third month	Second year; First month; First day	Second year, First month	Second year; Second month, First day

#### D. RELATION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

The predictive symbols, types, and shadows found throughout this third book of the Bible find their fulfillments in the New Testament. For example, the blood sacrifices point to Christ as the Lamb of God. The priests typify Jesus as the Great High Priest. The worshipers in Leviticus foreshadow the New Testament Christians.

A list of the New Testament references to Leviticus is given later, under *Further Study*. The best biblical commentary on Leviticus is

the book of Hebrews.

### III. SURVEY

1. In your survey of Leviticus, follow the same study procedures described earlier. (To conserve space, these general procedures will not be repeated for the remainder of this study guide. However, individual steps of that general process will be suggested along the way.)

2. Observe among other things that Leviticus opens with an exhortation to voluntary consecration (freewill offering) and closes on a similar note (freewill vows).

3. Note especially groupings of chapters with similar subject matter. For example, the first seven chapters describe the laws of the five offerings.³ After you have looked for other groupings, compare your findings with those shown on the survey [Chart 22](#).

4. Study carefully the survey [Chart 22](#). What one word represents the whole book? What outline divides the book into two parts? ⁴ Read 18:1-5 and notice how these words introduce a new theme, that of doing and living, or, *the walk with God*.

5. Study the outline shown just below the base line on [Chart 22](#). How is holiness prominent in the outline? Scan the chapters in your Bible to see the bases for the groupings. This is an effective way of surveying the book.

6. Leviticus has a twofold theme, which may be stated thus: the way to God and the walk He demands. Keep surveying the book until it is clear to you that this theme represents its message.

## **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

### **A. GOD'S HOLINESS AND MAN'S SINFULNESS**

The inescapable fact of a dichotomy of God's holiness and man's sinfulness is the universal basic problem confronting all people. The entire message of Leviticus is directed to it. The book's good news is that there are atonement and cleansing for man's sin to redeem him to God, and daily fellowship with God is possible for those who obey His directions. Keep this in mind as you read the Bible text.

## B. LAWS

Leviticus is the most thoroughly legalistic book in the Bible.⁵ The many laws which appear in its pages are of different kinds: general or specific; ceremonial, social, or moral; temporal or timeless; punitive or reparative. Burton Goddard writes:

By means of the ceremonial law, God spoke in picture language of the salvation He was to effect through the

life and death of the Incarnate Son.... The social legislation governing Israel was designed for a particular culture at a given period of history and so it... was but for a time, yet the principles which underlay it are timeless and applicable to all generations. God's moral law is in force everywhere and at all times, for it is a reflection of His very being.⁶

All the laws of Leviticus were designed by God for His glory and for man's good. Paul wrote that "the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith" (Gal 3:24). God's Law shows man his corruption, and is intended to bring conviction of sin. J. Gresham Machen comments, "A low view of law leads to legalism in religion; a high view of law makes a man a seeker after grace."⁷

Look for the purposes cited above as you

study the laws of Leviticus.

### C. THE FIVE OFFERINGS (1:1—7:38)

The five offerings described in these chapters were the major offerings of the Israelites' worship services. Below is listed what each offering meant to the people according to the specifications of Leviticus:

*Burnt* (1:3-17; 6:8-13): Voluntarily devoting all their very being and possessions to God, through purifying fire

*Meal* (2:1-16; 6:14-23): Thanking God and offering their lives for His service

*Peace* (3:1-17; 7:11-34): Participating in the blessings of fellowship with God

*Sin* (4:1—5:13; 6:24-30): Being forgiven because they were sinners

*Trespass* (5:14—6:7; 7:1-10): Being forgiven for the sins they committed

**Chart 18** identifies some of the Christian

teachings derived from these five offerings. Think about these, and add your own conclusions.

CHRISTIAN MESSAGE OF LEVITICUS' OFFERINGS CHART 18

OFFERING		THE CHRISTIAN	C H R I S T
BURNT	IN COMMUNION WITH GOD (SWEET SAVOUR OFFERINGS)	Consecration	He presented Himself to the Father, to do His will
MEAL		Service	He served His Father and men as Son of Man
PEACE		Fellowship	He is the common bond of fellowship between God and man
SIN	FOR COMMUNION WITH GOD	Redemption for the sinner that he is	He atoned for the <b>guilt</b> of sin
TRESPASS		Redemption for the sin he commits	He atoned for the <b>damage</b> of sin

## D. THE PRIESTHOOD (chap. 8-10; 21-22)

The inauguration of the Old Testament priestly ministry (Exod 28-29; Lev 8) began a new era in Israel's career, when God, through clear and unmistakable signs, symbols, and events, daily showed forth His righteousness, grace, and glory. Priests served especially as *mediators*, to help

maintain fellowship between the holy God and the sinful people. Aaron and his four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, were chosen of God to be Israel's first priests (Exod 28:1). The qualifications of the priestly office matched the awesome responsibility which rested upon the priests' shoulders. It is not surprising, therefore, that five chapters of Leviticus (8-10; 21-22) are devoted to the consecration and holy disciplines of their ministry.

The Messianic typology of the Old Testament priesthood is rich, as a reading of Hebrews 8:1—10:18 reveals. The one sinless, eternal Mediator between God and man is Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:5), and the writer of Hebrews devotes many pages to exalt Him and His office (“we have *such* a high priest,” Heb 8:1, italics added). Read and study Hebrews 8:1—10:18.

## E. DAY OF ATONEMENT (chap. 16)

The Day of Atonement was the most important day of Israel's calendar, for it was then that the idea of atonement for sin reached its highest expression. Sin and burnt offerings were part of the day's ritual. Only on this day could the high priest enter into the most holy place of the tabernacle. This was the only day of the year for which fasting was required, in bold contrast to the atmosphere of rejoicing that attended the annual feasts. On no other day were the Israelites more strongly impressed with the *grace* of God in forgiving all their sins. The gospel of this day was a bright prophetic sign of the coming Gospel of the event of Calvary, when Jesus would sacrifice Himself for the sins of man, once for all. Oswald T. Allis sees the Day of Atonement as the peak of Leviticus.

To understand Calvary, and to see it in its tragic glory, we must view it with all the light of sacred story centred upon it. With Isaiah, the “evangelical” prophet of the old dispensation, and with the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we must turn to Leviticus and read of the great day of atonement, and of the explanation which is given of it there: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lv xvii. ii).⁸

## **F. HOLY TIMES (chaps. 23-25)**

God instituted holy times (cf. *holidays*) in the calendar of the Israelites so that His people would set aside many days of the year to meditate on who He was and what He had done for them. The convocations

had a wholesome, positive purpose about them, to emphasize that believers were to be separated *unto* the Lord, as well as separated *from* evil. And what the Israelites learned and experienced at these holy seasons, they were to practice *daily*, step by step, throughout their life.

**Chart 19** lists the holidays described in Leviticus 23-25. As you read the Bible text, look for the main purpose of each convocation, and observe the prominent truths revealed by each about God.

**Charts 20a** and **20b** show how the feasts are distributed in the Hebrew calendar.⁹

PASSAGES	HOLY TIME	DATE	MAIN PURPOSE OF THE OBSERVANCE	GOD SEEN AS:
Lev 23 3 Exodus 20 8-11 Deut 5 12-15	SABBATH	7th day (weekly)	Rest from labor, worship of God	Creator, Lord
Lev 23 5 Num 28 16 Deut 16 1-2	PASSOVER	1/14		
Lev 23 6-8 Num 28 17-25 Deut 16 3-8	UNLEAVENED BREAD *	1/15-21		
Lev 23 9-14 Exodus 23 16 Num 28 26-31	FIRSTFRUITS	1/16		
Lev 23 15-22 Exodus 34 22 Deut 16 9-12	PENTECOST * (Harvest; Weeks)	3/6		
Lev 23 23-25 Num 29 1-6	TRUMPETS	7/1		
Lev 23 26-32 Lev. 16 Num 29 7-11	DAY of ATONEMENT	7/10		
Lev 23 33-44 Num 29 12-40 Deut 16 13-15	TABERNACLES *	7/15-21		
Lev 25 1-7 Exodus 23 10-11	SABBATICAL YEAR	every 7th year		
Lev 25 8-55	JUBILEE	every 50th year		

*Observe from Exodus 23 14-17 and Deuteronomy 16 16-17 that three times yearly all the men of Israel were to make pilgrimages to the place of worship and to observe these feasts.

## V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

Some of the most prominent key words and phrases of Leviticus are “holy” (about ninety times), “blood,” “life,” and “before the LORD” (about sixty times).

Key verses suggested for Leviticus are

17:11 and 19:2. Concerning the latter, compare 11:44-45 and 20:7, 26.

## VI. APPLICATIONS

1. With the five offerings of Leviticus 1-7 in mind, what do you think the Christian should be offering to God?

2. In what ways does Christ serve Christians as their High Priest?

3. The clear teaching of 1 John 1:8 is that all Christians do commit sins. Does this jeopardize the Christian's witness of the Gospel? Explain.

4. What do the chapters about the priests' consecration teach you about Christian service?

5. What is your personal testimony in connection with these two revealed truths:  
a) The just penalty for sin is death through

the shedding of blood, in which resides the life of the flesh.

- b) God in His grace allows the death of an *acceptable substitute* as payment for sin's penalty. (Read the following verses: Matt 20:28; Rom 3:24-26; 1 Cor 15:3; Gal 1:4; Heb 7:25; 1 Pet 2:24.)

6. What are your thoughts about the following statements:

- a) When man comes into fellowship with the holy God, he must live in the light of this new experience.
- b) Offerings to God must be made willingly, in the spirit of obedience to His instructions.

7. The truth about holy living by God's people is taught in the New Testament as well as the Old. Apply these verses to your life: 1 Peter 1:13-16; Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 1:22; 1 Timothy 2:8; Titus 1:8; 1

John 1:6-7.

8. What do Christian holidays (e.g., Easter) mean to you?

9. What do you consider to be the most important practical teachings of Leviticus for today? Identify at least five.

## VII. FURTHER STUDY

1. Study these three subjects in the Bible: law, sacrifice, and offering.

2. Make word studies of the following: sin, atonement, holy. (See Irving L. Jensen, *Enjoy Your Bible*, pp. 96-108, for help on how to study a word of the Bible.)

**HEBREW CALENDAR (1-6)**

**CHART 20a**

ORDER IN SACRED CALENDAR	ORDER IN CIVIL CALENDAR	PREXILIC NAME	POSTEXILIC NAME	EQUIVALENT	SEASON	FARMING	FESTIVALS	BIBLICAL REFERENCES
1	(7)	Abib	NISAN	Mar-Apr	Spring Equinox Latter rains	Barley harvest begins Flax harvest	(1) RELIGIOUS NEW YEAR'S DAY, Num. 28:11 14- Passover (Exodus 12:18) 15-21. Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6) 16 Firstfruits (Lev. 23:10ff)	Exodus 12:2 Neh. 2:1
2	(8)	Ziv	IYYAR	Apr.-May	Summer Dry season begins	Barley harvest	14 Later Passover (Num. 9:10-11)	I Kings 6:1, 27
3	(9)		SIVAN	May-June		Wheat harvest begins Early figs ripen	6 Pentecost (Lev. 23:15-21)	Ester 8:9
4	(10)		TAMMUZ	June-July		Wheat harvest Grape harvest		Ezek. 8:14
5	(11)		AB	July-Aug		Principal fruit month grape, fig, olive		
6	(12)		ELUL	Aug-Sept		Dates and summer figs		Neh. 6:15

**HEBREW CALENDAR (7-12)**

**CHART 20b**

7	(1)	Etiham	TISHRI	Sept -Oct	Early Rains Seedtime	(Plowing and sowing)	(1 CIVIL NEW YEAR'S DAY) 1 Trumpets (Lev 23 24; Num 29 1) 10 Day of Atonement (Lev 16 29ff ) 15-21 Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23 34ff )	I Kings 8 2
8	(2)	Bul	MESHVAN	Oct -Nov		Wheat and barley sowing	22 Solemn Assembly (Lev 23 36)	I Kings 6 38
9	(3)		KISLEV	Nov -Dec	Winter begins (John 10 22)		25 Feast of Dedication (Lights) (John 10 22)	Neh 1 1
10	(4)		TEBETH	Dec -Jan	Rainy winter months	Cultivation of Jordan valley begins		Esther 2 16
11	(5)		SHEBAT	Jan -Feb		Almond blossoms Oranges ripen		Zech 1 7
12	(6)		ADAR	Feb -Mar		Barley ripens Citrus fruit harvest		Ezra 6 15
13			ADAR SHENI	Intercalary month	Added each year that the barley was not ripe on the 16th of Nisan Two such years were not allowed in succession			

3. Compare the ministries of Aaron and Christ. [Chart 21](#) suggests some comparisons.

Israel's high priest (Lev. 16)	Our High Priest (Heb. 9)
(1) Aaron, called of God from among men.	(1) Christ, called of God from among men (Heb. 5:4, 10).
(2) Had compassion for the wayward (Heb. 5:2).	(2) Prayed with tears (Heb. 5:7).
(3) In spotless purity of dress.	(3) In spotless purity of character.
(4) Entered the holy of holies.	(4) Entered heaven itself (Heb. 9:24).
(5) Made complete atonement (by offering the blood of a goat).	(5) Made complete atonement (by offering His own blood).
(6) For the whole nation (Israel) and for himself.	(6) For the whole human race (John 3:16); not for Himself.
(7) Offered continually, from year to year.	(7) Offered once, for all eternity (Heb. 9:25).

4. Study the book of Hebrews as it relates to Leviticus.[10](#)

5. With the help of outside sources, study the New Testament use of Leviticus.[11](#)

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**LEVITICUS** "YE SHALL BE HOLY"

1	BURNT MEAL	LAWS OF OFFERINGS	LAW OF OFFERINGS CONSECRATION OF PRIESTS	THE WAY TO GOD	REDEMPTION	
2	MEAL	3				4
3	PEACE	4				5, 14
4	SIN	5, 14				6, 8
5, 14	TRESPASS	6, 8	8	9	10	
6, 8	LAWS OF OFFERINGS	9	10	11	12	
9	AARON AND SONS ANOINTED	10	11	12	13	
10	STRANGE FIRE	11	12	13	14	
11	EAT... TOUCH	12	13	14	15	
12	WOMAN CONCEIVE	13	14	15	16	
13	TEST OF LEPROSY	14	15	16	17	
14	CLEANSING OF LEPROSY	15	16	17	18	
15	UNCLEAN ISSUES	16	17	18	19	
16	ATONEMENT DAY	17	18	19	20	
17	BLOOD SLAUGHTER	18	19	20	21	
18	UNCOVERING NAKEDNESS	19	20	21	22	
19	"I AM THE LORD"	20	21	22	23	
20	MOLECH	21	22	23	24	
21	PRIEST RULES	22	23	24	25	
22	PROFANE NOT	23	24	25	26	
23	HOLY CONVOCATIONS	24	25	26	27	
24	CONTINUALLY	25	26	27		
25	SABBATICAL YEAR AND JUBILEE	26	27			
26	CONSEQUENCES	27				
27	VOWS					

CONSECRATION (circled) is written vertically on the left side of the chart.

CONSECRATION (circled) is written vertically on the right side of the chart.

RESTORATION (circled) is written vertically in the middle of the chart.

YEAR OF JUBILEE (circled) is written vertically in the middle of the chart.

REDEMPTION (circled) is written vertically in the middle of the chart.

THE WALK WITH GOD is written vertically in the middle of the chart.

THE WAY TO GOD is written vertically in the middle of the chart.

H O L I N E S S is written vertically in the middle of the chart.

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Erdman, Charles R. *The Book of Leviticus*.

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1. The phrase, “all their journeys,” in Exodus 40:36-38 refers to the wilderness journeys, which had not taken place as of Leviticus 1:1.

2. W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 1:30.

3. The section 6:8—7:38 gives additional rules concerning the five offerings described in 1:2—6:7.

4. Most expositors begin a main division at chapter 17, rather than 18. Either location can be justified. See *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 3:1871, for reasons supporting the division at chapter 18.

5. The few historical sections appear at these places: 8:1—10:7; 24:10-23.

6. Burton L. Goddard, “Law,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 480.
7. Quoted in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1292.
8. Oswald T. Allis, “Leviticus,” in *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 135.
9. See Guy B. Funderburk, “Calendar,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, pp. 138-41, for a discussion of the Jewish calendar.
10. See the survey chart of Hebrews, [Chart 58](#), in Irving L. Jensen, *Jensen Bible Charts*, vol. 3.
11. A list of all the New Testament allusions to Leviticus appears in Irving L. Jensen, *Leviticus, Self-Study Guide*, pp. 72-74.

## *Numbers: Journey to God's Rest Land*

Numbers is the story of God leading His people, Israel, through wildernesses on their way to Canaan, the rest land He promised. The journey moves from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab, opposite Jericho. First it is a brief journey in the dark unknown, demanding the utmost in trust and patience. Then it is a long, aimless wandering in judgment for unbelief, consuming all but a few of the original travelers. Finally, it is a new and swift journey by the next generation with a few of the old leaders, reviving the hopes of the nation to appropriate the original promise of a land of rest and blessing.

As the book of Numbers closes, the people

can expect to hear the trumpet as the signal to cross over the Jordan into the land. They have to drive out the enemy, but success is assured, for their God has said, “I will give it [the land] to you” (10:29).

The five books of Moses (Pentateuch), as noted earlier, constitute a whole. Numbers, as the fourth part of that whole, makes its indispensable contribution. This may be seen in the following comparisons:

Book	Nation of Israel	Man	God
Genesis	Birth; infancy	His creation, Fall, hope	Sovereignty
Exodus	Delivered from Egypt	Deliverance	Mercy
Leviticus	Given Law of worship and living	Access to God, and fellowship with Him	Holiness
Numbers	Traveling to Canaan	Conditions for inheritance	Patience
Deuteronomy	Final preparations for entering Canaan	Consecration	Lordship

## I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

1. Acquaint yourself with the geography of the Numbers narrative. See [Map F](#), studied earlier. It is very helpful to visualize

*location* as you study *action* in any historical account. As indicated earlier, the story of Numbers moves from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab, opposite Jericho.

2. Review the accounts of Exodus and Leviticus, which are the antecedents of the book of Numbers.

3. Be prepared to read about many supernatural works of God in behalf of the Israelites. These are a continuation of His mighty deeds recorded in Exodus. Do you know why God performed so many miracles in Old Testament times?

4. Be thinking of what the extent of the average Jew's acquaintance was with God at the beginning of the journey of Numbers.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. TITLE**

This fourth book of Moses has had various

titles (e.g., “Book of Journeyings,” “Book of Murmurings”). According to the Hebrew custom of deriving its title from the first word of the Hebrew text, it has been called *Wayyedabber*, meaning simply, “And he said.” When the Septuagint translators affixed a title to the book, they chose the Greek word *Arithmoi*, meaning “Numbers,” the word being suggested by the two numberings, or censuses, of the people as recorded in the book (Num 1 and 26). The Latin Vulgate named it *Liber Numeri* (“Book of Numbers”), which was carried over into the English versions. It must be true that not a few readers and students of the Bible have passed by the fourth book of Moses because of the “dry” connotation of this title. But it is both an exciting and inspiring story, and all who spend time studying it receive much benefit.

## B. AUTHOR

External and internal evidences point conclusively to Mosaic authorship of all five books of the Pentateuch, which includes Numbers. Moses certainly was a logical choice of God to write Numbers, since he was the chief eyewitness of its events.

### C. DATE

Moses wrote Numbers when he was at Moab with his people, toward the end of his life at the close of the fifteenth century B.C.

## III. SURVEY

1. Begin your survey study by scanning the thirty-six chapters of Numbers. Record on paper chapter titles similar to the ones shown on [Chart 24](#).

2. Note on [Chart 24](#) where the two main censuses are recorded in the book. The second census involves a different generation from the first. To understand the

reason for a second count, read the pivotal chapters cited on the chart. (A pivot is a turning point in a book's structure. In the case of a historical account, the change that follows a pivot may be for the better or for the worse.)

3. According to the chart, how many major divisions comprise the book of Numbers? Study the various outlines showing this. Refer to your Bible text to support these outlines. For example, read 10:11-13 and 22:1, observing the geographical movements.

4. According to the chart, how much time is covered by each of the three divisions? (It should be noted here that, while the middle section covers a span of about thirty-nine years, there is scarcely any record of the events of these many years of wanderings. Most of the section deals with events

immediately before and after the actual wanderings. This is a good example of the Holy Spirit's selectivity as to what He inspired the biblical authors to include and exclude.)

5. Read through Numbers again, referring to your chapter titles and the extended eight-point outline shown on the chart. This will give you a good overview of the book.

## **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

### **A. THE CENSUSES (chaps. 1 and 26)**

Both censuses of this book were counts of the fighting forces of Israel, not of the total population. On the basis of those censuses, the total population has been estimated to be around two million.¹ The people occupied a very large area as they traveled, and were miraculously fed and sustained along the way.

## **B. FINAL INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE THE JOURNEY (5:1—10:10)**

The first four chapters of Numbers record the directions which Jehovah gave Moses regarding preparations for the journey as related especially to the community of the camp as a whole. In chapter 1 the instruction was, “Count the warriors of the camp”; in chapter 2, “Arrange the tribes in the camp”; and in chapters 3 and 4, “Take care of the tabernacle of the camp.” Beginning at chapter 5, the directions are aimed at individuals within the camp. Read these chapters with the following outline in mind:

1. Put out the unclean (5:1-4).
2. Judge the guilty (5:5-31).
3. Separate yourselves (Nazirite vow) (6:1-27).

4. Offer gifts (7:1-88).
5. Cleanse the Levites (7:89—8:26).
6. Keep the Passover (9:1-14).
7. Follow your leaders (9:15—10:10).

### **C. THE SPIES' REPORTS AND THE PEOPLE'S UNBELIEF (12:16—13:33)**

Read the passage. As the Israelites approached the land of Canaan from the south ([Map F](#)), Moses sent spies ahead to see what the Israelite armies would be facing. God chose to use this situation as a terminal test of faith. He knew what the report would be—overwhelmingly fearful from a human standpoint. What God wanted to do was to face the people with the ultimate in the test of their faith: Would they move on in faith into the jaws of apparent annihilation?

Caleb's recommendation was to go in and possess the land, impregnable as it seemed.

The other spies' conclusion was that a conquest of the land was impossible. In unbelief, all the people went along with the pessimistic report and rebelled against the Lord and His promises of deliverance. They cried out, "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt" (14:4).

Judgment by God was inevitable: death and disinherittance (14:11-12). Everyone who murmured against Jehovah would die in the wilderness in the course of forty years. Only Caleb and Joshua, along with the children of the murmuring Israelites, would enter Canaan at the end of the forty years.

#### **D. DESERT WANDERINGS (15:1—19:22)**

The next thirty-seven years or more were transitional years in the history of the nation of Israel. (When the commencement and closing days of the wilderness experiences

are included, the total time period was forty years.) Read 15:1—19:22.

The history of Numbers records very few events of these transitional years, for in a real sense they were years of void; one generation of Israel's sacred history was quickly dying off, and its rising youth as yet had no history at all. But though the period lacked in events, it did not lack in its significance as a transitional period.

*Geographically.* The people neither advanced nor retreated geographically; rather, they wandered aimlessly about the wilderness and desert areas, between Kadesh and the Red Sea (14:25), consuming the years of God's calendar of judgment. Some of the names of the camping places are listed in 33:19-36. When the judgment years came to a close, the nation returned to Kadesh (20:1), ready then to advance

toward Canaan.

*Population.* The thirty-seven years produced the major population change. The 600,000 warriors met their appointed death over the space of the years, some by violent causes (16:49), and were buried in the wilderness—daily reminders of God’s great judgment. Children and youth under twenty years of age grew up, were married, and reared children; and by the end of the wandering years, a new generation of the seed of Abraham had appeared.

*Spiritually.* In a spiritual sense, new seeds of hope were sown, the original covenant and promise reaffirmed, and preparation for entering God’s land renewed. For this spiritual ministry among the people, God still had His servants, Moses, Aaron, Aaron’s sons, the Levites, Joshua, and Caleb. The next chapters of Numbers put into focus the

major spiritual issues of these transitional years.

#### **E. AT THE GATE TO THE LAND (22:2—36:13)**

The Israelites had now arrived at the gate to the promised land, Geographically, that gate is located in 22:1 as by “the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan opposite Jericho.” For the Israelites, God would keep the gate closed until the day of entrance arrived. The delay was for the accomplishment of God’s sovereign business at this crucial junction in the history of the Israelites. In the midst of new problems, the people would experience God’s hand of vindication and judgment (22:2—25:18). For preparation for life in the new land, a new census must be taken, a new leader identified to succeed Moses, and the Law of God finalized (chaps. 26-30). (Actually, Deuteronomy contains the bulk of legislation given to the people at this time).

Good strategy called for completing the disposition of the Transjordan (land on the east side of the Jordan where the Israelites were now settled) before crossing into Canaan proper (chaps. 31-32). Finally, specifications were given as to the geographical distribution of the lands of Canaan, with an identification of cities of refuge, and a recognition of the stability of inheritances within the respective tribes (chaps. 34-36).

An important item of business at this time, as noted above, was the designation of a new leader to succeed Moses. After telling Moses to take one last view of the promised land before his death (27:12-14), the Lord instructed him to commission Joshua, son of Nun, as his successor (27:18-21).

And Moses, aged 120, a mature man of God and faithful leader of His people

through agonizing years of tribulation, still in prime physical condition (Deut 34:7), who would have loved to be there when his brethren finally crossed the Jordan into the land of rest, unflinchingly obeyed his Master to the very end, and “*did just as the Lord commanded him*” (27:22, italics added). Before his death, recorded in Deuteronomy, Moses was to manifest this obedient attitude in a few more tasks as God’s servant.

## V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

Note the key words cited on [Chart 24](#). Refer to an exhaustive concordance, and read all the phrases where these words appear.

Two key verses suggested for Numbers are 10:9 and 10:29. Look for other key verses in the course of your study.

## VI. APPLICATIONS

1. Numbers reveals much about God's character. Look for passages in which these attributes appear: unchanging faithfulness, omnipotence, holiness, justice, mercy, and sovereignty. Why is it important for you to keep learning about who God is?

2. Why did God perform such extreme miracles in the days of Numbers? Are such miracles generally observed today? Why or why not?

3. Numbers is like a mirror for man to look in. Especially in the middle section of the book, from chapters 10 through 21, man's heart is exposed with its many sinful tendencies. The prominent sin of Numbers, in the general category of unbelief and disobedience, is that of murmuring against God. The Israelites no sooner began the journey from Sinai to Canaan than they began to murmur. "Now the people became

like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the LORD” (11:1). This they did despite the fact that everything was to their advantage: (1) deliverance from Egypt’s bondage; (2) no present problems on the start of the journey; (3) promise of sufficient help from God for the successful arrival in Canaan (cf. 10:29). About what things are Christians tempted to murmur today?

4. The years of desert wanderings were literally years of waste and void, giving awesome testimony of the fact of divine judgment for sin. Is God still the Judge of all mankind? If so, what should the Christian’s attitude be to this Judge?

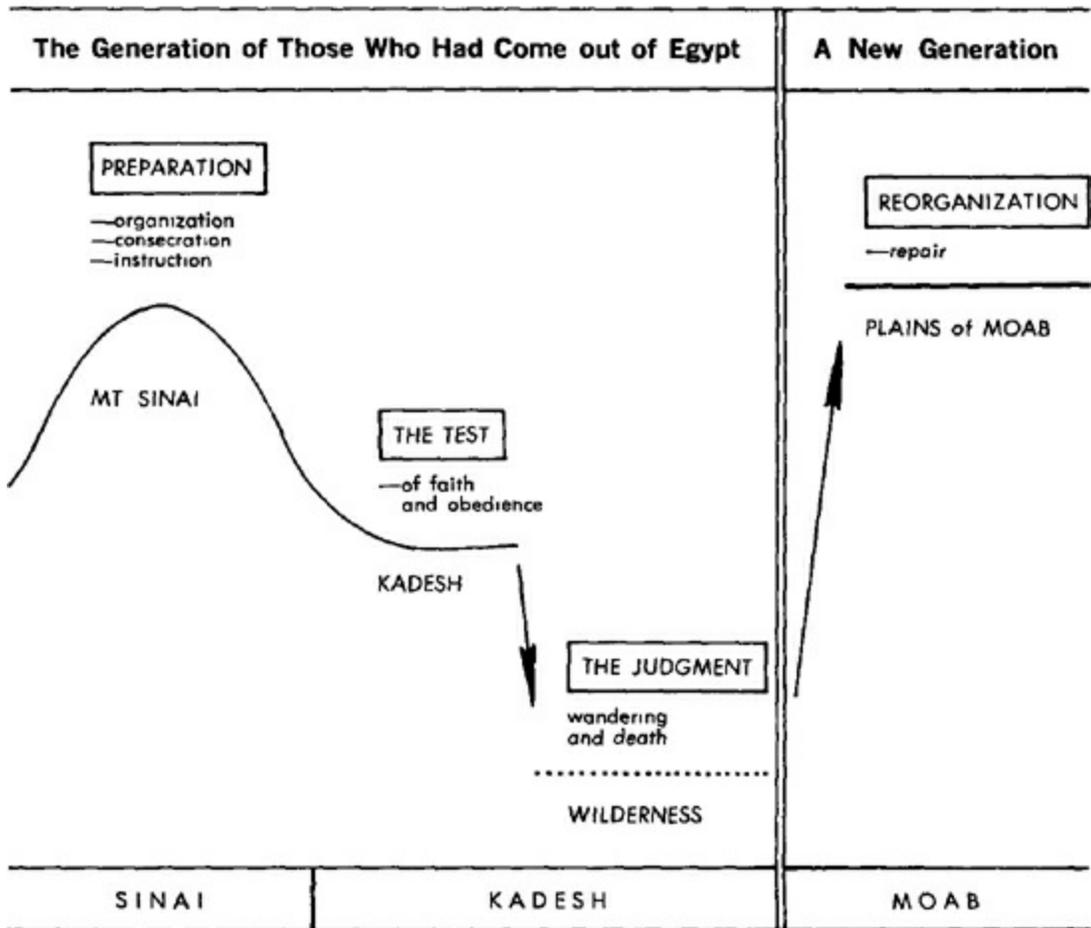
5. Hebrews 3 and 4 apply Numbers to the Christian life, concerning victorious living. The main thrust of the Hebrews passage is shown below.

a) God offered the occupation of Canaan to

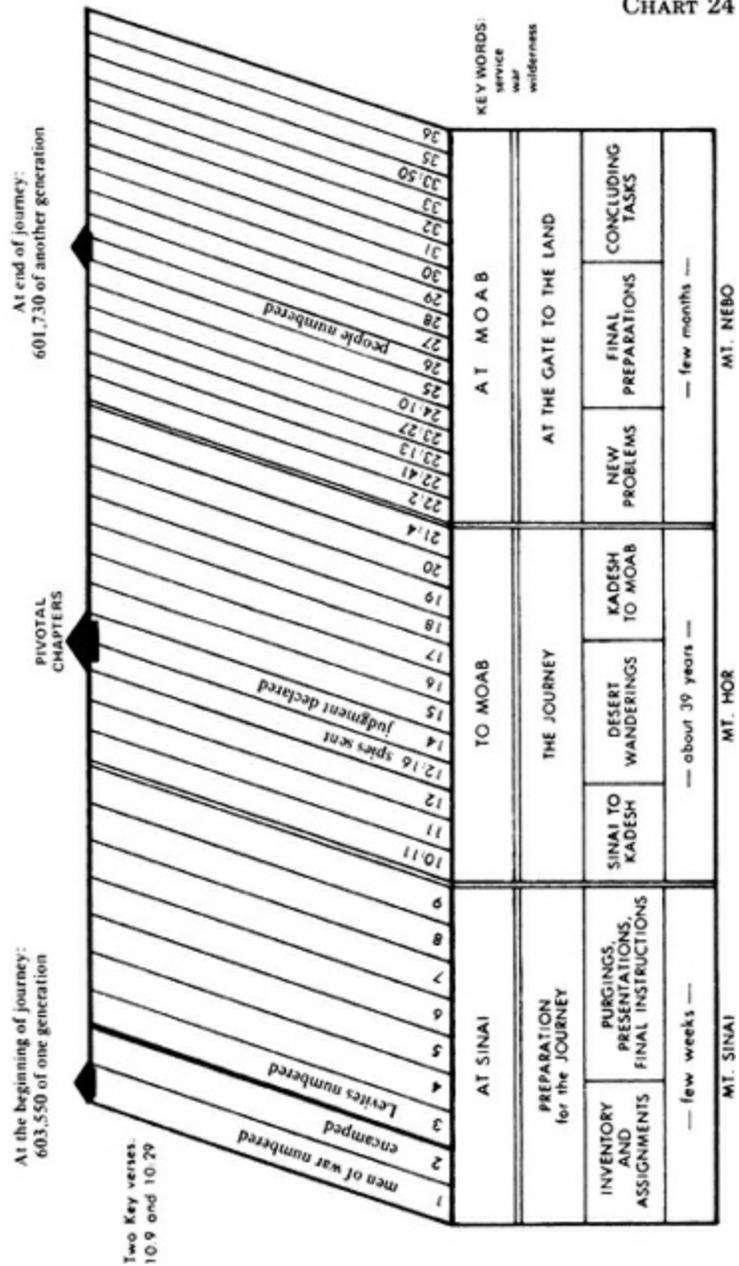
His people, Israel.

- b) They failed to enter the land because of unbelief (Heb 3:19).
- c) Today God offers rest to the Christian if he will fulfill the conditions of belief and obedience. (“There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God,” Heb 4:9.)

The “rest” spoken of in Hebrews does not refer to heaven, since the epistle teaches it is possible for a Christian to come short of it.



# NUMBERS JOURNEY TO GOD'S REST-LAND



“Let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it,” Heb 4:1.) Therefore, this rest is a state of Christian living today, of victory and blessing, where Jesus has preeminence in the heart (hence, the fruits of *His* rest), and where the Holy

Spirit continually fills the soul. Even as the Israelite needed to watch his life and keep right with God on his journey to Canaan if he would enter the land, so the Christian must “be diligent to enter that rest” (Heb 4:11). Spend time meditating on God’s offer of spiritual *rest* to Christians who fulfill His conditions.

6. Although Moses was not granted entrance to the land because of his sin, nevertheless he was used of God in a mighty way to serve and lead Israel up to the hour of crossing the Jordan. This was partly because he did not murmur against God for judging his earlier sin. What spiritual lessons does this teach?

## VII. SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

**Chart 23** serves as a review of the highlights of Numbers. Compare it with the

survey [Chart 24](#).

## VIII. FURTHER STUDY

1. Study carefully the Nazirite vow of chapter 6. Study similar vows in the Bible. Refer to Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias for help.

2. The real key to the successful conquest of Canaan and happy living within its borders was *continual fellowship with God*. Hence, it was that God at this time, by way of Moses, presented to the new generation a finalized and complete set of regulations for offerings, most of which had already been given at Sinai. Their observance would encourage an intimate worship of God by the people in the land (cf. Exod 23:14-17; 29:38-42; 31:12-17; Lev 23; Num 25:1-12). You may want to study these laws of offerings in chapters 28-30.

3. Read the commentaries of authors who reject the two million figure of Israel's population during the wilderness journeys. Evaluate the arguments advanced.

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1. Refer back to footnote 7 of chapter 4, which showed how the two million count may be arrived at. For a defense of this two million figure, see the following: C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 3:5-15; Edward J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 88-89; and R. Laird Harris, "Book of Numbers," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 591. Some, who question the fact of such a large

contingent of Israelites, interpret some Hebrew words not as numerical figures but as other designations. For example, it is contended that the consonants l-p should be read as *allup*, translated “captain,” and not as *elep*, translated “thousand.” (See J. A. Thompson, “Numbers,” in *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 169.)



## *Deuteronomy: Book of Remembrance*

This last book of the Pentateuch records Moses' addresses to the nation of Israel as they 'prepared to enter the promised land of Canaan. "These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel across the Jordan in the wilderness" (Deut 1:1). The closing words of the book are an epitaph memorializing the great patriarch's ministry:

Since then [the time of Joshua] no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror

which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel (34:10-12).

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

1. Read Deuteronomy 31:24-26. Where were the Levites instructed to deposit the Scriptures which Moses had written? Now read 2 Kings 22:1-13. This action took place more than seven hundred years after Moses wrote the scrolls. In what building were the writings found? What was the concern of King Josiah?

2. Read Exodus 20. The Ten Commandments were one portion of the earlier Scriptures which Moses repeated in his Deuteronomy addresses.

3. Read the last verse of Numbers (36:13). Compare it with the opening verse of Deuteronomy.

## II. BACKGROUND

### A. TITLE

Our English title *Deuteronomy* is traced back to the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament, where the title was given as *Deuteronomion*, meaning literally, “second law.” This latter title came from the Septuagint’s mistranslation of the phrase “a copy of this law” (17:18) as *to deuteronomion touto*, “this second law.” Actually, the book of Deuteronomy does not present another, or second, law, but repeats and amplifies the basic laws which had been given to the people on Mount Sinai.

### B. AUTHOR AND DATE

Evidence for Mosaic authorship is overwhelming. At specific places in the text he is expressly identified as the author. (Read 1:1-6; 4:44-46; 29:1; 31:9, 24-26.) Jewish and Samaritan tradition has assigned

the book to Moses. Jesus and New Testament writers, who quote from Deuteronomy more than from any other Old Testament book (about eighty times, e.g., Rom 10:6-8; Heb 12:29; 13:5; Matt 4:4, 7, 10; 22:37-38), associate the book with the Law. Internally, its message best fits the times and ministry of Moses. “The words are instinct with the warm solicitude of a great leader for the people whose experiences he had shared.”¹

Chapter 34, which records Moses’ death, was written by another person. Of this, Gleason Archer writes, “The closing chapter furnishes only that type of obituary which is often appended to the final work of great men of letters.”² Joshua, Moses’ friend and successor, may have written the obituary.

As for the date of composition, Moses probably wrote the book soon after he

delivered the addresses (1:3) and shortly before his death (1405 B.C.).

### C. SETTING

The circumstances under which Deuteronomy was written are clear. Israel had reached the border of Canaan. Forty years earlier the nation had been on the border of the land, but because of unbelief and disobedience the people were not allowed to enter. This time they had to tarry on the banks of the Jordan until they learned this one lesson: They must obey their God. God was willing and ready to lead them on to victory and to give them the delights of the land, on the condition that they would bend their stubborn wills and surrender entirely to Him. Moses, the lawgiver, was about to leave them; so he gathered his beloved people around him for the last time and delivered his farewell

address—Deuteronomy. (This took place on the plains of Moab. See [Map G.](#))



His object in the address, and hence the object of the book, was to impress upon them the one lesson: *obey*.

#### D. COMPARISONS WITH LEVITICUS AND NUMBERS

Within the group of the Pentateuch books, Deuteronomy resembles Leviticus in its paucity of action sections. The books are also similar in that the instructions contained in each were given to Israel while they were in standby encampment—at Sinai (Leviticus), and on the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy). In Leviticus they were anticipating their wandering life, and in Deuteronomy they were making preparations for their settled life in Canaan. The two books are different in that Leviticus was given mainly for the instruction of the priests and Levites, while Deuteronomy was given to instruct the Israelite laymen.

Deuteronomy also supplements, by additions or explanations, some of the things already recorded in the earlier books. For example, in Numbers we are told that elders were appointed to assist Moses, but the instructions that Moses gave these judges at

that time are recorded in Deuteronomy (1:16-17). Also, in Numbers we are told that the spies were sent from Kadesh-barnea, but not until Deuteronomy 1:19-23 do we hear of the request originating with the people. Further, in Numbers, Moses was forbidden to enter Canaan, but the conversation between him and God is not recorded until Deuteronomy 3:23-26.

### **III. SURVEY**

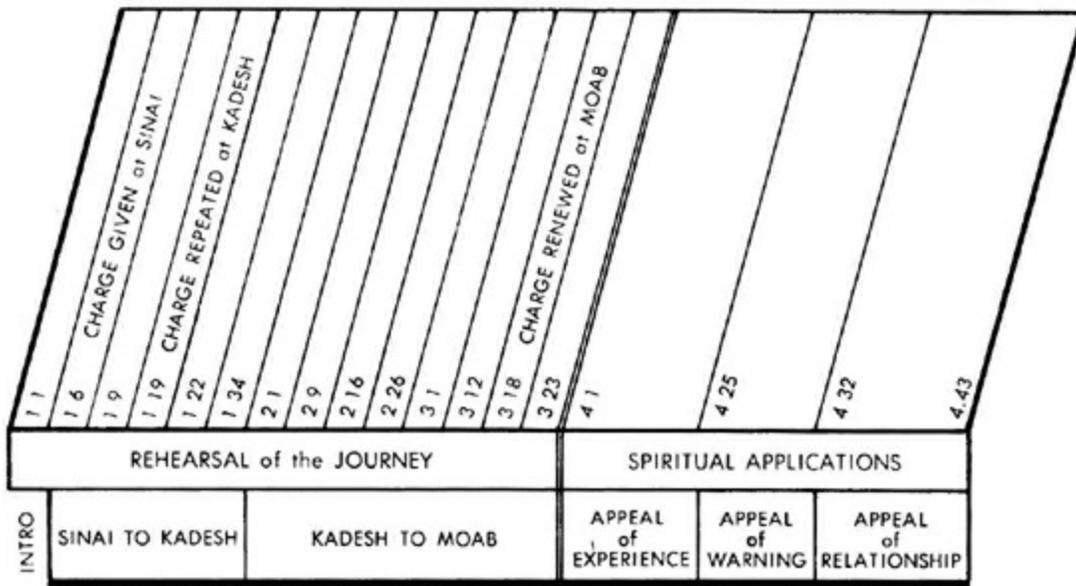
1. Scan the book of Deuteronomy for first impressions. Include in the scanning the reading of the first verse of each chapter and the topic headings shown at the top of your Bible. Do not get bogged down in any details along the course of this quick reading. Read more for overall impressions, trying to sense the atmosphere of Moses' message. Scan the book a second time, more slowly. Record a title for each chapter of the

book on paper. (Note that [Chart 27](#) begins a segment at 4:44 instead of at 5:1. Read the Bible text and account for the division at this point.)

2. Compare the beginning and end of the book by reading 1:1-8 followed by 34:1-8. What are some of your observations?

3. Read 1:1—4:43, underlining strong words and phrases as you read. In chapters 1-3, of what is Moses reminding the people? (Observe the repeated word “Then.”) How do those three chapters lead up to what Moses says in 4:1-43? Underline in your Bible all the imperative words which Moses spoke in chapter 4 (e.g., “listen,” 4:1; and “keep,” 4:6). How are chapters 1-4 represented on the survey [Chart 27](#)? Use [Chart 25](#) as an outline guide for your study of these chapters.

(Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43)



4. Note on [Chart 27](#) how the division 4:44—26:19 is identified. In 4:44—11:32, Moses expounds and applies the Ten Commandments. In what chapter are those Ten Commandments quoted? How does 11:26-32 conclude this section?

5. In chapters 12-26, Moses cites related commandments which the people were to obey in their daily walk. Read these chapters. Observe the repeated phrase, “the LORD your God” in these chapters. Why did Moses not say “the LORD *our* God”? Read the

concluding paragraph, 26:16-19. What does this reveal about the purposes of God's laws?

6. Read chapters 27-30, noting the many references to blessing and curse. What did Mount Gerizim represent (27:12)? What did Mount Ebal represent (27:13)? Why did God use object lessons like these? In your own words, what is the main point of these chapters?

7. The four concluding chapters of Deuteronomy are unusually interesting, partly because of the atmosphere of expectation. As you read and study these chapters, use [Chart 26](#) as an outline guide. In your own words, list what these chapters contribute to the overall theme of Deuteronomy.

8. Spend more time studying the survey [Chart 27](#). Account for the title "Book of

# Remembrance.”

## PARTING WORDS OF MOSES

CHART 26

(Deuteronomy 31:1-34:12)

31:1 CHARGE	31:30 SONG	33:1 BENEDICTION	34:1 DEPARTURE
CHALLENGE to DEVOTION	WITNESS of GOD'S JUDGMENTS	BLESSINGS on ISRAEL	CHANGE of LEADERSHIP
W O R D			EVENT

## IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

Deuteronomy is composed mostly of Moses' farewell addresses. Some of the prominent subjects of those addresses are identified below. Read the Bible passages identified with each subject.

### A. REMEMBRANCES OF THE PAST (1:1—4:43)

It was natural for Moses to refer to history first and let experience be a teacher. Not every event in Israel's journey from Egypt was reviewed, but only those from which

Moses” would draw his arguments. In substance, what he said was:

“You see how it has been for the past forty years. Whenever this nation obeyed God, it has been blessed; and whenever it has disobeyed Him, it has been punished. Therefore, in the future obey.”

## **B. COMMANDMENTS FOR THE PRESENT (4:44—26:19)**

Most of Deuteronomy records laws of God for Israel. God gave these as guides for leading His people into a faith relationship with Him, and to instruct them how to live their daily life acceptable to Him. Lest the people think lightly of that Law, Moses had reminded them of the great event at Sinai when the Maker of heaven and earth talked to them from the fiery, smoking, quaking mountain (read 4:32-33). And to guard against any idea that this Law had been

given only to their fathers, and was therefore out-of-date and not binding upon this new generation, Moses reminded the people: “The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, with all those of us alive here today” (5.3).

Here is a brief general outline of these chapters:

1. Basic commandments (4:44—11:32)
2. Laws of worship and holy living (12:1-16:22)
3. Punishments for specific offenses (17:1—26:19)

### **C. OPTIONS AFFECTING THE FUTURE (27:1—30:20)**

One of the first things Israel was to do on establishing themselves in the land of Canaan was to march to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, two mountains in the center

of the country (locate on [Map H](#)), and there set up great plastered stones on which the Law of God was to be written. Six tribes were to stand upon Mount Gerizim, to declare blessings upon the people for obedience to this Law, and the other six tribes were to stand upon Mount Ebal, to declare curses upon the people for disobedience.

The consequences of obeying this Law as well as the consequences of disobeying it are set forth in chapter 28. The first fourteen verses give a bright picture of the nation's future if they will take the path of obedience. From these verses we learn how blessed, rich, and powerful Israel could have been if they had been true to God. The tone changes at verse 15, and from there onward we have a picture of the black future awaiting the nation if they should take the path of disobedience.

A key subject of Deuteronomy is that of God's covenant. (The word "covenant" appears seven times in chap. 29.) Moses' addresses were delivered to Israel as a reaffirmation of the covenant relationship between God and His people. The pattern followed by Moses in delivering his message has been compared with the approach used by kings of Moses' day in addressing their subjects. Meredith Kline writes of this:

Part of the standard procedure followed in the ancient Near East when great kings thus gave covenants to vassal peoples was the preparation of a text of the ceremony as the treaty document and witness. The book of Deuteronomy is the document prepared by Moses as witness to the dynastic covenant which the Lord gave to Israel in the plains of Moab (cf. 31:26).³

The prominence of the “covenant-concept” in Deuteronomy is underscored by Kline.

Deuteronomy is the Bible’s full scale exposition of covenant-concept and demonstrates that, far from being a contract between two parties, God’s covenant with His people is a proclamation of His sovereignty and an instrument for binding His elect to Himself in a commitment of absolute allegiance.⁴

Kline rightly observes that the sovereign character of God’s covenant is not “an unconditional license to national privilege and prosperity.”⁵ The people were still responsible to choose to obey God.

Read chapters 29 and 30 carefully, and you will see how long-suffering and gracious God was in offering hope to Israel for loving

Him and obeying His commandments.

#### **D. PARTING WORDS OF MOSES (31:1—34:12)**

The people who have been camping on the east side of the Jordan, waiting to cross over, are given (1) their final charges, (2) an interpretation of the philosophy of God's judgments in history, and (3) a reminder of the blessings awaiting the people in the land. The parting words of Moses are not bitter ones, but bright and warm and hopeful. This patriarch remained a spiritual giant to his dying day.

#### **V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

Note the key words and verses on [Chart 27](#). Read the verses in your Bible, and study the key words in an exhaustive concordance.

#### **VI. APPLICATIONS**

1. Why should a Christian periodically

look back to such important spiritual experiences as his conversion?

2. Why is it often easy to forget the Lord and His Word in one's daily walk? What helps to guard against this?

3. What do the Ten Commandments mean to you? Do they apply to your life? What about other Old Testament commandments, such as the ceremonial laws of burnt offerings?

4. Are the options of believing and not believing always offered to man? What about the invitation of the Gospel of salvation?

5. Does God's law of recompense still hold true (blessing for obedience and punishment for disobedience)? Support your answer with New Testament Scripture.

6. What does Deuteronomy teach you about God's sovereignty and holiness?

7. What spiritual lessons may a Christian learn from the life of Moses, as taught in Deuteronomy?

## **VII. FURTHER STUDY**

1. Study the word “covenant” as it appears in both Testaments. (Refer to a concordance, Bible dictionary, and books on doctrine and theology.)

**DEUTERONOMY BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE**

CONCLUSION	34	SO MOSES DIED...	PARTING WORDS OF MOSES
	33		
THE WORD OF THE COVENANT	32		OPTIONS AFFECTING THE FUTURE
	31	BLESSINGS and CURSINGS	
	30		
	29		
	28		
	27		COMMANDMENTS for the PRESENT
	26		
	25		
	24		
	23	RELATED COMMANDMENTS	
22			
21			
20			
19			
18			
17			
16			
15			
14			
13			
12			
11	TEN COMMANDMENTS	REMEMBRANCES of the PAST	
10			
9			
8			
7			
6			
5	TAKE HEED... LEST THOU FORGET...		
4			
3			
2			
1			



KEY WORDS:  
remember  
obey  
blessing  
curse  
covenant

KEY VERSES:  
4:23; 5:29; 8:11  
10:12-13; 11:26-28  
28:1; 29:1



2. In Deuteronomy, God's laws are referred to by three words: judgments, statutes, commandments. Read G. T. Manley's discussion of this in *The New Bible Dictionary*.⁶

3. Read Gleason L. Archer's discussion of Deuteronomy's authorship and date in A

## VIII. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 239-50.

Keil, C. F. and Delitzsch, F. *The Pentateuch*, 3: 269-77.

Manley, G. T. "Deuteronomy." In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 195-97.

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Schneider, Bernard N. *Deuteronomy*, pp. 12-24.

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Schultz, Samuel J. *Gospel of Moses*.

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Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 241-50.

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## COVENANT

Berry, George Richer. "Covenant (in the Old Testament)." In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2: 727-29.

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## COMMENTARIES

Jamieson, Robert; Faucett, A. R.; and Brown, David. *A Commentary, Critical and Exploratory on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 1.

Kline, Meredith G. "Deuteronomy." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

Manley, G. T. *The Book of the Law*.

Reider, Joseph. *Deuteronomy*.

Schultz, Samuel J. *Deuteronomy*. Everyman's Bible Commentary.

1. G. T. Manley, ed., *New Bible Handbook*, p. 147.
2. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 244.
3. Meredith G. Kline, "Deuteronomy," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 155.
4. Meredith G. Kline, "Deuteronomy," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 215.
5. Ibid.
6. G. T. Manley, "Deuteronomy," in *The New Bible Dictionary*, p. 309.
7. Archer, pp. 241-50.

# **Part 2**

## ***History of Israel***

### ***In and out of the Land of Canaan***

The second main group of books in our English Old Testament is called the “Historical Books.” The history which is involved begins with Israel’s entrance into Canaan (reported by Joshua) and concludes with the nation’s return to the land from exile, almost a thousand years later (reported by Nehemiah).

Joshua	2 Kings
Judges	1 Chronicles
Ruth	2 Chronicles
1 Samuel	Ezra
2 Samuel	Nehemiah
1 Kings	Esther



## *Joshua: Book of Conquest*

Joshua is a book about a *land* and a *people*. The land is an inheritance promised by God, waiting to be occupied. The people are the elect nation of God, facing human obstacles in the way of taking the land. And the obstacles are the occasion for battle—a holy war—designed by God to oust the idolatrous and corrupt enemies from the land. It is for this that Joshua is called the “Book of Conquest.”

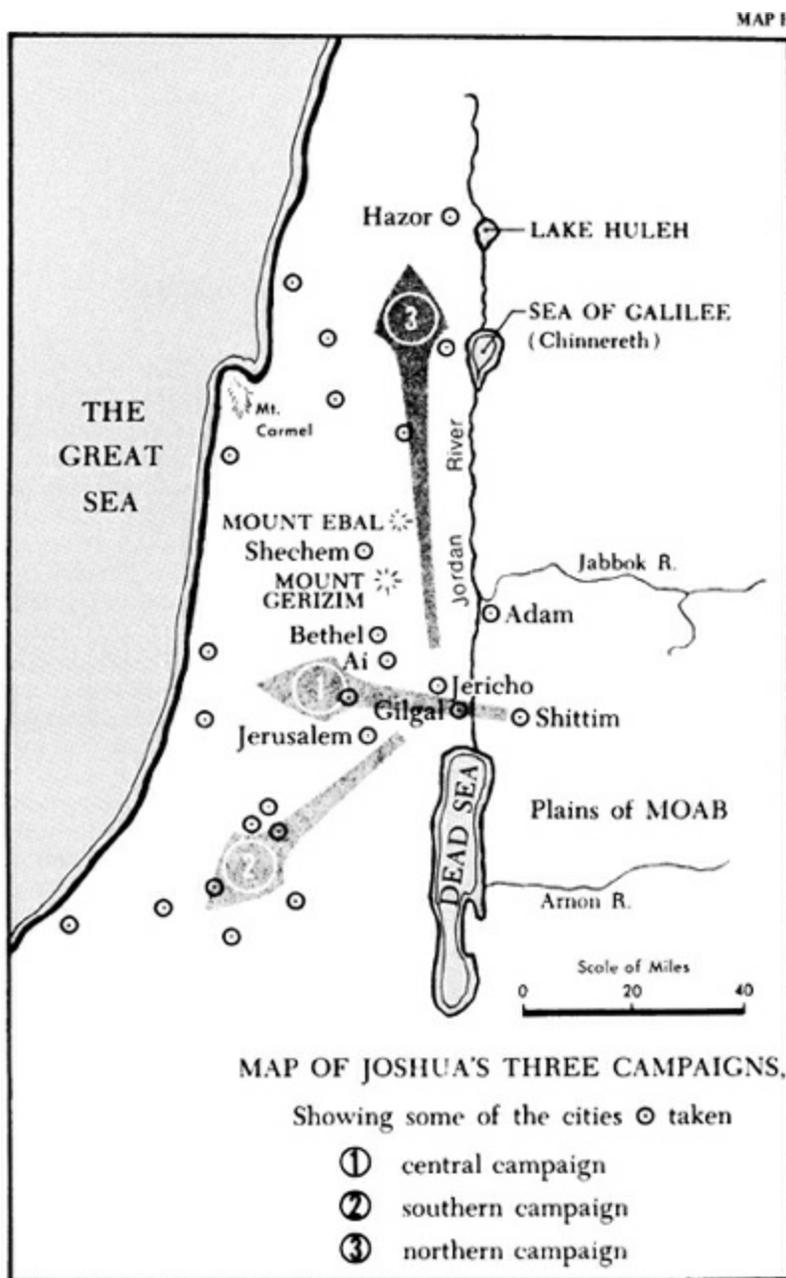
Joshua’s narrative about winning the rest land of Canaan resumes the history of Israel at the point where Deuteronomy ends. The sequence of the Pentateuch books is this: In Genesis, God brings Israel to birth,¹ and promises to give it the land of Canaan.² In Exodus, He delivers His people from

oppression in a foreign land (Egypt), and starts them on their way to the promised land, giving them laws to live by (as recorded both in Exodus and Leviticus). Numbers records the journey of Israel through the wildernesses up to the gate of Canaan, while Deuteronomy describes final preparations for entering the land. At this point Joshua picks up the story, describing the conquest of the land and the division of its territories to the tribes of Israel. In a real sense, Joshua is the *climax* of a progressive history as well as the *commencement* of a new experience for Israel. Thus, its historical nexus gives it a strategic place in the Old Testament Scriptures.

## I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

1. Review the discussion in chapter 1 of the Old Testament canons of the Protestant and Hebrew Bibles. As noted there, the

arrangement of the thirty-nine books of the Protestant Old Testament can be traced back to the Greek Septuagint version (third and second centuries B.C.). The books are arranged in such an order that four groups appear: (1) Pentateuch, (2) history, (3) poetry and ethics, and (4) prophecy. In this arrangement, Joshua is the first of the twelve historical books.



It is helpful to have clear in one's mind the place which the book of Joshua occupies in the historical thread of the Old Testament books as concerns Israel. Simply stated, the Old Testament history of Israel is of three eras,³ centered around a *land* (Canaan) and a *government* (theocracy [God as Ruler]), as

shown by [Chart 28](#).

CHART 28

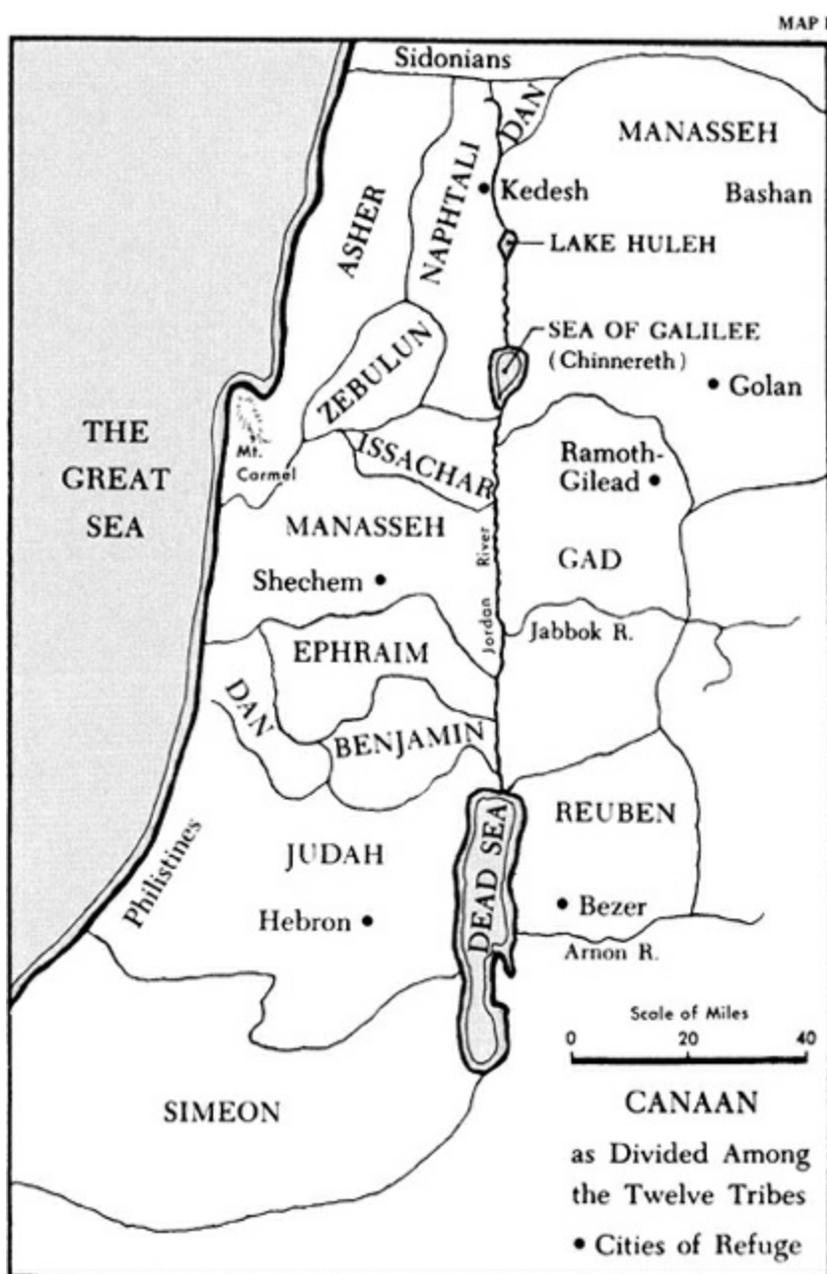
ISRAEL AND THE LAND OF CANAAN		
I	II	III
TO THE LAND	IN THE LAND	FROM THE LAND
promises of, and journey to the land and theocracy	entry into and living in, the land and theocracy	taken from the land to captivity; theocracy dissolved

As noted in chapter 1, the arrangement of the Hebrew Old Testament is vastly different from that of the Protestant Old Testament, though the text content is identical. The Hebrew Old Testament contains three groups, namely, Law, Prophets, and Writings. The Prophets section is divided into two parts: Former and Latter. Joshua is the first book of the Former Prophets, followed in order by Judges, Samuel (1 and 2 Samuel), and Kings (1 and 2 Kings). Placing Joshua among prophetic books may have been because its author was considered to hold the office of prophet; more likely it was because the historical

record illustrated the great principles which prophets preached.⁴

2. Before you study the Bible text of Joshua, become acquainted with the geography involved in the narrative. [Map H](#) marks the major movements of the Israelite hosts against the enemies, which fall naturally into three general campaigns:

a) the central campaign—to secure a bridgehead for the Israelites in the center of the land, from which to spread out



b) the southern campaign—to rout the nearest foes

c) the northern campaign—to gain control of the distant territory

**Map I** shows how Joshua divided the land of Canaan among the twelve tribes after the

major campaigns were completed.

The land originally promised to Abraham's seed extended from the "river of Egypt"⁵ to the "great river" Euphrates (Gen 15:18). The same promise was confirmed to the Israelites in the days of Moses (Exod 23:31), and again to Joshua (Josh 1:4). These were the two ideal limits of influence, from Egypt, the one world power on Palestine's southwestern border, to Babylon, the power on its eastern side. One can easily recognize the strategic location of Canaan with reference to the rest of the world of Israel's day. It was the connecting link, the point of balance and the spot on which the major land and sea routes converged.⁶ The explicit details of the geographical boundaries of the Canaan⁷ to be possessed were described by the Lord to Moses on the eve of Israel's entry into the land (Num 34:1-15). At that time also, Joshua and

Eleazar were appointed to the task of apportioning the territories to the different tribes. The accomplishment of this business is recorded in Joshua 13-19.

It is to be noted that all the enemies were not routed immediately; some cities within the boundaries were not taken until the days of David and Solomon. This piecemeal conquest can be attributed partly to the failure of the Israelites to fully obey God's conditions. Another factor was the divine timetable of designed delay, to spare the land from sudden desolation by nature itself: "I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate, and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land" (Exod 23:29-30).

3. Do you recall from your earlier studies of Numbers and Deuteronomy who were the ones of Israel allowed by God to enter the promised rest land?

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. AUTHOR**

The author of the book of Joshua is not explicitly identified. But the following facts are known about its authorship:

1. The general tenor of the book indicates that the author was an eyewitness of most of the events, which are described with great vividness and minuteness of detail, and occasionally in the first person (“we” and “us”, e.g., 5:6).

2. The unity of style in the organization of the book indicates that one author wrote the bulk of the work.

3. Joshua is *specifically* identified as the author of some writings. He wrote the words of a covenant which he shared with Israel “in the book of the law of God” (24:26), which was born of his farewell charge in chapter 24. Also, Joshua was responsible for the land survey of Canaan, which he caused to have recorded in a book (18:9).

4. Some small parts of the book could not have been written by Joshua. Such sections include the references to his death (24:29-30) and to the faithfulness of Israel during the years after his death (24:31). It is possible that these sections were added by Eleazar the priest, and that the note of Eleazar’s death (24:33) was in turn recorded by Phinehas, his son.

Jewish tradition, both ancient and modern, has consistently ascribed the authorship of the book to Joshua. Among

conservative Christians today, opinion is perhaps equally divided.⁸ Internally, there is nothing to deny the bulk of the book to Joshua's pen. The important thing to recognize is that the identification of the author is not a crucial factor in studying the Bible text.

## B. DATE

The book was written not long after the events themselves had transpired. If the conquest of Canaan was completed around 1400 B.C., the book was written soon after this date. (Note: Concerning dates of this period of Old Testament history, see John C. Whitcomb's chronological chart, *Old Testament Patriarchs and Judges*.)

About twenty-four years are covered by the narrative of Joshua. After the Canaanites were conquered, Joshua divided the land, settled the tribes in their respective places,

and looked after the affairs of the nation until his death.

### III. SURVEY

1. First, scan the book of Joshua in one sitting, if possible.
2. Jot down on paper your impressions from this first reading (e.g., which part of the book is mostly narrative?).
3. If your Bible identifies main content at the top of each page (or at the beginning of each chapter), read this sequence now, for the whole book. Also, you may want to read the first verse of each chapter.
4. Now return to the beginning of the book, and assign a title to each of the twenty-four chapters. Record on paper. (Note that [Chart 32](#) shows a segment beginning at 11:16 instead of at 12:1.)
5. Read the first paragraph of the book

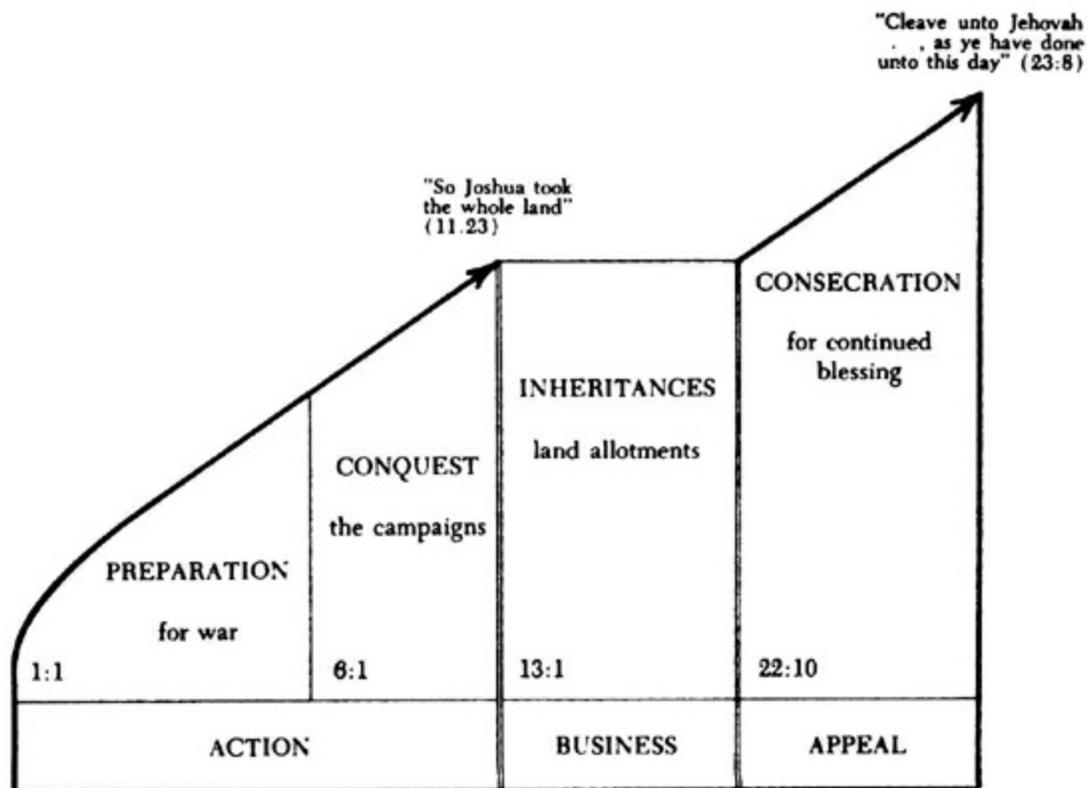
(1:1-9) and the last three paragraphs (24:19-33). Make comparisons.

6. Before studying the survey [Chart 32](#), try to group chapters into sections of similar content. For example:

What chapters are mainly of *action*?

What chapters record mainly the allotments of territory?

STRUCTURAL OUTLINE OF JOSHUA CHART 29



What chapters report preparations for

conquest, and what chapters report the battles themselves?

7. When you read the text in more detail, look for references to important experiences of the Israelites, such as altars. Are there many references in the book to sin of God's people, and judgments reaped?

8. The account of the book of Joshua is presented in a logical sequence of four sections, as shown on [Chart 29](#).

The first two sections, comprising the *action* section of the book, lead up to a peak of attaining the promised goal, as represented by a phrase of the key verse, "So Joshua took the whole land" (11:23). From this midpoint of the book, the account levels off to a plateau, as it were, to present the immediate business of Joshua, that of dividing the inheritance of land among the tribes. This is followed by a fitting intense

appeal and exhortation to the people, to fulfill the conditions for anticipated heights of continued blessing in God's rest land.

9. Study the survey **Chart 32**. Note the similarities to **Chart 29**. How does the survey chart divide the book of Joshua into two main parts? Find a phrase in 11:16-23 which summarizes the successful engagements of Joshua and his army. Note the two anticipatory sections.

10. To conclude your survey, read the last three chapters of Joshua, keeping the survey chart in mind as you read.

## **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

### **A. THE MAN JOSHUA**

The prominent person of this book is the man Joshua. A few of the many things revealed about him are cited below. Read all the Bible passages involved.

1. *His name.* Joshua's original name was Hoshea (Num 13:8; Deut 32:44), which literally means "salvation." During the wilderness journey, Moses changed the name to Jehoshua (Num 13:16, KJV), meaning, "Jehovah is salvation." (Joshua is a contracted form of Jehoshua.) What is the significance of this change of name?

2. *His association with Moses.* Joshua was a young man when Moses appointed him as one of his ministers, or attendants, during the wilderness journey. Read the following passages which tell of some of his services during those years: Exodus 17:8-16; 24:12-13; Numbers 13:1-16; 14:26-35. At the close of Moses' career, God chose Joshua to be his successor (Num 27:18), and Moses transferred the mantle of leadership to his faithful attendant and friend (Deut 34:9).

3. *His character.* Read what God said of

Joshua in Numbers 27:18 (cf. Deut 34:9). Joshua feared God, believed God, obeyed God, and glorified God. He was a great ruler, commanding the respect of all his subjects (Deut 34:9), maintaining order and discipline, putting the worship of God central in the nation's government, encouraging his people to press on to claim God's best. He was also a great military leader, using his God-given traits of wisdom, confidence, courage, and a spirit of challenge to manipulate his army in strategies that consistently led to triumph. And Joshua was a humble man who thought highly of others and most gloriously of God.

## **B. THE LORD GOD**

One writer has commented that “the criterion of the religious value of any book is, What does it tell us about God?”⁹ The book of Joshua reveals much about the

person and work of God. Look up the names “Lord” and “God” in an exhaustive concordance and observe that the Lord was actively and incessantly involved in the battles and business of the leaders and people. Three attributes of God especially prominent in the book are His holiness, faithfulness, and saving grace.

### C. THE MAJOR TASKS

The book of Joshua reports the essential details of four major tasks or experiences of Israel in occupying the promised rest land: preparation, conquest, allocating the land parcels, and consecration.

1. *Preparation (1:1—5:15)*. The first five chapters of Joshua concern the preliminary stages of the Israelites’ conquest of Canaan, as they prepared and positioned themselves for the battles against their enemies. Read the passage, referring to this condensed

# outline as you read:

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Significance</u>
1	Charge to Joshua	Task identified
2	Spying Jericho	Enemy studied
3	Crossing Jordan	Leader magnified
4	Stones set up	Deliverance memorialized
5	Circumcision and Passover	Hearts prepared

**2. *Conquest (6:1—12:24).*** To possess Canaan meant to drive out the enemy. But the enemy was many—Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and others—each to be reckoned with as Joshua planned his strategy of conquest. There is no record of God explicitly instructing Joshua as to the pattern of that strategy, though the divine direction was ever present. Actually, the geographical location of entrance into the north-south-oriented Canaan, at Jericho, determined the plan. See [Map H](#) for the general movements of the central, southern, and northern campaigns. The strategy was simply to (1) gain the bridgehead at Jericho;

(2) extend the battle in this central region to effect a wedge between the northern and southern armies; (3) then engage each, one after the other, the nearer armies (southern) first. The account of the book of Joshua follows the sequence of that plan in recording the highlights¹⁰ of Israel's conquest of the enemies in Canaan. [Chart 30](#) outlines this section of Joshua. Study the chart as you read the Bible text.

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN  
(Joshua 6:1-12:24)

CHART 30

6:1		9:1	11:1	11:16 12:24
CENTRAL CAMPAIGN			SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN	NORTHERN CAMPAIGN
Victory Through Faith	7:1 Defeat Through Sin	8:1 Restoration	Progressive Conquests	

3. *Allocations (13:1—21:45)*. The activities of Israel during the years of chapters 1-12 were not terminal in themselves. The

terminus was reached when it could be said that “Joshua took the whole land” (11:23) and that he could now divide the land “for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes” (11:23). The action of the unhappy though necessary wars was the prelude to the gratifying and pleasant business of the allotment of the lands to the Israelites.

**Chart 31** shows how these chapters report the various allocations made to the tribes and individuals.

LAND ALLOCATIONS  
(Joshua 13-21)

CHART 31

JUDAH / SONS OF JOSEPH / 7 TRIBES										
13:1	13:8	14:1	15:1	16:1	17:1	18:1	19:1	20:1	21:1	21:43
INTRODUCTION	2½ TRIBES	CALEB	9 ½ TRIBES					LEVI	CON- CLUSION	
SPECIAL ALLOTMENTS			MAJOR ALLOTMENTS					SPECIAL PROVISIONS		

While there is no record of any pageantry or colorful ceremony attending the drawing of lots for the land assignments for each tribe, the importance of such allotments cannot be overstated. This was the climactic moment in Israel's young life, when for the first time she could claim a land as her own, given by God. In the days of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph—the land was too large for total claim. When by propagation Israel grew to the size of a formidable nation, the people were dwelling in bondage in a foreign land, Egypt. The wilderness years were spent on the way to the land. The seven years of fighting after crossing the Jordan were used to conquer the land. Now the hour had come to claim the land, build homes, and live with God in peace. The day of land allotment was truly a happy for Israel.

4 . *Consecration* (22:1—24:33). The first

five chapters of Joshua, the *Preparation* section, are chapters of anticipation of conquest. The last three chapters, this *Consecration* section, are chapter of anticipation of continued dwelling in God's rest land. The intense action of the first half of the book, which reached a plateau in the business of land allotments, now gives way to relatively quiet but emotion-filled moments of crisis, when Joshua appeals for total commitment, and elicits Israel's consecration to God, a heartwarming climax to the years of his ministry among them.

Here is a brief outline of these concluding chapters:

- I. Consecration of Eastern Tribes (22:1-34)
  - A. Joshua's Charge (22:1-9)
  - B. Tribes' Altar of Witness (22:10-

## II. Consecration of Western Tribes (23:1—24:28)

A. Joshua's Charge (23:1-16)

B. Covenant Renewed (24:1-28)

## III. Appendix (24:29-33)

### D. TYPES AND SYMBOLS

There is a remarkable correspondence between the experiences of Israel, from the bondage of Egypt to the conquest of Canaan, and the spiritual experiences of the individual soul. In Exodus we read of (1) Israel's condition in Egypt (bondage, poverty, imminent death), corresponding to the spiritual condition of a soul before regeneration; and (2) Israel's Exodus from Egypt, typifying God's deliverance of a soul, bringing salvation. In Numbers we read of Israel's backslidden condition in the

wilderness (unbelief, disobedience, discontent, weakness), picturing a soul regenerated but out of fellowship with God.

The close of the book of Joshua shows the commencement of Israel's life in Canaan to be one of peace, joy, wealth, power, and victory, typifying a saved soul wholly surrendered to God.

Three prominent types in Joshua are identified below.

1. Joshua, leader of the host of Israel, is a type of Christ, the "captain of... [our] salvation." (Read Heb 2:10-11, KJV; cf. Rom 8:37; 2 Cor 1:10; 2:14.)
2. The crossing of the Jordan is a type of the Christian's dying with Christ. (Read Rom 6:6-11; Eph 2:5-6; Col 3:1-3.)
3. Israel's conquest of Canaan typifies the Christian's victories over the enemies of his soul (e.g., 2 Cor 10:3-6).

## V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

On the basis of your study thus far, choose key words and Verses from the Bible text which represent the theme of Joshua. [Chart 32](#) suggests one of each.

## VI. APPLICATIONS

1. What makes Joshua so practical for the Christian is that its major application concerns the Christian's pursuit of that abundant life which Christ talked about when He said, "I have come for people to have life and have it till it overflows" (John 10:10, Williams). Israel dwelling in the rest land of Canaan is a vivid type of the Christian living in intimate relationship to Christ, abiding in Him (John 15:4), and being filled with His joy (John 15:11). The Christian's rest is a peace that comes out of victory over the soul's enemies, through the

power and help of God (Heb 4:9-10). While it is true that the blessings of abiding in Christ originate in the divine act of regeneration, they are contingent upon the Christian's diligence to enter into that abiding life. (Read Heb 4:11.)

2. Much can be learned from the book of Joshua about the Christian's call to service for God. Hugh J. Blair writes this about Joshua: "His supreme qualification lay in the fact that all his gifts and training and experience were fused into a dynamic force by the touch of God. It was at the call of God that all his potentialities were called forth."¹¹ What different things are involved in a Christian's call to service?

3. Why are the wars of Joshua called "holy wars"? Is war ever justifiable today? (Give biblical support to your answer.) The book of Revelation prophesies many wars of

God in last times. Refer to the book and try to derive some basic principles about “holy wars.”

4. Make a list of other practical truths taught by this book, for example, concerning blessing, judgment, and the Word of God.

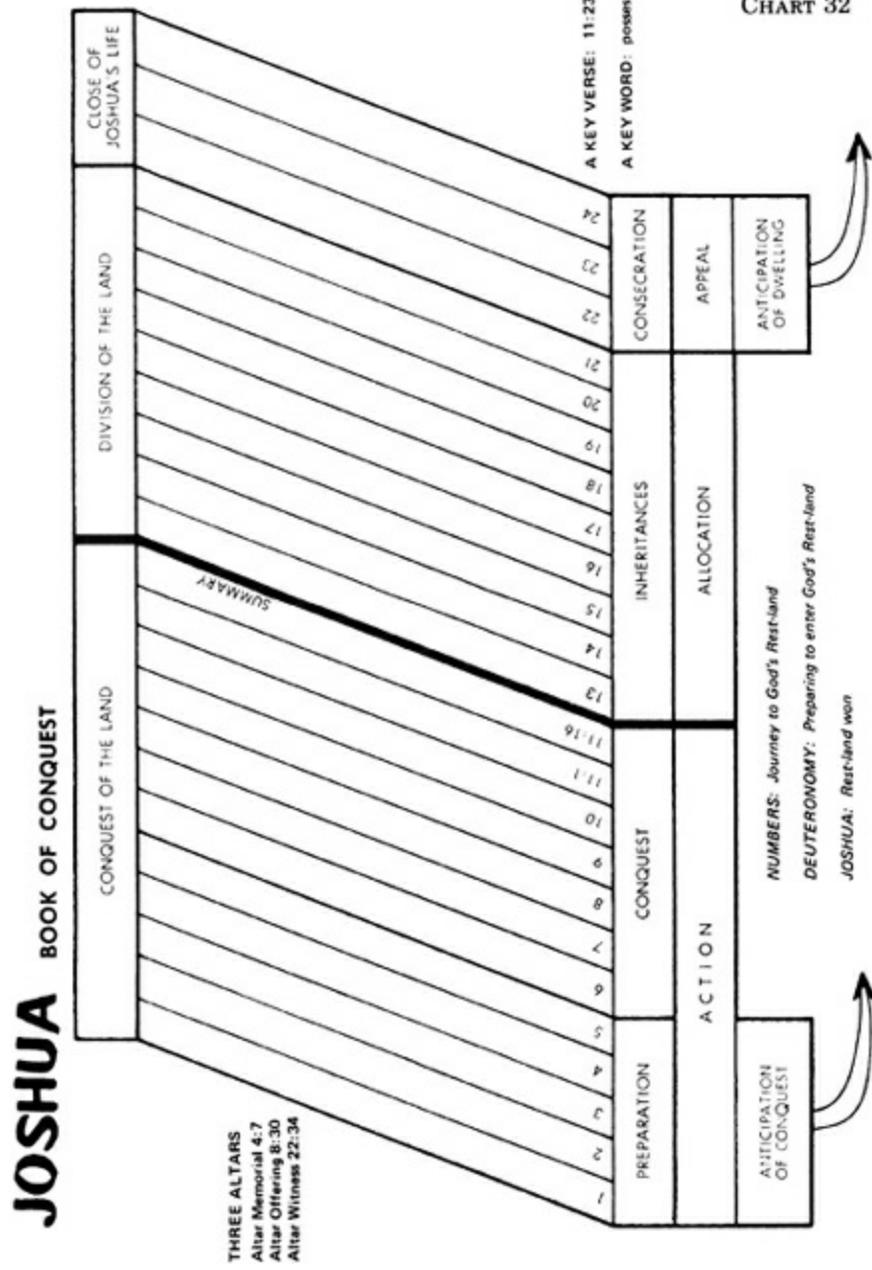
## VII. FURTHER STUDY

1. Read outside sources on the life and religion of the various Canaanite peoples who were dwelling in the land when Joshua began his campaigns.¹²

2. Study in more detail the land allotments to the tribes.¹³

3. Read various discussions concerning whether war is justifiable.¹⁴ Base your own conclusion on what you believe the Bible teaches on this vital subject.

4. Make a biographical study of the man Joshua.



## VIII. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 251-61.

Blair, Hugh J. "Joshua." In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 223-26.

Jensen, Irving L. *Joshua: Rest-land Won*.  
Everyman's Bible Commentary, 8-26.

Keil, Carl F. "Joshua." *In Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, pp. 13-27.

Pink, Arthur W. *Gleanings in Joshua*, pp. 9-22.

Wood, Leon. *A Survey of Israel's History*, pp. 168-70; 192-202.

## WAR

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 261.

Blair, Hugh J. "Joshua." *In The New Bible Commentary*, p. 225.

Unger, Merrill F. "War." *In Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 1161-63.

## COMMENTARIES

Blaikie, William G. *The Book of Joshua*.

Edersheim, Alfred. *The Bible History—Old*

*Testament, 3:46-104.*

Henry, Matthew. *Commentary on the Whole Bible.*

Pink, Arthur W. *Gleanings in Joshua.*

Rea, John. "Joshua." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary.*

1. To Abraham, God said, "I will make you a great nation" (Gen 12:2).

2. Genesis 12:7. God later gave further details of the promise (Gen 15:18-21).

3. More accurately, there were four eras, when one considers the restoration period (e.g., under Nehemiah). Since this was a brief period of revival, with hearts returning to "stone" by the time of Malachi, the simplified threefold outline holds.

4. F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 92.

5. The "river of Egypt" is either (1) the Wadi

el Arish, or “brook of Egypt” (Josh 15:4,47), which was the boundary line between Egypt and the southern deserts of Canaan, or (2) the Nile River. In either case, the land limit is *Egypt*.

6. See Denis Baly, *The Geography of the Bible*, p. 5.

7. The name Canaan in the Bible, especially when used in the phrase “land of Canaan” (as in Num 34:2), usually refers to the combined areas known today as Palestine and Syria, rather than to the smaller coastal territory of the heathen people called Canaanites. It is in this large sense that the term “Canaan” is used also in this book, unless otherwise specified.

8. Here are three representative positions by conservatives on the Joshua authorship: “yes”: Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 252; “no”: Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Exploratory on the Old and New Testaments*, 2:210; “possibly”: Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, p. 281.

9. Hugh J. Blair, “Joshua,” in *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 225.

10. As with all history in the Bible, selectivity, not exhaustiveness, is the aim. Those events are recorded which retain the unity of the narrative and serve the underlying purposes of the divine revelation. In the book of Joshua, not all the events but the highlights of the campaigns are recorded.

11. Blair, p. 223.

12. See *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 206; Howard F. Vos, *Genesis and Archaeology*, pp. 85-91; K. A. Kitchen, “Canaan,” in *The New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 183-86; Samuel J. Schultz, *The Old Testament Speaks*, pp. 89-93.

13. Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel’s History*, pp. 185-92. Also see Irving L. Jensen, *Joshua: Rest-land Won*, *Everyman’s Bible Commentary*, pp. 97-115. A chart of land allotments appears on p. 113.

14. For example, read Blair, p. 225.

## *Judges: Apostasies of God's People*

The book of Judges is one of the saddest parts of the Bible, humanly speaking. Some have called it the “Book of Failure.” The **last chapter** of the preceding book, Joshua, anticipates continued blessing upon God’s people in the rest land of their inheritance. (Read Joshua 24:19-28.) But one does not proceed far into the account of Judges before he senses that all is not well. While there are deliverances along the way, the tone of the book is predominantly one of oppression and defeat because “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (21:25). When the gospel of God’s grace does appear in the book, it shines forth in sharp brightness because of the contrast of this

dark setting. As in all books of the Bible, God does not furnish a diagnosis of sin and guilt unless He also prescribes a cure.

## I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

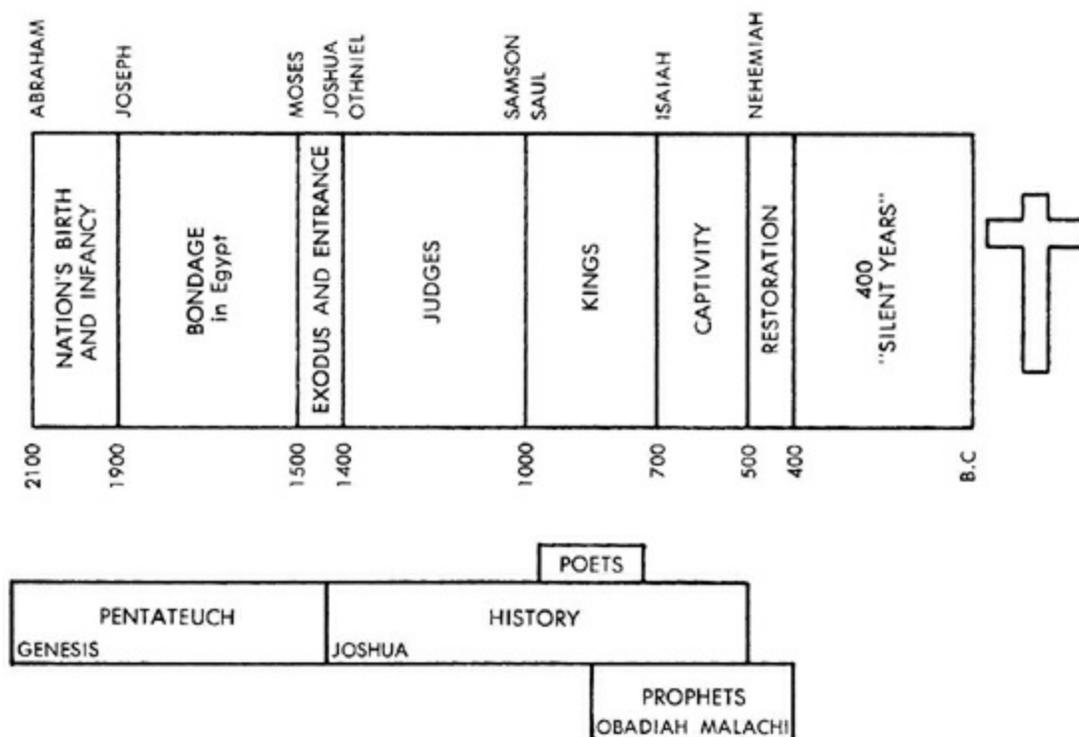
1. Read Exodus 18:21-26. The judges referred to here were civil magistrates, fulfilling the judicial functions usually associated with the office of judge. These magistrates should not be confused with the judges of the book bearing the name Judges. The latter are *shophetim* (Heb.), commissioned by God to deliver the Israelites from the oppression of their enemies, usually by war, and then to rule the people during the era of peace. Read Judges 2:16; 3:9. Refer to a Bible dictionary for a description of both types of judges.

2. The era of judges during Israel's occupation of Canaan was one of many

important phases of the nation's history. Study carefully [Chart 33](#), which represents all of Israel's history from Genesis through Malachi. Observe the duration of the period of judges. (The bottom of the chart indicates the Bible's coverage of this history.)

THE PERIOD OF JUDGES  
IN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

CHART 33



3. Now observe on [Chart 34](#) the order and dates of the judges' reigns. (Note: Eli, a priest-judge, and Samuel, a prophet-judge, do not appear in the Bible until 1 Samuel.)

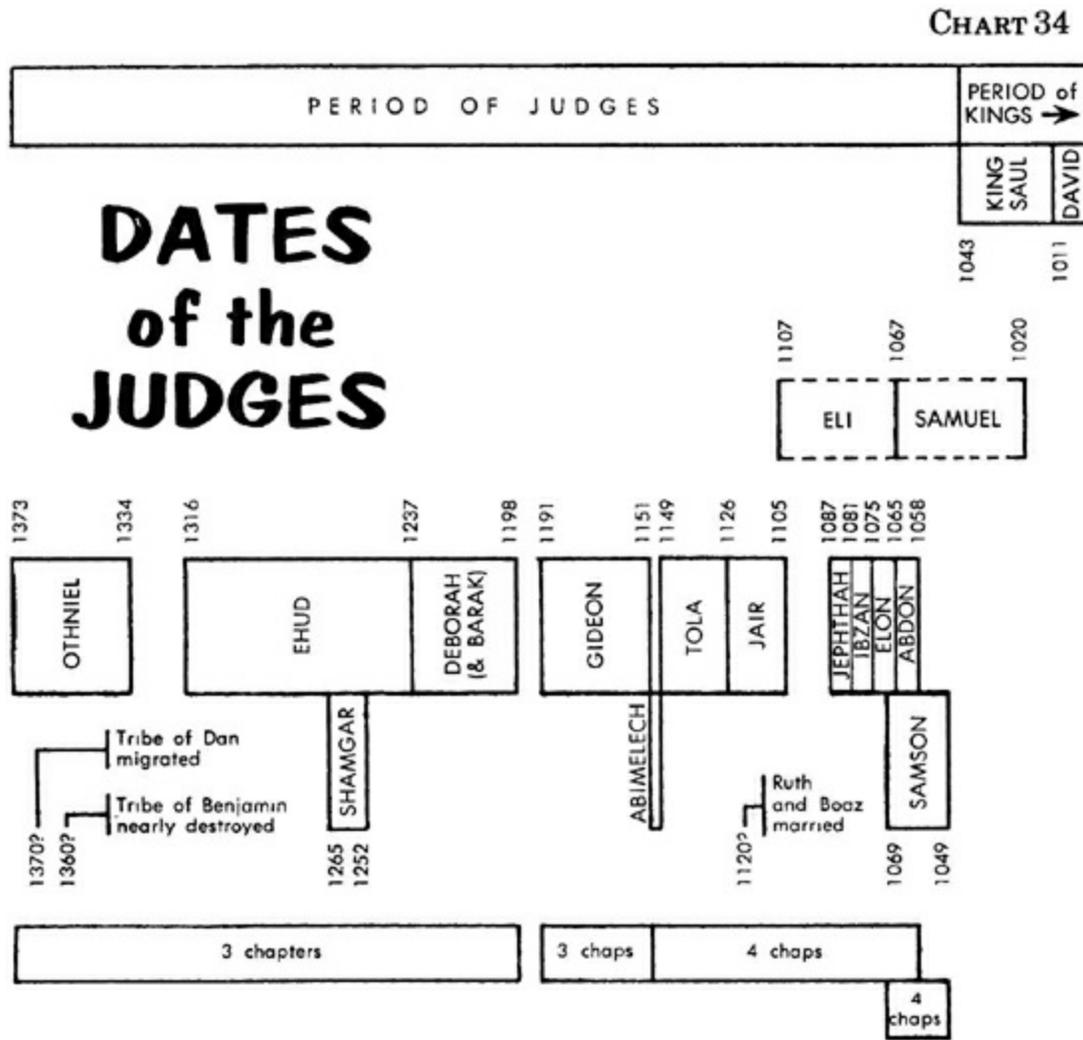
Begin now to become acquainted with the names of these judges, for they are the main characters of this Bible book.

4. Review your study of Joshua. Many comparisons may be made between the books of Joshua and Judges, some of which are listed here:

JOSHUA	JUDGES
Upward trend, spiritually	Downward trend, spiritually
One man is prominent	No One man is prominent
Israel as at tutored child	Israel as an adult
Victory	Defeat
Fidelity	Apostasy

As the book of Joshua closes, Israel is shown taking a stand for God. Thus they entered into the promised blessings of the inheritance—victory, prosperity, and happiness—which is the life God would always have His people lead. They were still surrounded by enemies; indeed, some enemies still lived within their boundaries.

But if they would obey God's commands concerning these enemies, they would have the power of the Almighty with them.

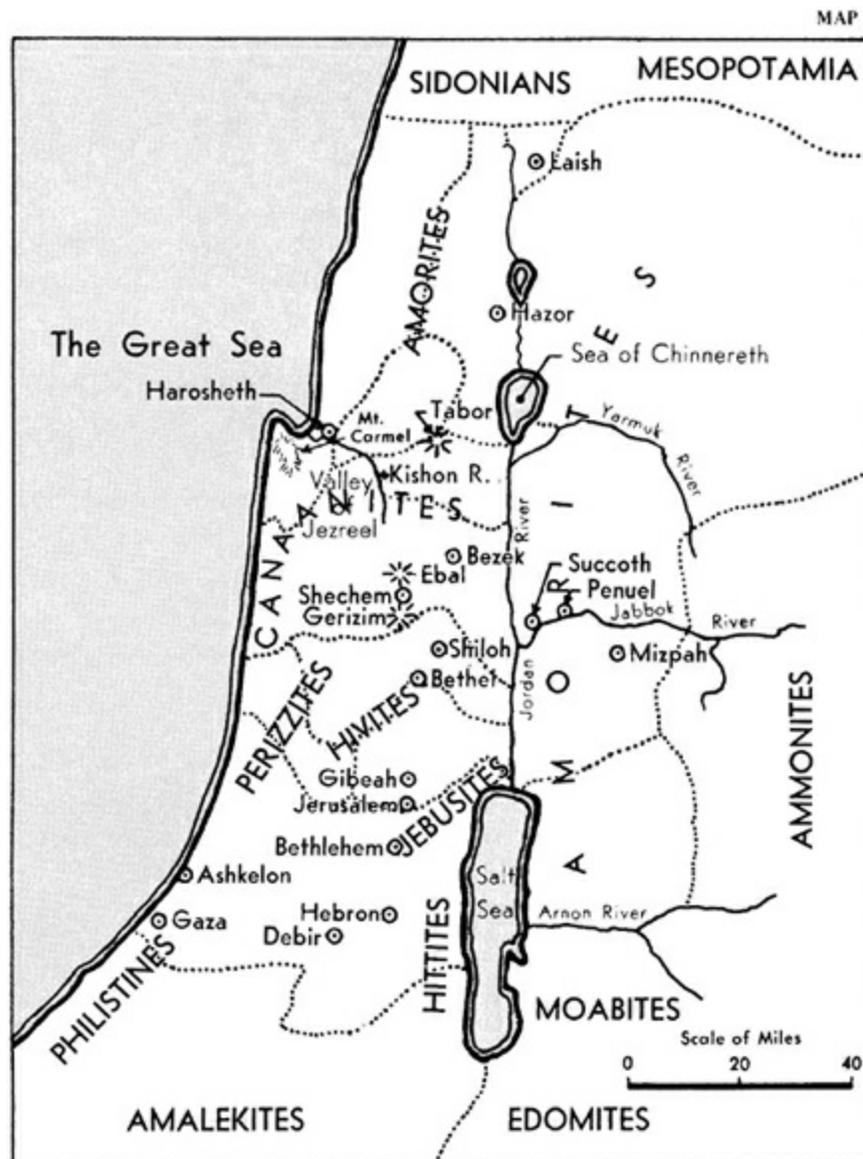


In the book of Judges we shall see Israel turning away from God and doing the very things which God through Moses and Joshua had repeatedly besought them not to do.

## II. BACKGROUND

### A. TITLE

The title of the book is Judges, named after the judges (*shophetim*) who are the leading characters of the book.



ENEMIES DWELLING IN CANAAN  
DURING THE TIMES OF THE JUDGES

### B. DATE AND AUTHOR

Judges was written and compiled by an unnamed prophet around 1000 B.C., not long after the death in 1051 B.C. of Samson, the last main character of the book. The book was obviously written after Israel began to be ruled by a king, for the phrase, “in those days there was no king in Israel,” appears four times, implying that there was a king when the history was published (cf. 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

Jewish and early Christian tradition have assigned this book’s authorship to Samuel. If the author was not Samuel, he was a contemporary of Samuel.

### C. ENEMIES DWELLING IN CANAAN

From Joshua and Judges we learn that although Israel conquered the whole land of Canaan in a general sense, there still remained pockets of enemy heathen nations here and there. These proved to be real tests

for the tribes of Israel as to whether they would obey God's command to utterly subdue them. Those were enemies within the boundaries of their inheritances. In addition to this, enemy nations from without also plagued the Israelites. The book of Judges shows how God used His appointed judges to conquer them. Refer to [Map J](#) for the locations of these enemy nations.

**JUDGES OF ISRAEL**

**CHART 35**

(cited in Judges)

NAME	TRIBE	IDENTIFICATION	ENEMY	YEARS OF OPPRESSION	YEARS OF PEACE	REFERENCES
1 OTHNIEL	Judah	nephew of Caleb	Mesopotamians (king Chushan)	8	40	3 9-11
2 EHUD	Benjamin	left-handed assassin	Moabites (king Eglon)	18	60	3 12-30
3 SHAMGAR	Nephtali?	used ox goad	Philistines	?	?	3 31
4 DEBORAH	Ephraim	only woman judge	Canaanites (king Jabin)	20	40	4 4-5 31
5 GIDEON	Manasseh	of an obscure family sought a sign	Midianites	7	40	6 11-8 35
6 TOLA	Issachar				23	10 1-2
7 JAIR	Gilead	30 sons, 30 cities			22	10 3-6
8 JEPHTHAH	Gilead	made rash vow	Ammonites	18	6	11 1-12 7
9 IBZAN	(Bethlehem)	30 sons, 30 daughters			7	12 8-10
10 ELON	Zebulun				10	12 11-12
11. ABDON	Ephraim				8	12 13-15
12 SAMSON	Dan	Nazirite from birth strongest man	Philistines	40	20	13 2-16 51

## D. DESCRIPTIONS OF THE JUDGES

**Chart 35** gives brief descriptions of the twelve judges appearing in the book of Judges. Acquaint yourself with each of these now, and your later survey will be more effective. Read the Bible references.

### III. SURVEY

1. First, swiftly scan the pages of the Bible text, reading at least the first and last sentences of the chapters and also the chapter headings in your Bible. The purpose of this exercise is merely to catch highlights of the book and to sense something of the tone of its message. Follow with a second, slower scanning of the book.

2. Next, choose a chapter title for each chapter and record them on paper. (Note on **Chart 36** the special segment divisions at 2:6; 3:7; and 12:8. Mark these divisions in your Bible before you get your chapter

titles.)

3. Refer to [Chart 35](#) and note the chapter spread of the references to the judges. Where on [Chart 36](#) does this grouping appear?

4. Study the survey [Chart 36](#) carefully. Read 1:1—3:6 and observe how these chapters serve as an introduction to the main body of the book. Why is a main division made at 3:7?

5. According to [Chart 35](#), who is the last judge appearing in this book? What chapter is the last to report about him? Use this as a clue to explain why a new division is made at chapter 17 on the chart.

6. The long section 3:7—16:31 is one continuous story of deliverances and setbacks. How does the bottom of the chart relate 1:1—3:6 and 17:1—21:25 to this?

7. Note the contrast between the

beginning of the book—fighting the enemy  
—and the end—fighting a brother.

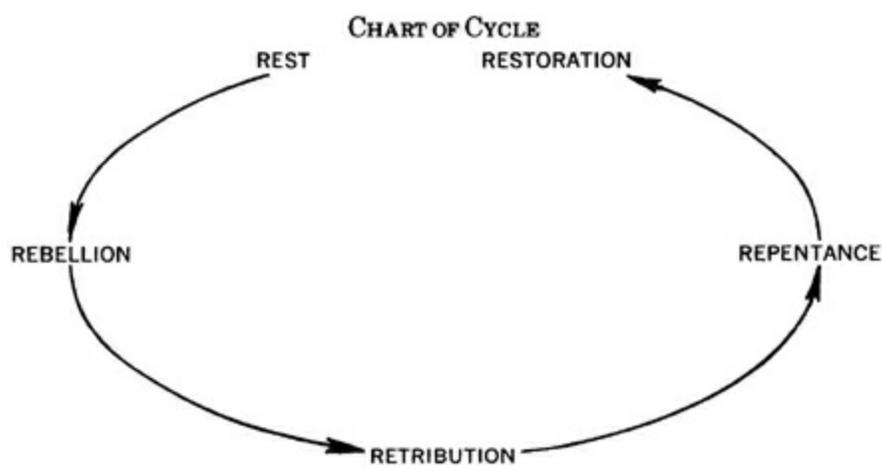
## **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

### **A. THE JUDGES (3:7—16:31)**

According to [Chart 36](#), a comparatively large space of the Bible text is devoted to three judges, Deborah, Gideon, and Samson. Many are the Bible stories which have been written about these interesting leaders. But all the judges of Israel had the equally responsible task of delivering the nation from six successive foreign oppressions. These are cited in the next section (B).

### **B. THE CYCLE OF ISRAEL'S RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**

A pattern of religious experience, which might be called a cycle, appears again and again in the book of Judges. The following diagram illustrates this cycle.



Read 2:16-19 to see the pattern of this cycle.

1. *Rest.* During Joshua's lifetime and for some years afterward, Israel served God and enjoyed the blessings of their rest land. This is where the book of Judges begins.

2. *Rebellion.* When a new generation arose, they divorced themselves from God and, in rebellion against Him, took on the ways of the idolatrous Canaanites.

3. *Retribution.* Just as He had said He would, God withdrew His protection and power from Israel and delivered them into the hands of foreign oppressors.

4. *Repentance.* Then the Israelites repented of their sin and cried to God for help. (In 2:16 this is only implied; read 3:9 for a fuller statement. Read also 10:10, KJV, to see what was involved when they “cried unto the LORD.”)

5. *Restoration.* God raised up a judge to deliver His people from their oppressor and to lead them back to a life of fellowship with Him—back to the beginning of the cycle, *rest.*

The cycle accentuates two prominent lines of truth: (1) the desperate sickness of the human heart, revealing its ingratitude, stubbornness, rebellion, and folly; and (2) God’s long-suffering, patience, love, and mercy. (The prominence of the Lord in the narrative of Judges is shown by the fact that the name “LORD” appears 178 times and “God” 62 times in the book.)

The passages of Judges which report the occurrences of this cycle are listed below. Read the Bible text to see the pattern.

<u>CYCLE</u>	<u>PASSAGE</u>	<u>OPPRESSORS</u>	<u>JUDGES</u>
I	3:8-11	Mesopotamians	Othniel
II	3:12-31	Moabites	Ehud Shamgar
III	4:1—5:31	Canaanites	Deborah with Barak
IV	6:1—10:5	Midianites	Gideon Tola Jair
V	10:6—12:15	Ammonites	Jephthah Ibzan Elon Abdon
VI	13:1—16:31	Philistines	Samson

## V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

Read 2:19 and 17:6 as key verses of Judges. A key phrase suggested for the book is “did evil.”

## VI. APPLICATIONS

Answer the following questions on the basis of your study of Judges.

1. Why do Christians disobey the Word of

God, even though they know the promised blessings for obedience? What are the consequences of disobedience?

2. What is apostasy? (Refer to a dictionary for a definition of the word.) Can Christians be guilty of this?

3. How long-suffering is God? Does God overlook sin in His long-suffering and mercy?

4. God's people often live far below their privileges. What are some privileges and blessings which Christians may forfeit?

5. Only God can give spiritual victory. Why?

6. God uses weak vessels to accomplish His divine work (1 Cor 1:26). Why?

# JUDGES

## APOSTASIES OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Key verses:  
2:19, 17:6

FIGHTING  
THE ENEMY

"Who shall go up  
for us against  
the Canaanites?"  
1:1

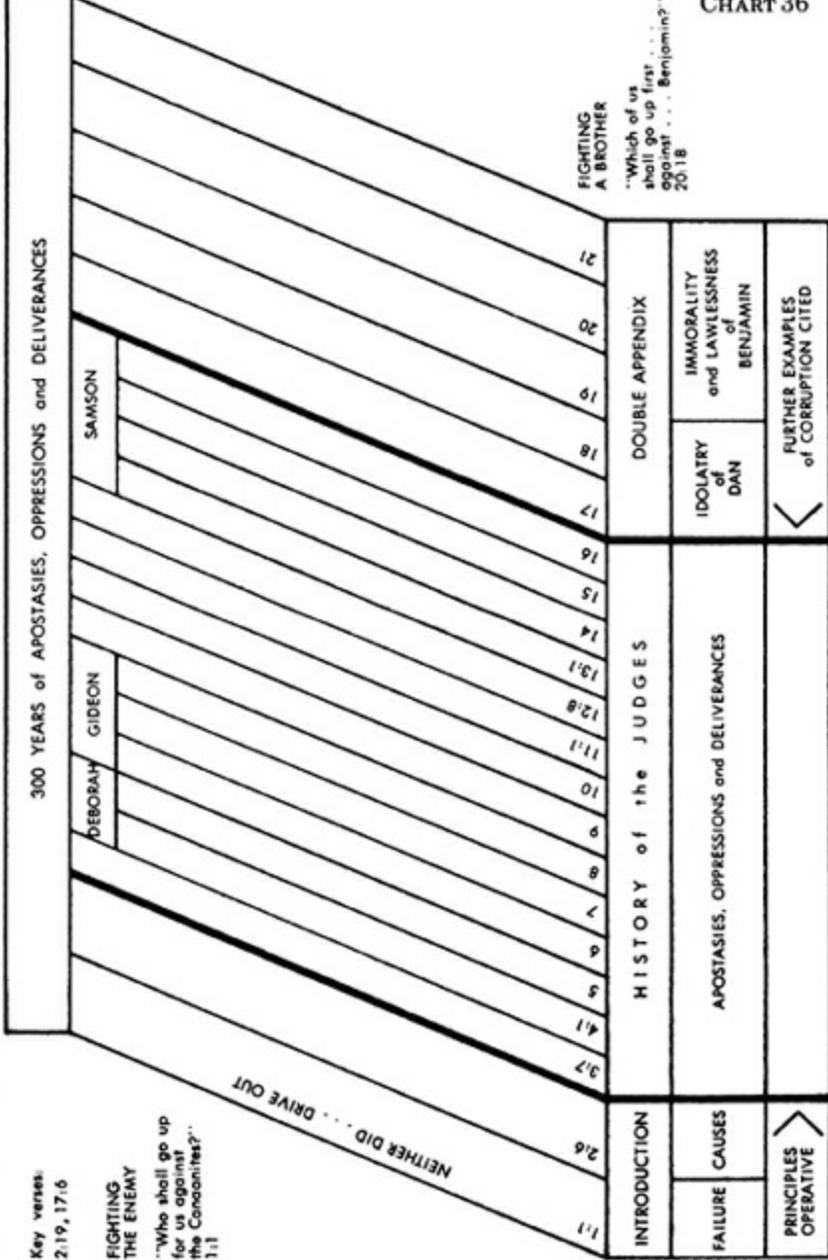
300 YEARS of APOSTASIES, OPPRESSIONS and DELIVERANCES

SAMSON

DEBORAH GIDEON

NEITHER DID . . . DRIVE OUT

FIGHTING  
A BROTHER  
"Which of us  
shall go up first . . .  
against . . . Benjamin?"  
20:18



1:1	INTRODUCTION	FAILURE CAUSES	PRINCIPLES OPERATIVE
2:6			
3:7			
4:1			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11:1			
12:8			
13:1			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
	DOUBLE APPENDIX	IMMORALITY and LAWLESSNESS of BENJAMIN	FURTHER EXAMPLES of CORRUPTION CITED
		IDOLATRY of DAN	

7. The Israelites were to expel the idolatrous nations from the land of Canaan. Does this mean that God did not want the Israelites to have any evangelistic ministry with these people at a later time? What should be the Christian's attitude toward very worldly sinners?

8. What are some other practical lessons which you have learned from Judges?

## VII. FURTHER STUDY

Four subjects suggested for extended study are:

1. the various appearances in Judges of the religious cycle cited earlier in the chapter
2. biographical studies of Gideon and Samson
3. war
4. the long-suffering of God

## VIII. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Bruce, F. F. "Judges." In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 236-38.

Cundall, Arthur E. *Judges and Ruth*, pp. 15-

49.

Eason, J. Lawrence. *The New Bible Survey*, pp. 120-27.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Analyzed Bible*, pp. 70-77.

Payne, J. Barton. "Book of Judges." In *The New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 676-79.

Unger, Merrill F. *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 286-92.

#### OPPRESSIONS OF ISRAEL

Edersheim, Alfred. *The Bible History-Old Testament*, 3:105-77.

Purkiser, W. T.; Demaray, C. E.; Metz, Donald; and Stunneck, Maude A. *Exploring the Old Testament*, pp. 150-59.

Wood, Leon. *A Survey of Israel's History*, pp. 211-26.

Young, Edward J. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 168-72.

## COMMENTARIES

Baxter, J. Sidlow. "Judges to Esther." In *Explore the Book*, vol. 2.

Burney, C. F. *The Book of Judges*.

Cook, G. A. *The Book of Judges*. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.

Moore, George F. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges*. The International Critical Commentary.

Watson, Robert Addison. *Judges and Ruth*. The Expositor's Bible.

## *Ruth: Kinsman-Redeemer Gives Rest*

The short story of Ruth is one of the beautiful love stories of the Bible. Boaz, a type of Christ the Redeemer, woos and marries Ruth, a type of Christ's Church. The events took place "in the days when the judges governed" (1:1). In chapter 9 it was shown that the period of judges, extending from about 1375 to 1050 B.C., was mainly one of apostasy, unrest, wars, and judgments. But there were temporary periods of deliverance and peace from the harassments of the enemies. The book of Ruth relates one of the stories of the brighter years, reminding us—among other things—that all was not black darkness during those years.

This account of a godly family from Bethlehem reveals something of God's mysterious and wonderful ways of sovereign grace in fulfilling His divine purposes through a believing remnant. G. T. Manley comments:

The absence of any reference to the "shield, the sword and the battle," the atmosphere of simple piety that pervades the story, the sense throughout of an overruling providence, and the setting in that quiet corner of Judah all conspire to remind us that the story comes straight from the heart of that Hebrew consciousness of *divine destiny* which was later to reach so glorious a fulfilment.¹⁰

The chief purpose of the book is to be found in the genealogical table at the end

(4:17-22): “And to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.” G. Campbell Morgan comments, “In this final word of the book there is manifest the Divine moment in the history of the chosen people. Thus the kingly line was ordered in the midst of infidelity, through faithful souls.”² God was soon to allow Israel to have kings, and so, by way of preparation, the book of Ruth introduces the kingly line, Boaz and Ruth being, the ancestors of King David, through whom came the Saviour-King.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

1. Read Matthew 1:1-17. Observe especially the names given in verses 3-6. Compare these with the names of Ruth 4:18-22. What name begins Matthew’s genealogy?³ Account for this, in view of the fact that Matthew’s gospel was written especially with the Jew in mind.

2. Consult an outside source on the subject of typology.⁴ Determine the purpose of Old Testament types, and how to interpret them.

3. Refer to [Chart 34](#). Observe on the chart the suggested date for the marriage of Ruth and Boaz.

4. Locate on a map the region of Moab and the city of Bethlehem. This is the geography of the book of Ruth.

## II. BACKGROUND

### A. TITLE

The book is named after its heroine, Ruth. The name Ruth may be a Moabite modification of the Hebrew *reeiut*, meaning “friendship, association.”

### B. DATE AND AUTHOR

The author is not known. The book may

have been written some time during the reign of King David (1011-971 B.C.). It could not have been written before then because David's name appears in 4:17,22. It may have been written before the time of Solomon, David's successor on the throne, since Solomon's name is not included in the genealogy of 4:18-22. It is very likely that the author was a contemporary of David.

### C. PLACE IN THE CANON

The book of Ruth follows Judges in our canon, placed there to fit the chronological sequence. In the Hebrew Bible, it appears in the third division ("Writings") of the threefold canon, under the group of five *Megilloth* books (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther). As noted in earlier chapters, these books are read by the Jews at annual feasts or holidays of the Jewish calendar. The harvest field setting of

Ruth makes it an appropriate liturgy for the harvest festival (Pentecost).

### III. SURVEY

1. First, read through the four chapters at one time. If possible, read aloud. Familiarity with the text is the first law of Bible study. Have pencil or pen in hand as you read so you can make notations in your Bible along the way.

2. Assign chapter titles, and record them on paper.

3. Observe these items in the story: people, places, actions, things. Record outlines of these on paper.

4. Observe all the questions in the book. Also, note the many references to “God” and “LORD.”

5. Study the survey [Chart 37](#). Compare its outlines with the observations you have

already made in the Bible text.

6. Thus far you have concentrated on observing the facts of the narrative. This is the basis for moving on to interpretation and application. In the remainder of your study you will want to see especially the Messianic character of the book.

#### IV. MAIN PURPOSES

Four of the book's main purposes are cited below.

1. *Genealogy.* The book introduces a few of the ancestors of David, the royal lineage of Christ the Messiah. Prominent is the inclusion of a non-Israelite person (Moabitess Ruth) in this line.

2. *Typology.* The kinsman-redeemer (Boaz) is the prominent Messianic type. Ruth, then, is the type of the Church, the Bride of Christ. Some Bible students view Naomi as a

prominent type of Israel.⁵ Other types may be seen in the book.

3. *Theology*. Underlying the entire book is its revelation of the character and ways of God: His providence, sovereignty, grace, holiness, and His invitation of salvation to all peoples.

4. *History*. As noted earlier, the book describes a few intimate experiences of a godly family of Bethlehem during the period of the judges.

## V. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

### A. MAIN CHARACTERS

The main characters of the story are:

*Naomi* (“pleasant one”⁶)—a Jewess of Bethlehem, wife of Elimelech, and mother of two sons, Mahlon and Chilion.

*Orpah* (“neck”)—wife and widow of Chilion.

*Ruth* (“friendship”)—widow of Mahlon, who later married Boaz.

*Boaz* (“in him is strength”)—a wealthy Bethlehemite, distant relative of Mahlon, who married Ruth.

## B. KINSMAN-REDEEMER

Two key words of the story are “kinsman” and “redeem,” which have given Boaz the classic title, “kinsman-redeemer.”

*Kinsman.* This word (Heb., *gô-ēl*) appears thirteen times in Ruth. It basically means “one who redeems,” and in the setting of Ruth refers to the near male relative of a deceased man who had the right and duty to buy back (i.e., redeem) land which had been sold to another family, thus preventing the alienation of the land and the extinction of the family. If the nearest kinsman could not fulfill such a redemption, the next of kin had the opportunity. The sequence of the story is

described below:

1. When Naomi returned from Moab, she sold her deceased husband's property, probably under pressure of poverty. A. Macdonald writes: "Either Elimelech sold the land before he went to Moab and the year of jubilee came in the interval so that the land reverted to Naomi—see Lev 25:8ff.—or the land was for the last ten years left in the care of a friend."⁷

2. It was necessary for *a. go-ēl* to redeem the land in order to keep it in the family name. By buying it back, however, "the *gô-ēl* would not come into possession of the land himself, but would hold it in trust for his son by Ruth, who would inherit the name and patrimony of Mahlon (her first husband)."⁸ In this connection it should be noted that it was Naomi who had prior claim upon the *gô-ēl* but she surrendered it

in favor of Ruth.

3. As it turned out, the nearest kinsman wanted the land (4:4b) but not Ruth, and so he would not gain by the transaction. Boaz wanted Ruth, not the land, and had the money to transact the business. (Read the following references to a kinsman and his right to redeem: Lev 25:25-31, 47-55; Deut 25:5-10; Job 19:25.)

*Redeemer.* In view of the above description, it may now be seen why Boaz is called a kinsman-redeemer. The two words are essentially synonymous, but the word “redeemer” is added since our English word “kinsman” usually suggests only the idea of family relationship. Notice the seven occurrences of the word “redeem” in chapter 4. It translates the same Hebrew root as *gô-ēl*.

**C. MESSIANIC TYPES**

Since we now have the New Testament with its antitypes (antitypes are the fulfillments of the types), it is usually not too difficult to identify types which reside in various persons, things, and events of Old Testament history. (Note: In a study of types, one should always be careful to make the antitype, not the type, the preeminent fact; and also to avoid forcing types for the mere sake of typology.)

There is a rich underlying typology in the book of Ruth. The major groups are described below.

*1. Ruth, representing the Church, the body of believers.* Follow this theme through from Ruth's lost condition in chapter 1 to her salvation in the later chapters. G. Campbell Morgan suggests an outline: The Choice of Faith (1-2); The Venture of Faith (3); The Reward of Faith (4)⁹

2. *Boaz, representing Christ, the Kinsman-Redeemer.* Gleason L. Archer says that “the little book of Ruth is one of the most instructive in the Old Testament concerning the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus.”¹⁰ He cites some of the qualifications and functions of the *go-ēl*.

- a) He must be a blood relative.
- b) He must have the money to purchase the forfeited inheritance.
- c) He must be willing to buy back that forfeited inheritance.
- d) He must be willing to marry the wife of a deceased kinsman.

Pursue this study further, observing how Christ as the believer’s Kinsman-Redeemer fulfills the above qualifications.

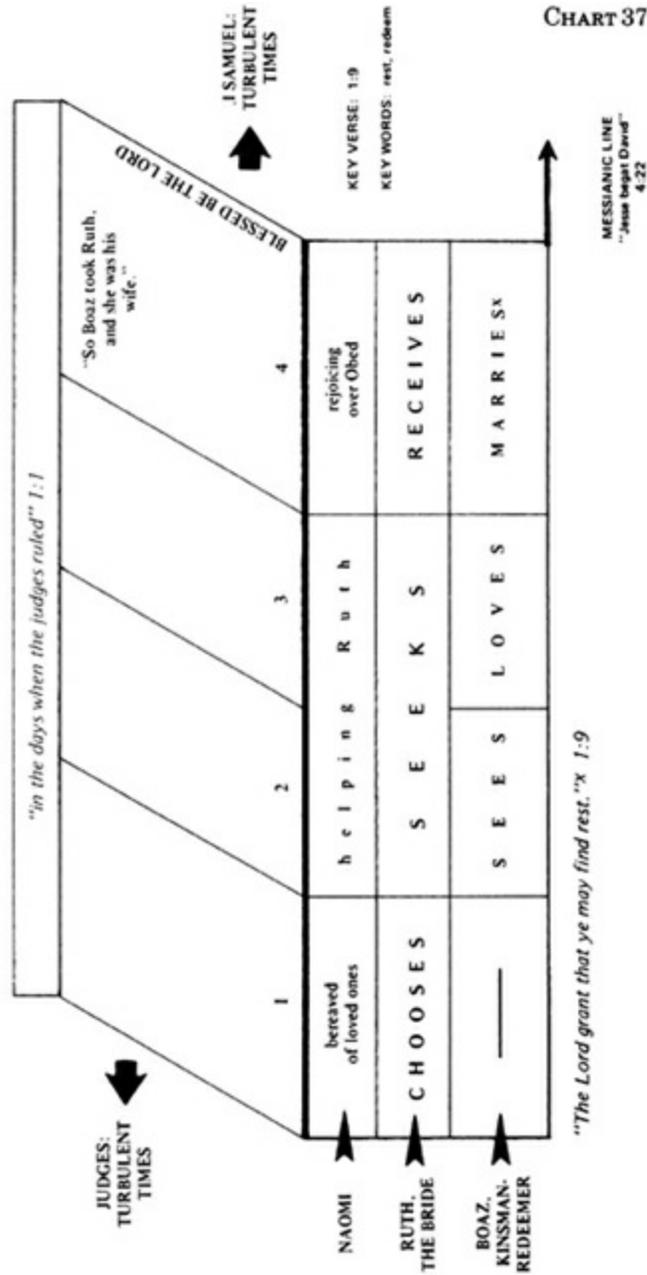
#### **D. GENEALOGY OF THE MESSIAH**

The concluding verses (4:17-22) of the

book of Ruth are very significant, for, as one writer has said, “a genealogy is a striking way of bringing before us the continuity of God’s purpose through the ages.”¹¹ As to the uniqueness of this particular genealogy, A. Macdonald comments:

The reader is here constrained to face the vital matter that is behind the story, namely the genealogy of the Messiah, for every Israelite knew that the Messiah was to spring from David. Ruth the Moabitess is seen no longer as the courageous stranger who came to Bethlehem, but as the woman whose great love for Naomi and devotion to Naomi’s God put her into the direct line of the Messiah.¹²

**RUTH**  
KINSMAN-REDEEMER  
GIVES REST



## VI. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

Three key words of Ruth are “rest,” “redeem,” and “kinsman.” Read 1:9 and 4:14, which are suggested as key verses.

## VII. APPLICATIONS

Write a list of spiritual lessons taught by the book of Ruth. Include teachings about God (e.g., as the Holy One, Judge, worshiped One, gracious Lord, Rewarder); characteristics of man; faith and salvation.

## VIII. FURTHER STUDY

Make a thorough study of the types seen in the book of Ruth.

## IX. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Cassel, Paulus. "Ruth." In Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, pp. 3-10.

Macdonald, A. "Ruth." In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 258-59.

Morris, Leon. *Judges and Ruth*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, pp. 229-43.

### COMMENTARIES

Baxter, J. Sidlow. "Judges to Esther." In *Explore the Book*, vol. 2.

Cook, G. A. *The Book of Ruth*. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.

Morris, Leon. *Judges and Ruth*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries.

Watson, Robert Addison. *Judges and Ruth*. The Expositor's Bible.

1. G. T. Manley, ed., *The New Bible Handbook*, p. 166.

2. G. Campbell Morgan, *The Analyzed Bible*, p. 83.

3. The list of Matthew's genealogy is only partial, but the hereditary connections are accurately represented.

4. For example, Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 196-219.

5. For a description of this interpretation, see Merrill F. Unger, *Ungefs Bible Handbook*, 181-85.

6. This is the literal meaning of the Hebrew name.

7. A. Macdonald, "Ruth," in *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 261.

8. Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett Harrison, eds., *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 271.

9. Morgan, p. 78.

10. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 269

11. Leon Morris, *Judges and Ruth*, p. 318.

12. Macdonald, p. 261.

## *1 and 2 Samuel: The First Two Kings of Israel*

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel continue the history of Israel from the point where Judges leaves it. The last verse of Judges sums up the spiritual life of Israel at that time: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 21:25). That is, no man was the head of the nation, no voice commanded the obedience of the people, no prince served as commander in chief of all the tribes at one time in a nationwide program to subdue the enemies, and no one monarch unified the people under the banner of their sovereign Lord God.

It was always God’s purpose to reign as

King in the hearts and lives of the Israelites. A government so ordered is called a *theocracy* (from the Greek *theos*, “God”). Furthermore, in terms of organization, God desired to preserve the unity of His chosen people through the leadership of *one* ruler over all. That is what is called *monarchy* (from the Greek *monos*, “one”). God’s design, therefore, called for the combination theocracy-monarchy (theocratic monarchy, or monarchic theocracy).

The years of the judges were years of spiritual decline for Israel, because the nation was increasingly putting God out of their lives. Thus they were untheocratic. When the time came (1 Sam 8) that they felt their need of a king (monarchy), they had rejected the idea of God on the throne (theocracy). God objected to their request for a king, not because He was against kingship (monarchy), but because of their

rejection of Him (theocracy): “They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam 8:7, KJV).

God granted Israel’s request for rulership by kings, but not without warning of consequences for dethroning Him as their King (1 Sam 8:7-9). Then, in His mysterious workings of grace and might, as God of history He used the people’s kings as His channels of revelation, service, blessing, and justice. One of those whom He anointed as king was David, “a man after His own heart” (1 Sam 13:14), who would be the grand type and forerunner of the Messianic King. The two books of 1 and 2 Samuel describe the establishing of this Davidic kingdom in Israel.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

1. It will be of help to you as you begin

your study of 1 and 2 Samuel to see their place among the Old Testament books that describe Israel's history. Broadly speaking, the history of Israel as given in the Old Testament falls into four periods, which someone has identified by the words *camp*, *commonwealth*, *crown*, *captivity*. See [Chart 38](#).

ISRAEL'S HISTORY BY PERIODS

CHART 38

IN EGYPT AND THE WILDERNESS	IN CANAAN UNDER JUDGES	IN CANAAN UNDER KINGS	IN ASSYRIA AND BABYLON
CAMP	COMMONWEALTH	CROWN	CAPTIVITY
660 YEARS	360 YEARS	460 YEARS	160 YEARS
PENTATEUCH	[ JOSHUA JUDGES RUTH	I and II [ SAMUEL KINGS CHRONICLES	[ EZRA NEHEMIAH ESTHER

a) The *Camp* period extended from the call of Abraham, the founder of the nation, to Moses' bringing the people up to the "gate" of Canaan, a period of about 660 years. This history is recorded in the Pentateuch.

- b) The *Commonwealth* period extended from their entrance into Canaan under Joshua to the crowning of their first king, Saul, a period of about 360 years, the history of which is given in Joshua, Judges, and Ruth.
- c) The *Crown* period extended from the crowning of their first king, Saul, to the Babylonian Captivity, a period of about 460 years. This history is given in the six books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles.
- d) The *Captivity* period, including the restoration, extended from the Babylonian Captivity to the end of the Old Testament history, a period of about 160 years. Ezekiel and Daniel were prophets during this period. The historical books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther report some events of this period, especially the return from captivity.

You will find interesting descriptions of these four periods of Israel's history in Psalms 78 and 79, as follows: under Moses, 78:5-54; under Joshua, 78:55; under the judges, 78:56-64; under the kings, 78:65-72; in captivity, 79:1-13.

2. Acquaint yourself with the geographical setting of 1 and 2 Samuel. Study [Map K](#) now, and refer to it as you read the action of the books.

## **II BACKGROUND**

### **A. TITLE**

The Jews probably assigned the name Samuel as a title for these books for various reasons: (1) the man Samuel was the key character of the books; (2) he was the “king-maker,” anointing the two other main characters, Saul and David, to be king; (3) the Jews regarded him as a national leader,

second only to Moses. Of this, A. M. Renwick writes:

As Moses delivered Israel from Egypt, gave them the law, and brought them to the very borders of the promised land, so Samuel was sent of God to deliver Israel when the nation's fortunes seemed almost hopeless. Spiritually and politically, the nation appeared virtually lost at the end of Eli's judgeship (cf. 1 Sam. 4:12-22; Ps. 78:59-64; Jer. 26:6). Under Samuel came a wonderful spiritual renovation and a new hope (1 Sam. 7).¹

## **B. PLACE IN THE CANON**

In our English Bible, 1 and 2 Samuel appear among the historical books. The earliest Hebrew Bibles considered the two books as one, among the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings). Notice the

changes made over the years of the Samuel and Kings books: Hebrew Bible (B.C.): Samuel; Kings (two books)



Septuagint (B.C.): 1,2 Kings; 3,4 Kings (four books)

Vulgate (A.D.): 1,2 Kings; 3,4 Kings (four

books)

English Bible (A.D.): 1,2 Samuel; 1,2 Kings  
(four books)

The intimate structural connection of 2 Samuel with 1 Samuel is shown by the accompanying outline. Note especially that the last half of 1 Samuel and the first chapter of 2 Samuel are part of one section in the outline for the simple reason that the story of Saul does not end until chapter 1 of 2 Samuel.

## FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL

ELI, the ARK, and SAMUEL	SAMUEL and SAUL	SAUL and DAVID	DAVID, KING over JUDAH	DAVID, KING over ALL ISRAEL
I SAM. 1	9	16	II SAM. 2	5 24

### C. AUTHOR AND DATE

It is difficult to identify the author (or authors). Various suggestions of authorship or coauthorship include Abiathar, an

attendant of David; Nathan and Gad (cf. 1 Chron 29:29); and pupils from Samuel's school of the prophets. The detailed and vivid account of the happenings, with which these books abound, indicates that most of the narrative was written by men living at the time these things occurred rather than at a much later date.

The fact of joint authorship does not take away from the unity of the books as to theme. Concerning all the writings of Scripture, one must continually recognize the supernatural moving of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of the human writers, whoever and however many they were, to compose the holy writings.

If Samuel was one of the authors, he could only have narrated the events that preceded his death (which is recorded in 1 Sam 25).² He would have done his writing sometime

between 1025 and 900 B.C.

#### D. THE THREE LEADING CHARACTERS OF 1 AND 2 SAMUEL

1. *Samuel*. The name Samuel is from a Hebrew word which has been variously translated as: “the name of God,” “his name is God,” “his name is mighty,” or “heard of God.”

One is not surprised that the Jews have esteemed Samuel second to Moses among their leaders. The psalmist (Psalm 99:6), and God speaking to Jeremiah (Jer 15:1), classified Samuel with Moses as an interceding priest. Samuel held the honor of being the last of the judges (1 Sam 7:6, 15-17) and the first of the new order of prophets (1 Sam 3:20; Acts 3:24; 13:20). The stature of the prophetic office during the years of the kingdoms can be traced back to Samuel’s life and ministry. He probably was

the founder of a school of prophets (cf. 1 Sam 10:5).³

2. *Saul*. Saul (Heb., *Sa-ul*, “asked,” i.e., of God) was the first king of Israel; son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a choice young man in the prime of life when he was placed on the throne. He was a physical “giant” (1 Sam 10:23), industrious, generous, honest, and modest. God chose him to institute Israel’s monarchy, but three times during his reign he disqualified himself from the high office. The story of Saul (1 Sam 9-31) is one of the most pathetic accounts of God’s servants. J. Barton Payne cites four degenerations in Saul’s experience:⁴

GOOD POINTS	DEGENERATED INTO
striking appearance, 9:2	pride, 18:8
initiative, 11:7	rebellion, 20:31
bravery, 13:3	recklessness, 14:24
patriotic Spirit-filling, 11:6	demon possession, 16:14

3. *David.* David, son of Jesse, was a man after God's heart, and in a life-span of about seventy years, he "served his own generation by the will of God" (Acts 13:36, KJV). T. H. Jones describes David:

He stood out as a bright and shining light for the God of Israel. His accomplishments were many and varied; man of action, poet, tender lover, generous foe, stern dispenser of justice, loyal friend, he was all that men find wholesome and admirable in man, and this by the will of God, who made him and shaped him for his destiny.⁵

David was Israel's greatest king, designated by God as the Messianic forerunner of Christ. He is the only person in Scripture with the name David. There are fifty-eight New Testament references to him.

(Read Rom 1:3 and Rev 22:16 for two examples.)

David's career was marred by heinous sins, but his honesty and contrition in acknowledging and confessing those sins brought God's forgiveness. (Read his prayer of Psalm 51.)

### E. FIRST TWO KINGS OF ISRAEL

Saul and David were the first two kings of Israel, followed by Solomon, the third king. For orientation in your study of 1 and 2 Samuel, keep in mind the simple outline of [Chart 39](#).



### III. SURVEY OF 1 SAMUEL

1. First note on the survey [Chart 42](#) that most of the thirty-one chapters are individual segments of study. Mark your Bible to show that extra segments begin at 2:11 and 21:10; and that 4:16; 7:3; and 28:3 replace 4:1; 7:1; and 28:1 as starting points.

2. Scan the thirty-one chapters in your Bible. Make notations (e.g., underline strong phrases) in your Bible as you read. Record segment titles on paper.

3. Read your segment titles and try to recall the general movement of the narrative from chapter to chapter.

4. Try to determine what chapters of 1 Samuel might be grouped together according to similar content. Look especially for grouping according to main characters. Is there any overlapping?

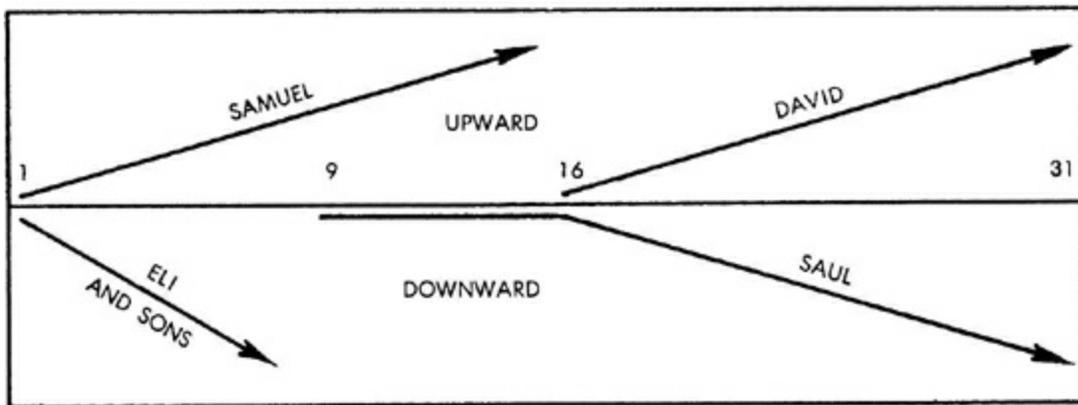
5. Observe the important places of chapters 9 and 16 in the book: Samuel gives way to Saul in chapter 9; Saul is rejected in favor of David in chapter 16. This is diagrammed on [Chart 40](#).

MAIN CHARACTERS OF 1 SAMUEL

CHART 40

1	9	16	31
<p>SAMUEL</p> <p>—prophet, priest, judge</p>		<p>SAUL</p> <p>—man after man's heart</p>	
<p>—birth</p> <p>—childhood</p> <p>—judgeship</p>		<p>DAVID</p> <p>—man after God's heart</p>	
		<p>—choice</p> <p>—reign</p> <p>—rejection</p>	
		<p>—anointing</p> <p>—pursuit</p> <p>—exile</p>	

But [Chart 40](#) does not recognize the overlappings of the biographies in 1 Samuel. This is done by [Chart 41](#), which shows the contrasting lives (upward and downward) of the main characters. Carefully study the two charts together.

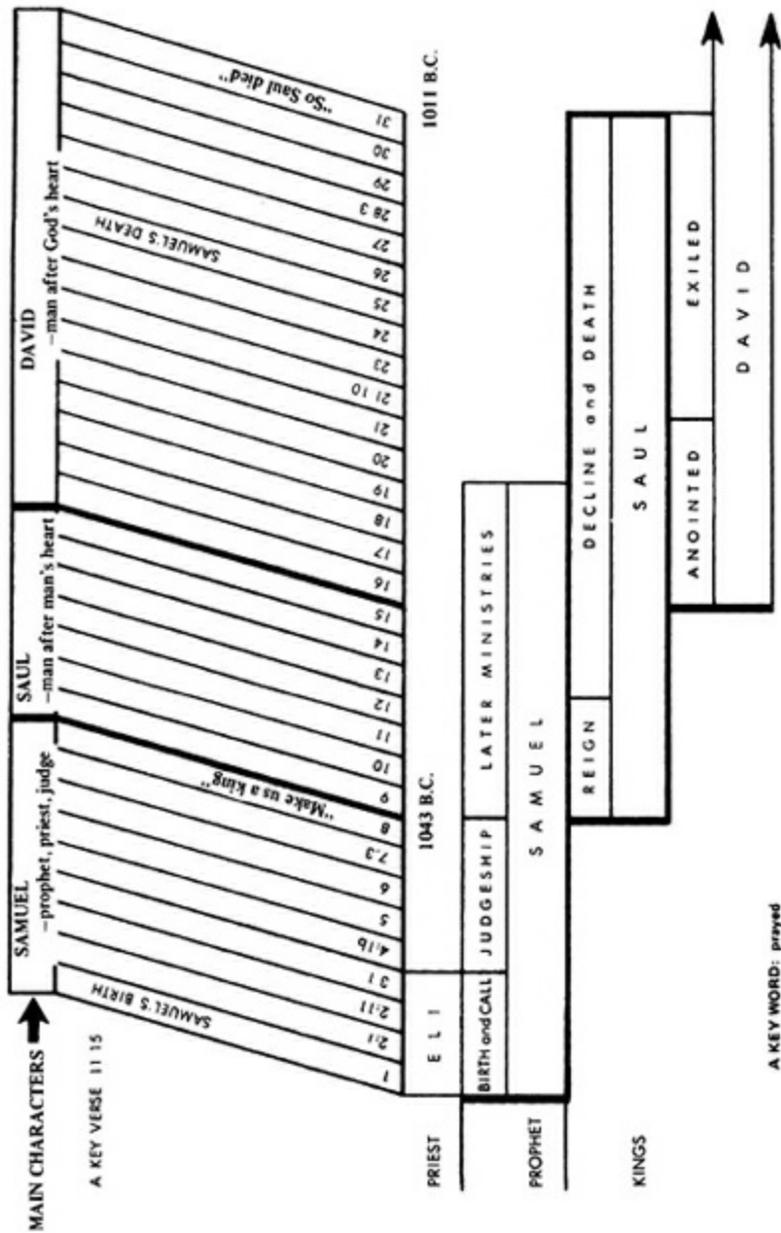


6. Compare the beginning and ending of the book.

7. Before you finish your survey study, try to suggest a theme for 1 Samuel. Write out a few important truths which you have already observed in your study.

8. Study the survey [Chart 42](#). Compare its outlines with what you have already observed. How does the chart show 1 Samuel to be a connecting link between the books of Judges and 2 Samuel?

# 1 SAMUEL THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL, SAUL



## IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 1 SAMUEL

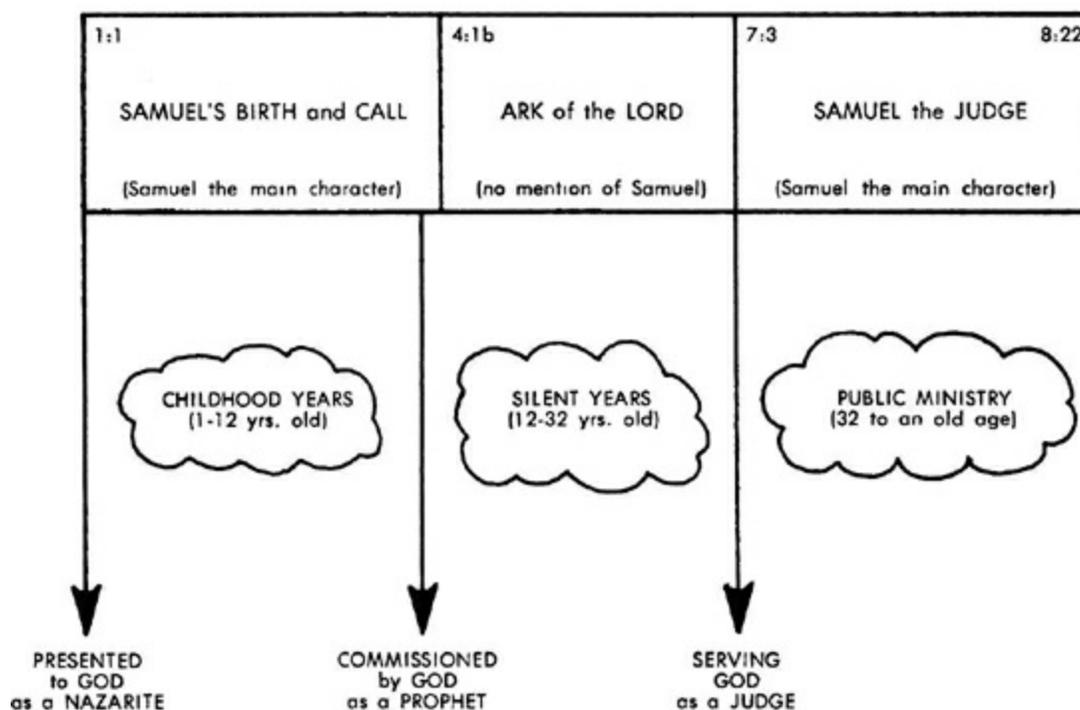
### A. HISTORY

First Samuel records the transition from the era of judges to that of the monarchy. (Read Acts 13:20-21, noticing these three words: judges, prophet, king.)

The book also describes Samuel's influences, as prophet judge, on the life of Israel and many of its leaders. **Chart 43** shows how the story of Samuel is told in the first eight chapters of 1 Samuel. (He continued to serve after 1 Samuel 8:22, but beginning at chapter 9 the head of the nation is a king, Saul.)

THE MAN SAMUEL IN 1 SAMUEL 1-8

CHART 43



Most of 1 Samuel reports the highlights of the tragic reign of Saul, Israel's first king. Overlapping this account is the setting for

the reign of David as describe in 2 Samuel.

Read 1 Samuel with this outline in mind:

1. Samuel's Birth and Call (1:1—4:1a)
2. The Art of the Lord (4:1b—7:2)
3. Samuel the Judge (7:3—8:22)
4. Samuel the king (9:1—12:25)
5. Saul Rejected (13:1—15:35)
6. David Anointed (16:1—17:58)
7. David Flees Saul (18:1—21:9)
8. David in Exile (21:10—28:2)
9. Last Days of Saul's Reign (28:3—31:13)

## **B. TYPES AND SYMBOLS**

The books of Samuel are rich in typical or symbolic truths. In many ways this Old Testament book foreshadows Christ in the offices of prophet, priest, and king.

## **C. SOME DISTINCTIVE POINTS OF 1 SAMUEL**

The book of 1 Samuel contains many unique items. Some of them are:

1. The sources of the oft-quoted words, "Ichabod" ("The glory is departed" or

“Where is the glory?”) 4:21 (KJV); “Ebenezer” (“Hitherto hath the LORD helped us”) 7:12 (KJV); “God save the king,” 10:24 (KJV).

2. Reference to the school of the prophets, probably founded by Samuel (10:5; 19:18-24).

3. First Old Testament book to use the phrase “LORD of hosts” (appears eleven times in the two books of Samuel; e.g., 1 Sam 1:3).

4. Important place given to the Holy Spirit and prayer.

5. As in the book of Judges, explicit reference to the Law of Moses is lacking. But many of the items and activities inherent in the Law (e.g., offerings, tabernacle, ark, Aaron, Levites) appear frequently.

6. In the early chapters, much light is shed on Shiloh as the focal place of the national religion.

## V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES OF 1 SAMUEL

After you have finished your survey of 1 Samuel, choose key words and verses which represent its story. Also, assign a title to the book. Note the title given on [Chart 42](#). Compare this with the one assigned to 2 Samuel ([Chart 44](#)).

## VI. APPLICATIONS OF 1 SAMUEL

1. Among other things, 1 Samuel teaches much about prayer. Read the following verses, and apply them to your own life: 1:10-28; 7:5-10; 8:5-6; 9:15; 12:19-23; 28:6.

2. What constitutes a call to Christian service?

3. In what sense does a Christian need and enjoy the presence of the Lord?

4. Why does God sometimes let His people have the things they request, even though

the thing desired is evil (1 Sam 8:6-9)? Is judgment for such an evil request inevitable? (Cf. Psalm 106:15.)

5. What are some causes of spiritual backsliding? Trace the downward path in Saul's life.

6. List some spiritual lessons taught by the story of David in 1 Samuel.

7. What do you learn here about jealousy and hate, and about faithful friendship?

8. What does the book teach about God?

## **VII. FURTHER STUDY OF 1 SAMUEL**

1. Make biographical studies of Eli, Samuel, and Saul.

2. Critics of the Bible text see two conflicting reactions by God concerning Israel's request for a king. They see God condemning in chapters 7 and 8; and God

favoring in chapter 9 (especially v. 16). Read these chapters. Is there contradiction here? Support your answer.

3. Study the origin of the ministry of prophet. Look into the schools of prophets of those early days.⁶

## VIII. SURVEY OF 2 SAMUEL

1. Survey 2 Samuel, using procedures followed for 1 Samuel.

2. Who is the main character of the book? Is he still living when the book closes?

3. Read 1 Samuel 31 immediately followed by 2 Samuel 1. What is the continuity?

4. Carefully study [Chart 44](#). Compare its outlines with what you have already observed in your scanning of the book.

5. The pivotal point of the book is 11:1—

12:31. Read the two chapters. Note on the chart the contrast before and after this turning point.

6. The last four chapters are appendixes, recording some of David's last acts and words. Read these chapters, and relate them to the main body of the book.

## **IX. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 2 SAMUEL**

Of the many ingredients of this narrative of 2 Samuel, **7** four are given prominence:

a king—David (e.g., 2:4)

a city—Jerusalem (5:6-12)

—Zion (5:7; 6:1-17)

a covenant—Davidic (7:8-17)

a kingdom—everlasting (7:16; 23:1-7)

Read the passages cited above, and look for other references in the book to those subjects.

## A. SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF DAVID'S REIGN

This history book does not intend to be exhaustive in its contents. The authors, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, selected those events from this period of David's life which would serve to impart the message God intended for the reader. Some events not recorded here, but occurring about the same time, are found in other books, such as 1 Chronicles.

The following brief outline shows some of the highlights of David's reign as recorded in 2 Samuel.

1. David's Lament over the Death of Saul and Jonathan (1:1-27)
2. David's Reign over Judah (2:1—4:12)
3. David's Reign over All Israel (5:1—10:19)
4. David's Sins (11:1—12:31)

5. David's Troubles (13:1—20:26)
6. Appendixes (21:1—24:25)
  - a) Famine (21:1-14)
  - b) Philistine Wars (21:15-22)
  - c) Psalms of Thanksgiving (22:1—23:7)
  - d) David's Mighty Men (23:8-39)
  - e) Census and Pestilence (24:1-25)

## B. THE TEMPLE AND THE COVENANT

God refused David's offer to build Him a house, but He spoke His refusal in such a burst of grace and glory and revelation that David could only marvel at God's greatness and goodness. It was not that God was displeased with David's desire to build Him a house; indeed, He said, "You did well that it was in your heart" (1 Kings 8:18). But God had another plan for His beloved servant. God would build a "house" for *David*. God was reaffirming the covenant He

had originally made with Abraham, a covenant promising an everlasting Kingdom, with Christ on its throne.

David wanted to build a temple for God, but Solomon was given the privilege. David's wars cleared the way for another man to lay the foundation of that house of worship (1 Chron 22:18; cf. 22:8-10). After the warring was over, Solomon erected the Temple from materials which David had prepared.

### **C. DAVID'S SINS (11:1—12:31)**

David had not reigned long in Jerusalem as king of all Israel before he came to a tragic turning point in his career. There had been other times in his experience when he left his usual high plane of living and descended into the valley, yielding to such things as unbelief, fear, falsehood, deceit, pride, and anger. But the sins of this day—

adultery involving Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah—were all the more conspicuous because they were committed at the height of his reign.

David was never the same again. As long as he lived, troubles kept arising to plague him.

#### **D. DAVID'S TROUBLES (13:1—20:26)**

David's sins against Bathsheba and Uriah were forgiven by God when he confessed in repentance, but the bitter fruits of his sins were inevitable. Read these chapters with this brief outline in view:

1. Family Troubles (chaps. 13-14)
2. Absalom's Rebellion (15:1—19:8)
3. David's Restoration (19:9-40)
4. Further Strife and Rebellion (19:41—20:26)

## **X. KEY WORDS AND VERSES OF 2 SAMUEL**

Read 5:4 and 7:25-26 as key verses of 2 Samuel. Choose others from the Bible text. The phrase “before the LORD” is a key phrase of the book. Consult an exhaustive concordance to see its uses.

## **XI. APPLICATIONS OF 2 SAMUEL**

1. What does the book teach about the following:
  - a) sin and its workings, punishment, confession, and pardon
  - b) God and His relationship to the believer
  - c) the believer’s dependence on God (see 2:1; 5:3; 6:16,21: 7:18; 8:6,14: 12:16; 22:1).
  - d) the will of God
  - e) rewards of God
2. Read Galatians 6:7. Apply its teaching

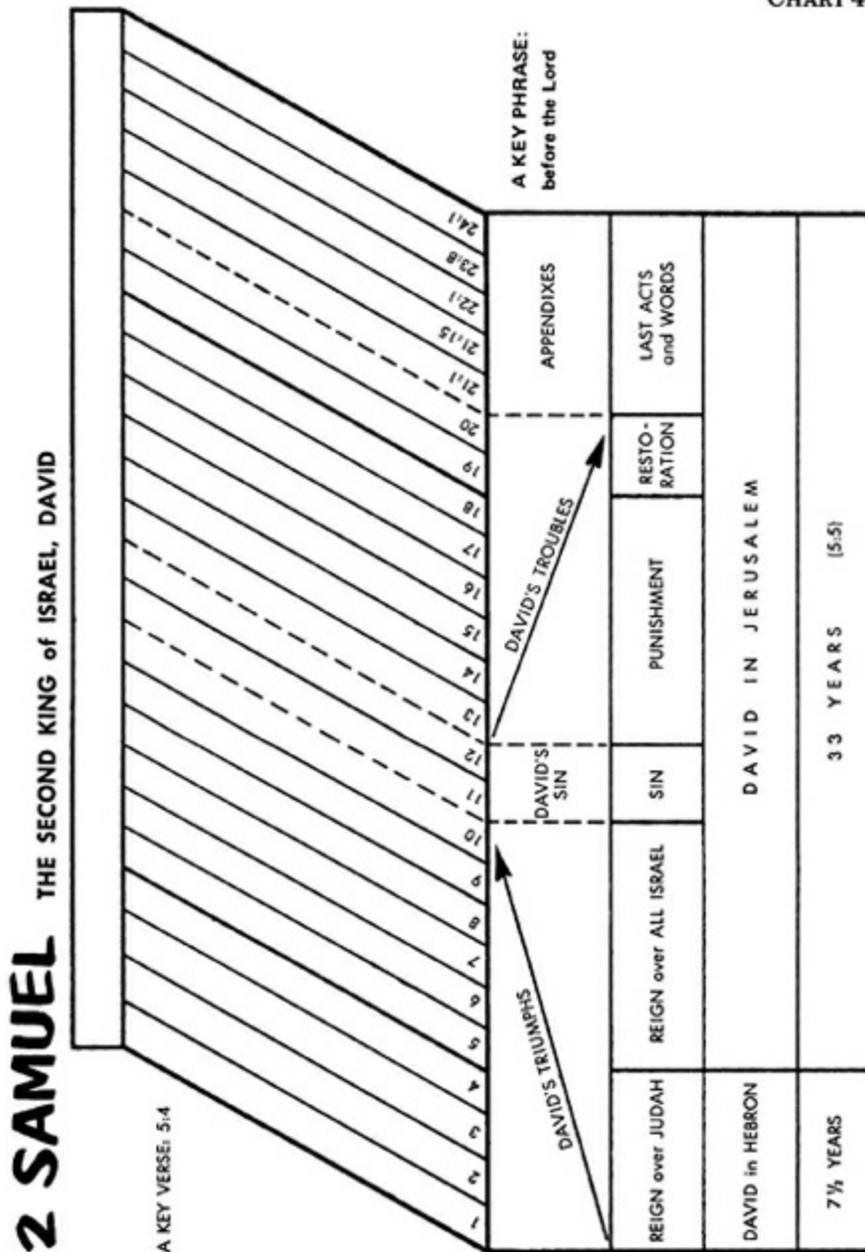
to the life of David.

3. How important is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the daily walk of the believer? What are His ministries?

4. Study the contrasts (page 184) about *control* in David's life, as J. Barton Payne has observed these in the books of Samuel.⁸

## **XII. FURTHER STUDY OF 2 SAMUEL**

1. Make a biographical study of David. The Bible passages about him are 1 Samuel 16:1—1 Kings 2:11; 1 Chronicles 11-29; and many psalms. (Consult William Day Crockett's harmony of these books.)⁹



**WHEN GOD'S SPIRIT WAS IN CONTROL**

David had men's devotion (1 Chron 12:18) and women's (1 Sam 19:12-13)

He cared for the helpless (2 Sam 9:1)

He confessed his own sins (Psalm 51) and his enemies' nobility (2 Sam 1:23)

His piety was shameless (2 Sam 6:21)

His faith was radiant (Psalm 23)

**WHEN SELFISH DESIRES WERE IN CONTROL**

David failed to restrain Joab (2 Sam 3:39) and his own family (2 Sam 13:21)

He was brutal with captives (2 Sam 8:2)

He would not admit error (2 Sam 19:29) and repudiated former pardons (1 Kings 2:8-9)

He practiced deception (1 Sam 21:2)

His sin was heinous (2 Sam 11)

2. Study the subjects of Temple, covenant, and kingdom in 2 Samuel.

### **XIII. SELECTED READING FOR 1 AND 2 SAMUEL**

#### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 270-75.

Davis, John D. *The Birth of a Kingdom*.

Manley, G. T., ed. *The New Bible Handbook*, pp. 167-72.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Analyzed Bible*, pp. 84-99.

Phillips, John. *Exploring the Scriptures*, pp. 61-66.

Young, Edward J. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 173-83.

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Crockett, William Day. *A Harmony of the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles*.

Deane, W. J. *Samuel and Saul: Their Lives and Times.*

Unger, Merrill F. "David." In *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 242-48.

Wood, Leon. *A Survey of Israel's History*, pp. 237-86.

#### COMMENTARIES

Baxter, J. Sidlow. "Judges to Esther." In *Explore the Book*, vol. 2.

Keil, C. F., and Delitzsch, F. *Samuel.*

Kirkpatrick, A. F. *I, II Samuel.*

Renwick, A.M. "I and II Samuel." In *The New Bible Commentary.*

Young, Fred E. "I and II Samuel." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary.*

1. A. M. Renwick, "I and II Samuel," *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 262-63.

2. That Samuel was a writer of at least one work is indicated by 1 Samuel 10:25.

3. The Old Testament (e.g., 1 Sam 10:5) makes only a reference to a “group” of prophets. It is not known if such groups had any formal organization. The word “school” is still probably an accurate designation. See Edward J. Young, “Prophets,” *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 687.

4. J. Barton Payne, *An Outline of Hebrew History*, p. 96. ©1954 by Baker Book House. Used by permission.

5. T. H. Jones, “David,” in *The New Bible Dictionary*, p. 296.

6. See *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 687.

7. Much of 2 Samuel is reported in 1 Chronicles.

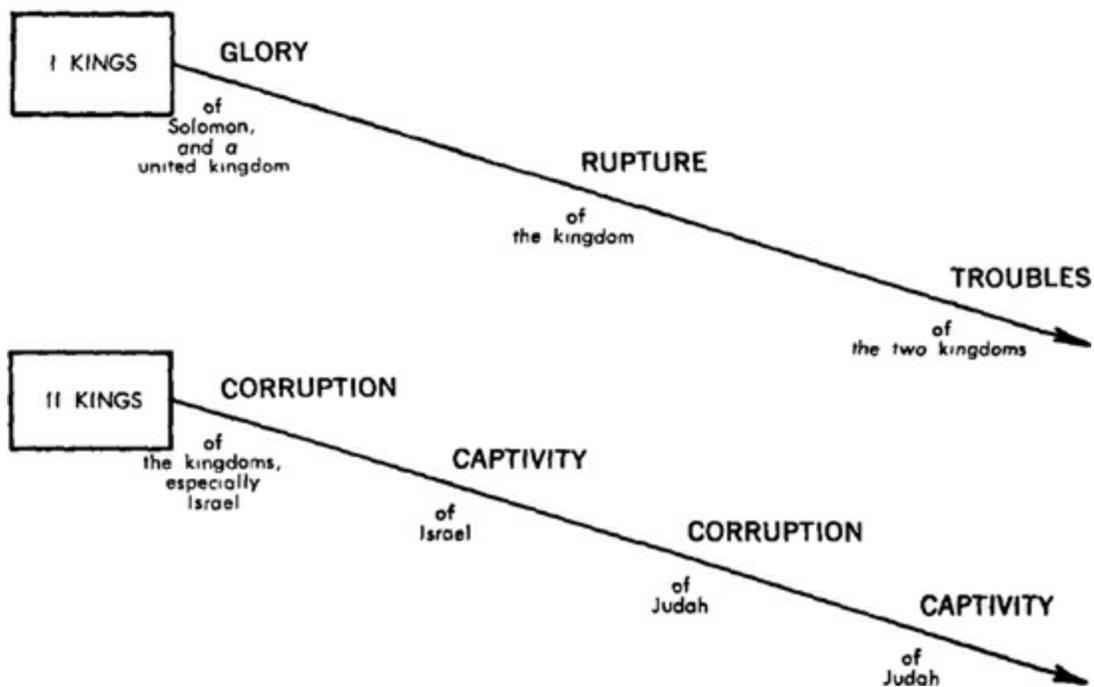
8. J. Barton Payne, *An Outline of Hebrew History*, p. 110. ©1954, Baker Book House. Used by permission.

9. William Day Crockett, *A Harmony of the Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.*

## *1 and 2 Kings: From Glory to Captivity*

The story of 1 and 2 Kings is basically one of failure: a nation passes “from affluence and influence to poverty and paralysis.”¹ The opening chapters of 1 Kings describe the glory attending Solomon’s reign, but by the middle of the book antagonisms between the ten northern tribes and the two southern tribes bring on a split in the kingdom. The troubles of the two new kingdoms (Israel and Judah) carry over into the narrative of 2 Kings, climaxing in the fall and captivity of both. The accompanying diagram shows the downward movement in both books.

## THE DOWNWARD MOVEMENT OF 1 AND 2 KINGS



By revealing the failure of man and of human governments, 1 and 2 Kings point forward to that age when God will set up His own Kingdom, with the greater Son of David as its sovereign Head, and all nations subject to Him.

### I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

1. Review the four periods of Israel as shown on [Chart 38](#).
2. Study carefully [Chart 45](#). Read the explanation furnished on the chart. Note

especially the reference to three periods of Israel's history: united kingdom, divided kingdom, and surviving kingdom. Account for the words *united*, *divided*, and *surviving*. Where on the chart does each period begin?

Observe the prominence of the prophets during the kingdom years. The prophets of the first half of the divided kingdom period, among whom were Elijah and Elisha, did not write any prophetic books of the Old Testament. They were succeeded in the prophetic office by such great prophets as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Kings and Chronicles furnish a background for the prophetic utterances, and the prophetic books shed much light on Kings and Chronicles.

3. Before reading each of the Kings books, acquaint yourself with the geography involved. [Map L](#) shows the geography of 1 Kings, and [Map M](#) that of 2 Kings.

4. Consult the Appendix ([Charts 118](#) and [119](#)) for a listing of the kings of Israel and Judah. You will want to refer to these charts from time to time as you survey the books of Kings.

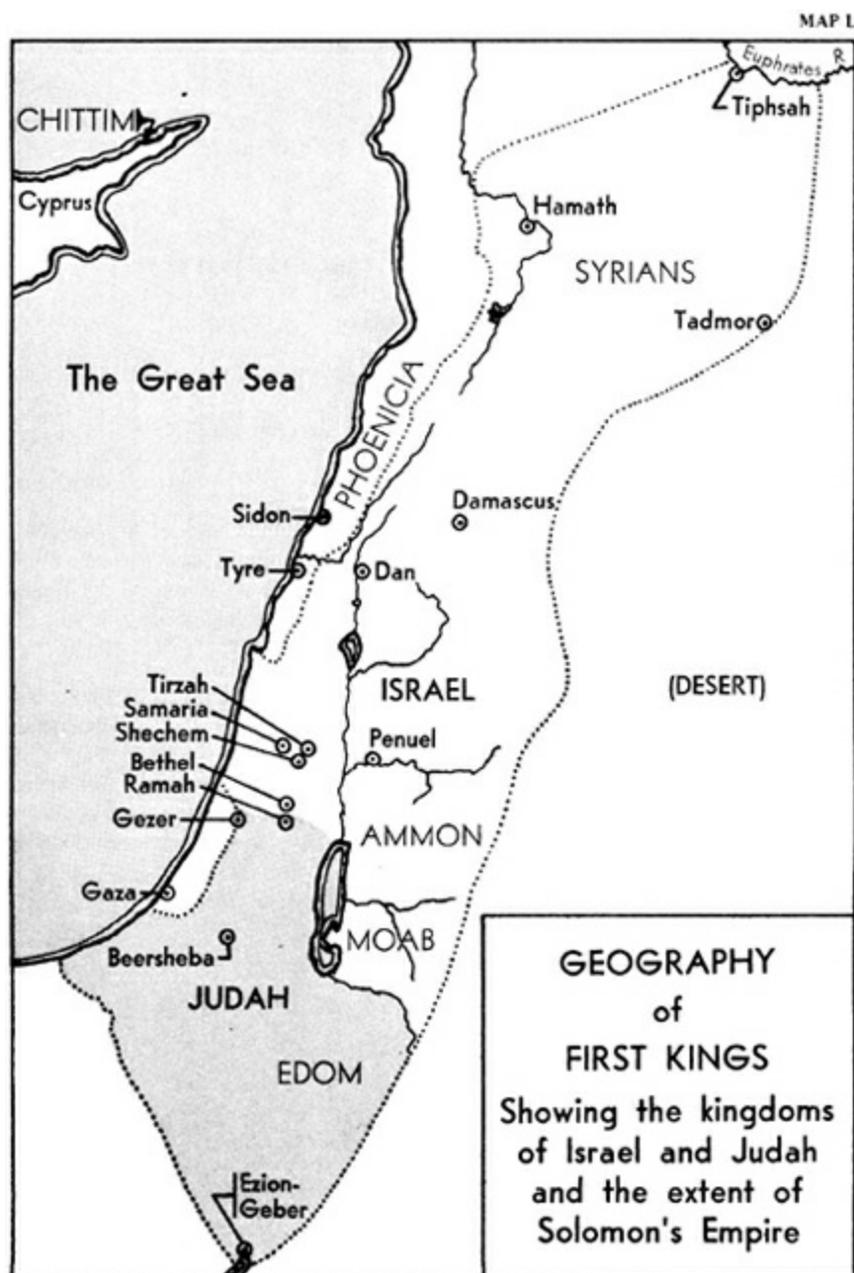
## II. BACKGROUND

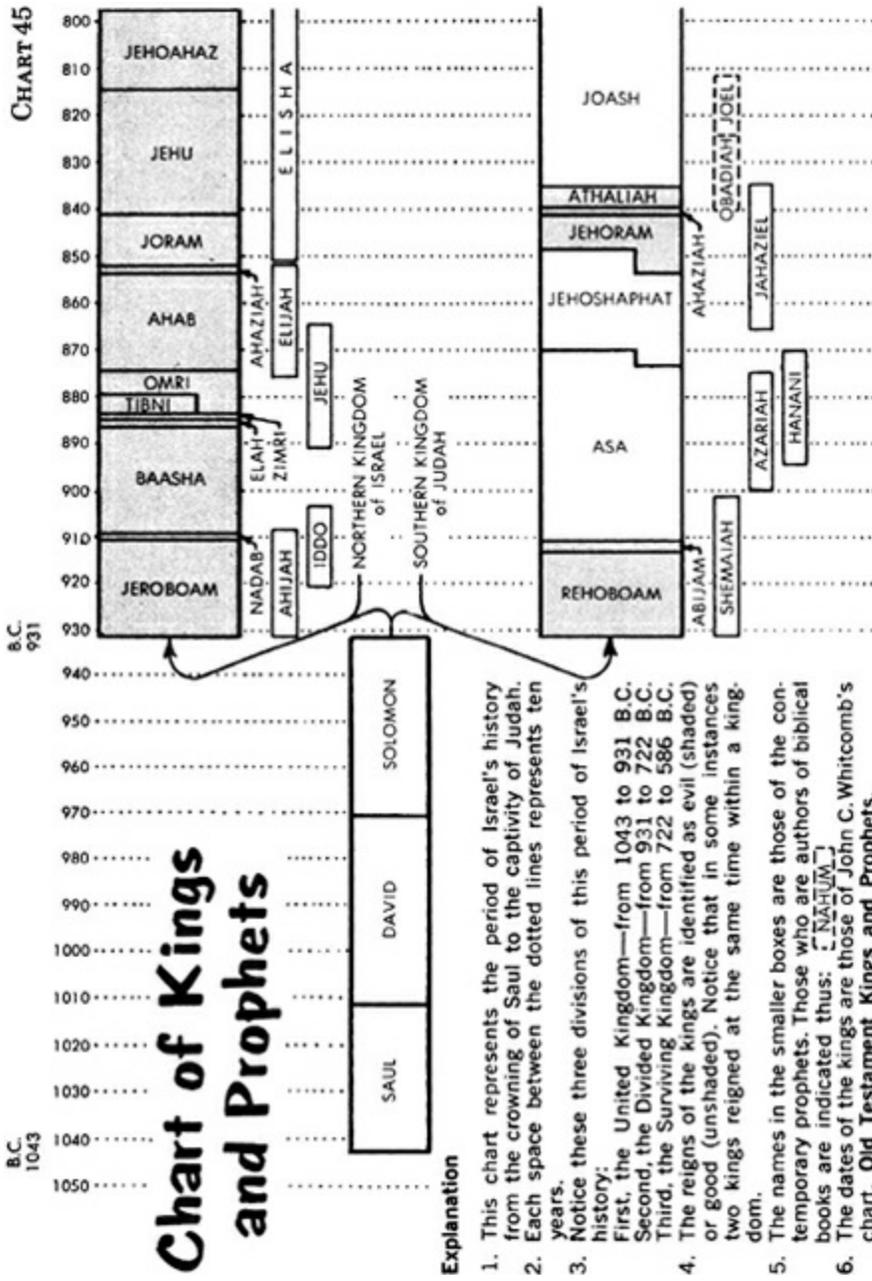
### A. TITLE AND PLACE IN THE CANON

The title “Kings” is very appropriate for these books, since they record events in the careers of the kings of Judah and Israel from Solomon to Zedekiah, the last king.

[Chart 46](#) shows the locations of the four books of Kings and Chronicles in the early Hebrew canon, in the Greek Septuagint listing, and in our present English Bible. As the chart shows, 1 and 2 Kings were one book in the early Hebrew Bibles. When the Septuagint translators translated this one book into Greek, they made two books out

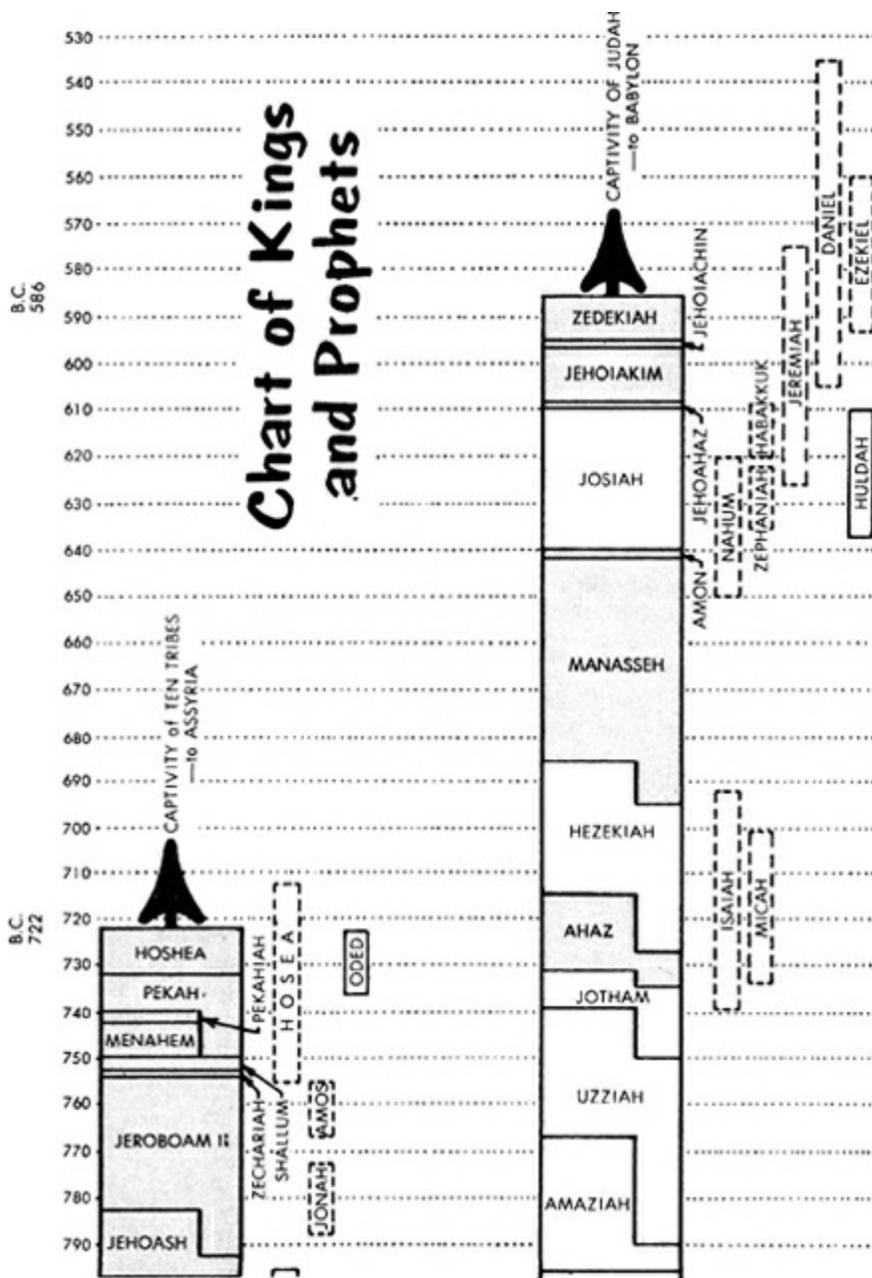
of it. The reason was that of convenience of handling the scrolls, since the Greek translation requires about one-third more space than the Hebrew text. This twofold division first appeared in modern Hebrew Bibles with the printed edition of Daniel Blomberg in 1517.





**Explanation**

1. This chart represents the period of Israel's history from the crowning of Saul to the captivity of Judah.
2. Each space between the dotted lines represents ten years.
3. Notice these three divisions of this period of Israel's history:  
 First, the United Kingdom—from 1043 to 931 B.C.  
 Second, the Divided Kingdom—from 931 to 722 B.C.  
 Third, the Surviving Kingdom—from 722 to 586 B.C.
4. The reigns of the kings are identified as evil (shaded) or good (unshaded). Notice that in some instances two kings reigned at the same time within a kingdom.
5. The names in the smaller boxes are those of the contemporary prophets. Those who are authors of biblical books are indicated thus: [NAME]
6. The dates of the kings are those of John C. Whitcomb's chart, **Old Testament Kings and Prophets**.



KINGS AND CHRONICLES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT CANONS CHART 46

EARLY HEBREW BIBLE	GREEK SEPTUAGINT	ENGLISH BIBLE
KINGS { <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—one book</li> <li>—among the Former Prophets</li> </ul>	III KINGDOMS ²	1 KINGS —among the Historical Books
	IV KINGDOMS	2 KINGS
CHRONICLES { <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—one book</li> <li>—among the Historical Writings</li> </ul>	1 CHRONICLES	1 CHRONICLES
	2 CHRONICLES	2 CHRONICLES

2

Most of the chapters of Kings and

Chronicles relate events of the crown period of Israel and Judah. This is shown by [Chart 47](#).

Observe that 1 Kings continues the narrative where 2 Samuel stops, and Ezra continues the narrative where 2 Chronicles stops. While 1 and 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles generally cover the same period, the narratives are written from different perspectives. The differences are discussed in the [next chapter](#).

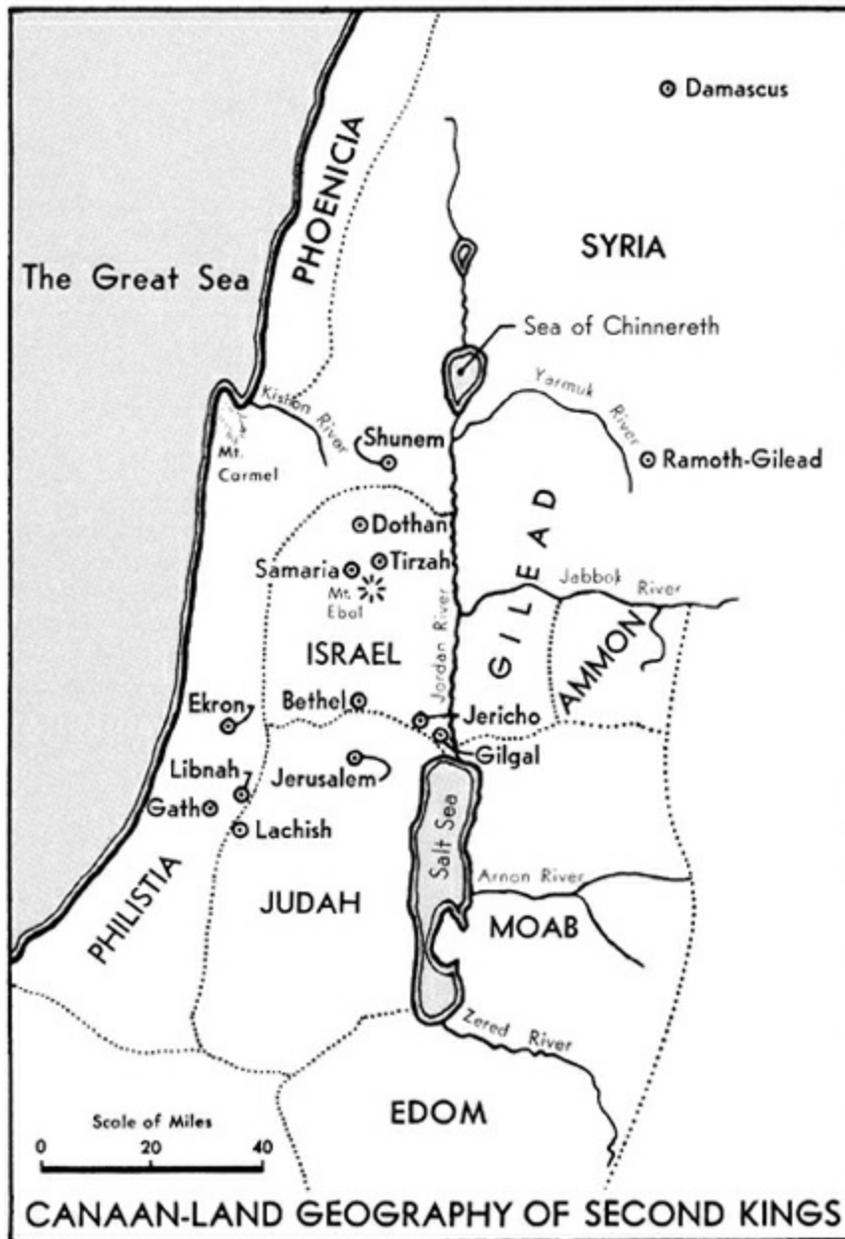
## B. DATE AND AUTHOR

In view of the unity of Kings, there apparently was only one author for 1 and 2 Kings. Since the latest item of 2 Kings (release of Jehoiachin) took place around 562 B.C., and since no mention is made of the return from Babylon (536 B.C.), 1 and 2 Kings were probably written between 562 and 536 B.C. Tradition has assigned Jeremiah

as the author. Most authorities prefer the viewpoint of anonymity, and agree that the writer was a Jewish captive in Babylon.

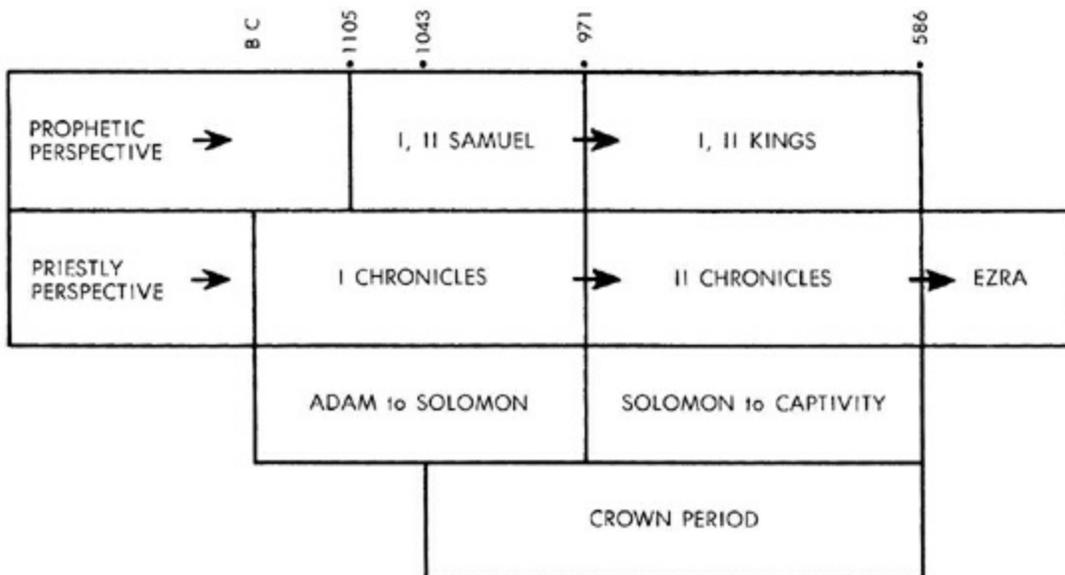
### C. SETTING

Just as the study of Judges is made easier by an acquaintance with the names of the various judges, so you will find it helpful in this early stage of your survey of Kings to learn the names of the kings. Study the lists in the Appendix, where the nineteen kings (plus one queen) of Judah and nineteen kings of Israel are listed chronologically. Some names appear in both groups but represent different men. Note the words “good” and “bad” designated for each king. It was part of the biblical writer’s aim to issue a verdict on the character of the leadership of the kings. Keep these lists before you as you read Kings (and Chronicles).



**COVERAGE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS AND CHRONICLES**

CHART 47



Next study the accompanying [Chart 48](#) entitled “The Setting of Kings and Chronicles.” Observe the following:

1. Note the key historical *events* of this period:

1043 B.C. First King

931 B.C. Division of the Kingdom

722 B.C. Fall of Samaria (Northern Kingdom)

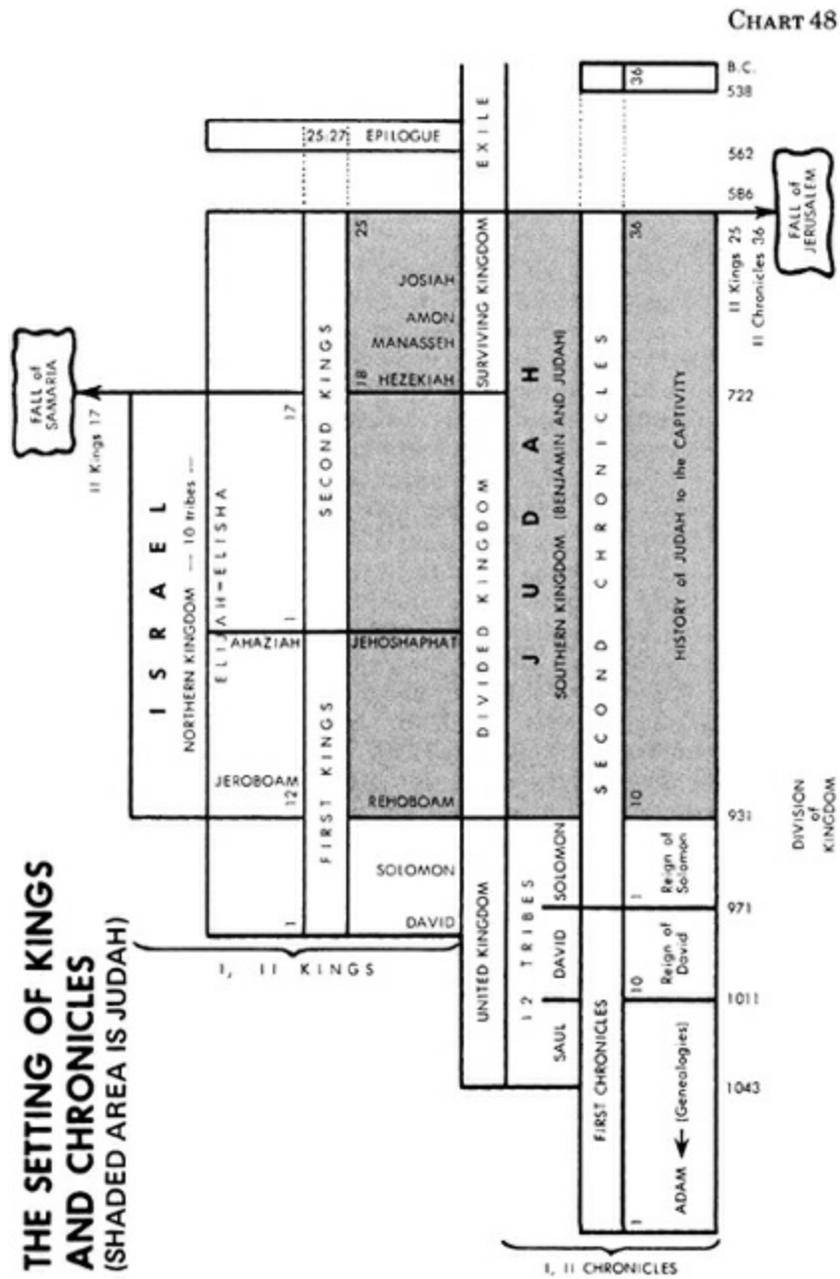
586 B.C. Fall of Jerusalem (Southern Kingdom)

2. Note where 1 Kings picks up the narrative. Note also that 2 Kings concludes at the fall of Jerusalem, *bUt* that it includes a brief epilogue (25:27-30) of a later date.

3. Observe that 2 Kings picks up the narrative from 1 Kings at an uneventful junction. This confirms the approach to 1 and 2 Kings as one unified narrative.

4. Note that Elijah and Elisha are

prominent characters in Kings. Look at [Chart 45](#) and note that almost all of the prophets who lived after Elijah and Elisha were authors of prophetic books of the Bible. Why was the prophet's work so important for the kingdoms? What three periods of kingdom history are covered by Kings?



### III. SURVEY OF 1 KINGS

1. Scan the chapters of 1 Kings, and record chapter titles on paper.

2. Read 1 Kings 22:37-53 and 2 Kings 1:1-4 and observe how the narrative of 1 Kings continues into 2 Kings without any real break, indicating that the two books are virtually one unit.

3. Proceed with the usual steps of survey study, and answer these questions:

- a) What impressed you about the book?
- b) What appeared to be some of the highlights?
- c) How much does the book contain of action, description, and conversation?
- d) Who are the main characters of the book? What prophet is the leading servant of God in the last chapters of the book? Consult a concordance to see when he

first appears in the story.

e) Where is the book's critical turning point?

4. Now study the survey [Chart 49](#), observing the following:

a) The book has twenty-two chapters. How many concern the united kingdom, and how many concern the divided kingdom?

b) Observe where these events are recorded: David's death; the Temple chapters; Solomon's death; split of the northern tribes from Judah; the call and ministry of Elijah.

c) What do you consider to be key chapters in 1 Kings?

d) Note the title given to 1 Kings, as shown on the chart: "A Kingdom Divided Against Itself."

e) The book of 1 Kings covers about 130

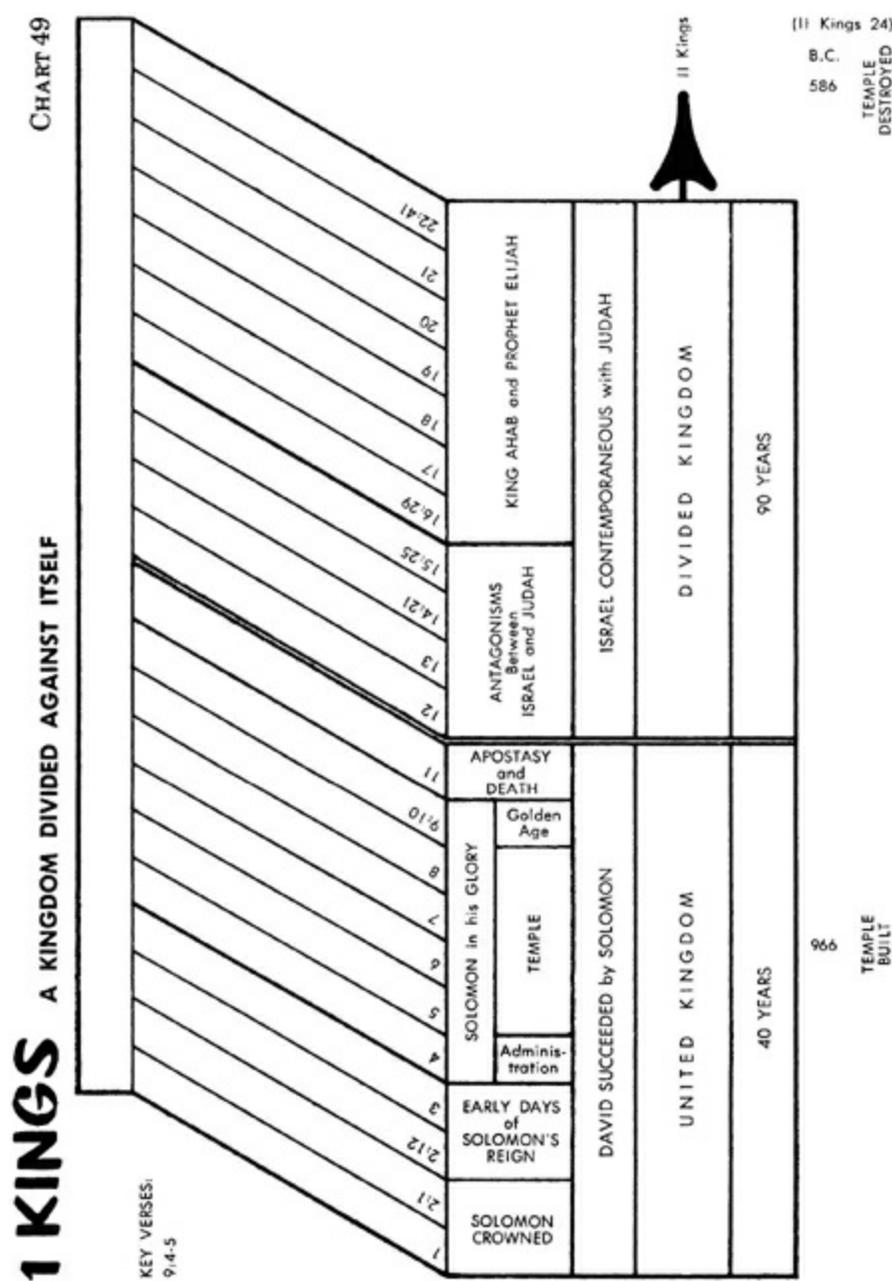
years (971-841 B.C.). The first eleven chapters cover Solomon's reign of forty years. By adding the number of years that each of the other four kings in Judah reigned (see 14:21; 15:1-2; 15:8-10; 22:41-42), one can approximate the time covered by the entire book.

#### **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 1 KINGS**

Among the prominent subjects of 1 Kings are these: King Solomon, the split of the kingdom, and the prophet Elijah. This is suggested by the general outline (page 196) of the book's contents, around the pivotal chapter 12.

##### **A. SOLOMON**

Make an outline of Solomon's early life and reign as recorded in chapters 1-4.



THE KINGDOM IN TRANQUILITY	CHAPTER 12	THE KINGDOMS IN TURMOIL
God rules His people through a king: SOLOMON	SPLIT OF THE KINGDOM	God speaks to His people through a prophet: ELIJAH

## B. SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

Study 5:1—9:9 with this outline in mind:

1. Preparation for building (5:1-18)

2. Building and furnishings (6:1—7:51)

3. Dedication (8:1—9:9)

### C. SOLOMON'S LAST YEARS

This is a study of contrasts:

1. The prosperity of the kingdom (9:10—10:29)

2. The apostasy of the king (11:1-43)

In fame and wisdom, riches and honor, position and popularity, Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth. These things won his heart, and he forgot the Lord, who really was the One who had given him every good thing he had. The last part of Solomon's life was a tragedy. Carl De Vries comments that "his gradual apostasy had more disastrous results than the infamous scandal of his father, who sincerely repented."³

### D. SPLIT OF THE KINGDOM

chapter 12 of 1 Kings is a key chapter in

the Old Testament, because it records the event which steered the course of God's people through the remainder of the Old Testament days. Study the chapter carefully.

Before the event of the kingdom's split, there were occasions of hostility between the northern tribes ("men of Israel") and the southern tribes ("men of Judah"). (Read 2 Sam 19:40-43.) Solomon's excessive taxation of the people stirred up such discontent that shortly after his death the ten northern tribes revolted against the authority of Solomon's son Rehoboam, and formed another kingdom, known thereafter as Israel. The two tribes which remained true to Rehoboam were known as Judah (see [Map L](#)). This was the beginning of the divided kingdom. Who was king of the northern group?

In the first eleven chapters of 1 Kings the

narrative runs smoothly because only one, kingdom (all the tribes of the united or undivided kingdom) is involved. From 1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 17, however, with the two kingdoms (Israel, north and Judah, south) existing side by side, the account reads with more difficulty, because the author has chosen to shift the narrative from the one kingdom to the other, in order to synchronize the histories. Then at 2 Kings 18 to the end, there is a return to the smooth flow again, since only the one surviving kingdom (Judah) is involved. This alternation of kingdoms in the narrative of 1 Kings 12-22 is shown by the following outline:⁴

I. The Kingdom of Judah (12:1-19).

A. Accession and Folly of Rehoboam (12:1-15; cf. 2 Chron 10:1-11).

B. Rebellion of the Ten Tribes  
(12:16-19; cf. 2 Chron 10:12-19 11:1-4).

II. The Kingdom of Israel (12:20—14:20).

A. Accession and Sin of Jeroboam  
(12:20-33).

B. God's Interposition (13:1-32).

C. Jeroboam's Continued Sin and  
God's Message (13:33—14:18).

D. Jeroboam's Death (14:19-20).

III. The Kingdom of Judah (14:21—  
15:24).

A. Judah's Sin and Idolatry (14:21-  
24; cf. 2 Chron 12:1).

B. God's Chastisement and Mercy  
(14:25-30; cf. 2 Chron 12:2-12).

C. Death of Rehoboam (14:31; cf. 2  
Chron 12:13-16).

D. Abijah (15:1-8; cf. 2 Chron 13:1-2).

E. Asa (15:9-24; 2 Chron 14:1; 16:1-6, 12-14).

#### IV. The Kingdom of Israel (15:25—22:40).

A. Nadab (15:25-26).

B. Baasha (15:27-34).

C. God's Message (16:1-7).

D. Elah (16:8-10).

E. Zimri (16:10-20).

F. Omri (16:21-28).

G. Ahab (16:29—22:40).

#### V. The Kingdom of Judah (22:41-50).

A. Jehoshaphat (22:41-50; 2 Chron 17:1—21:1).

#### VI. The Kingdom of Israel (22:51-53).

A. Ahaziah (22:51-53).



Consider 9:4-5 as key verses for this book. Look for other key verses. A key phrase is “David his father” (also “David my father”). A concordance shows how often the phrase appears.

## VI. APPLICATIONS OF 1 KINGS

1. Look in 1 Kings for spiritual applications concerning the following:

- prayers; warnings; exhortations
- the Lord’s justice and righteousness; His judgments
- the Lord’s mercy
- the church as God’s house
- worship and praise
- the voice of God
- successful leadership
- causes of apostasy
- the hand of God in the experiences of individuals and nations (cf. Dan 4:25,

34, 35)

2. What part should Christians play in government today?
3. What is true worship?

## **VII. FURTHER STUDY OF 1 KINGS**

Study the character and career of Solomon. Include the subject of Solomon's Temple. Among other things, compare this Temple with the earlier wilderness tabernacle.

## **VIII. SURVEY OF 2 KINGS**

1. First review [Chart 44](#), observing the general movement of 2 Kings' story.
2. Scan the entire book of 2 Kings in one sitting, if possible. Do not tarry over details.
3. Record a title for each segment on paper. (Note: In some instances [Chart 52](#)

shows a segment to comprise a group of chapters, or part of a chapter.)

4. What are your first impressions after making this survey?

5. Did you notice any important key words or phrases? If not, be on the lookout for these as you proceed with your survey. The identification of key words and phrases in a book is often the best clue to the theme of the book.

6. Did you notice any turning point in the book? Any climax? Compare the beginning and ending of the book.

7. Study carefully the survey [Chart 52](#). Recall from your earlier studies that 2 Kings is a continuation of the story of 1 Kings.

8. The two main divisions of the book are marked by a heavy line between chapters 17 and 18, the first division being “The Divided Kingdom,” chapters 1-17; and the second

division being “The Surviving Kingdom,” chapters 18-25. (Scan the Bible text to observe that up to the end of chapter 17 both the kingdoms of Israel and of Judah are under consideration, as they have been since 1 Kings 12. Beginning at chapter 18, only the closing years of Judah are reported.)

9. As the chart shows, the book of 2 Kings covers a period of about 265 years. The first division, chapters 1-17, covers about 130 years, while the second division, chapters 18-25, covers about 135 years.

10. Observe which chapters record the two critical events of the judgments of Israel and Judah. What are those judgments? Read the two passages carefully.

11. Note which chapters are devoted to the ministry of Elisha. Observe also that the last of Elijah’s ministry is the subject of the opening chapter of the book.

12. The large proportion of space devoted to the ministries of Elijah and Elisha suggests the importance of these men during this era of God's people. The time period covered by 2 Kings has been called the great prophetic period. Refer to the "Chart of Kings and Prophets" ([Chart 45](#)) and identify the various prophets who served between the dates 850 and 586 B.C.

13. Note from the survey chart the arrangement of 2 Kings' record of the reign of the kings of Israel and Judah.

14. The title given to 2 Kings is "Kingdoms Taken Captive." Compare this with the title of 1 Kings.

15. Read the epilogue (25:27-30). Refer to [Chart 48](#) and note that the events of this epilogue happened some years later than the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.).

16. Since 2 Kings completes the narrative

begun in 1 Kings, it will be of interest to compare the beginning of 1 Kings with the end of 2 Kings (not considering the epilogue). Recalling your survey of 1 Kings, observe such contrasts as these:

- a) First Kings begins with a kingdom established in glory; 2 Kings ends with a kingdom dissolved in shame.
- b) First Kings begins with bright prospects for obedience; 2 Kings ends with tragic judgments for disobedience.
- c) First Kings begins with the dazzling splendor of the Temple; 2 Kings ends with the smoke and flames of the Temple in ruins.

## **IX. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 2 KINGS**

### **A. ELISHA**

The prophet Elisha is the key person of 2 Kings, even as Elijah is the central figure of

1 Kings. Both were God's spokesmen to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Interesting comparisons may be made of these two representatives of God. Elijah is noted for great public acts, and Elisha is known for the large number of miracles he performed, many of them for individual needs. Elijah's ministry emphasized God's Law, judgment, and severity. Elisha supplemented this by demonstrating God's grace, love, and tenderness. Elijah was like John the Baptist, thundering the message of repentance for sin. Elisha followed this up by going about, as Christ did, doing deeds of kindness and miracles attesting that the words of the prophets were from God.

The religious climate in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during Elisha's ministry was very bad. Never since the kingdom was formed under Jeroboam had the people of these ten tribes availed themselves of the

Temple worship at Jerusalem. Neither had they had the ministry of the priests and Levites, because these servants of God, together with many devout worshipers of God, had fled into Judah under the persecution of Jeroboam (see 2 Chron 11:13-16).

However, the schools of the “sons of the prophets” were evidently a power for righteousness in Israel. These schools of the prophets were colleges for instruction in the Law of God, and no doubt the prophets taught the people what they themselves had learned. A prophet is a spokesman for God, not only a *foreteller* of future events but also a *forthteller* of the truth. The prophets performed somewhat the same services for the Northern Kingdom which the priests did for the Southern Kingdom.

Elisha was the acknowledged head of the

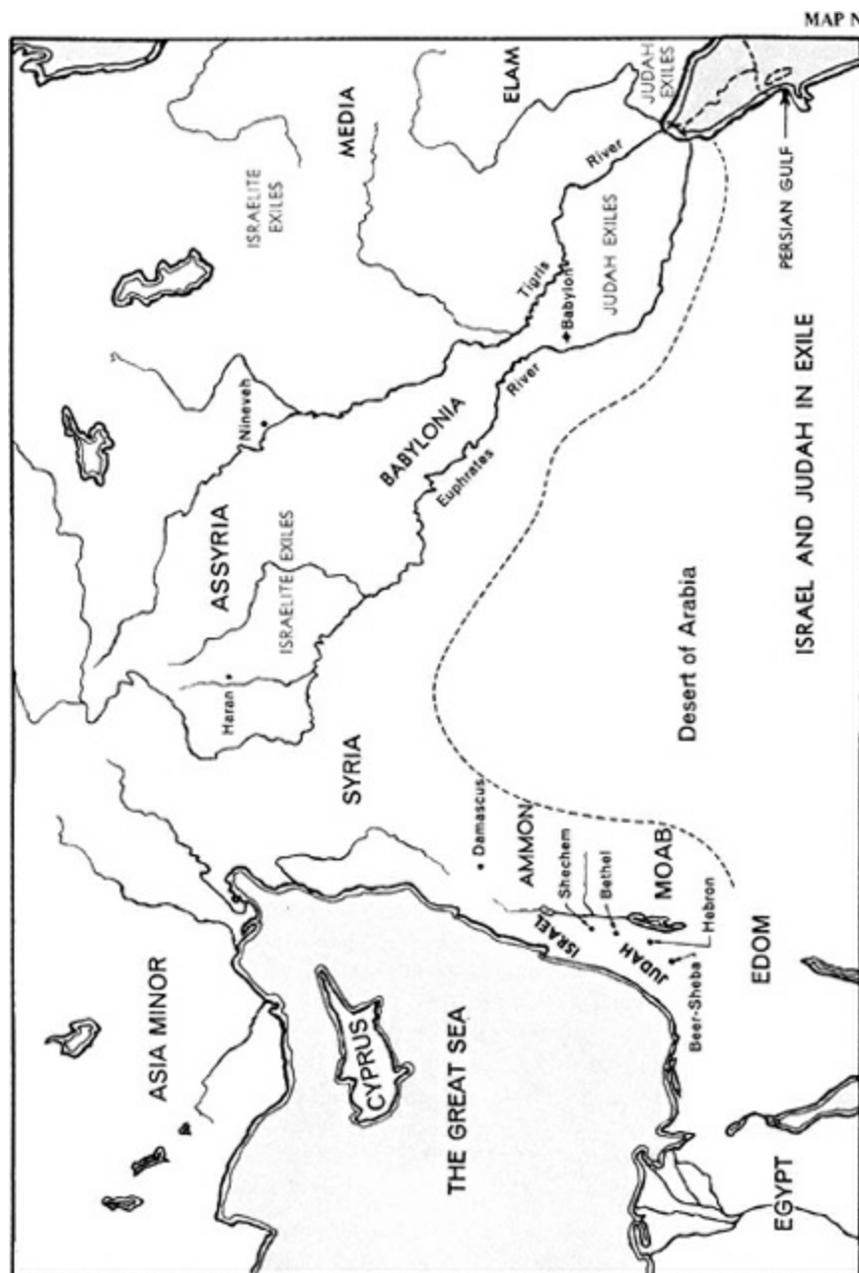
prophetic body, and he journeyed up and down throughout the land, making frequent visits to each of these schools. It was, while he was engaged in these duties that many of his miracles were performed. In fact, one of his miracles was performed for the benefit of one of the sons of the prophets (6:1-7).

Make a list of all of Elisha's miracles recorded in 1:1—8:15.

## **B. FALL OF SAMARIA (17:1-41)**

Hoshea was the last ruler of the Northern Kingdom, and at the close of his short reign, Samaria, the capital of Israel, fell, and the ten tribes were carried away into captivity by the Assyrians. See [Map N](#), "Israel and Judah in Exile." The *immediate* cause which brought on the kingdom's overthrow was Hoshea's conspiracy against the king of Assyria, to whom he had become a vassal some time earlier. The *underlying* cause of

Israel's overthrow was their persistent sin of rejection of God. Study carefully God's arraignment of His apostate people, recorded in 17:7-23.



### C. HEZEKIAH (18:1—20:21)

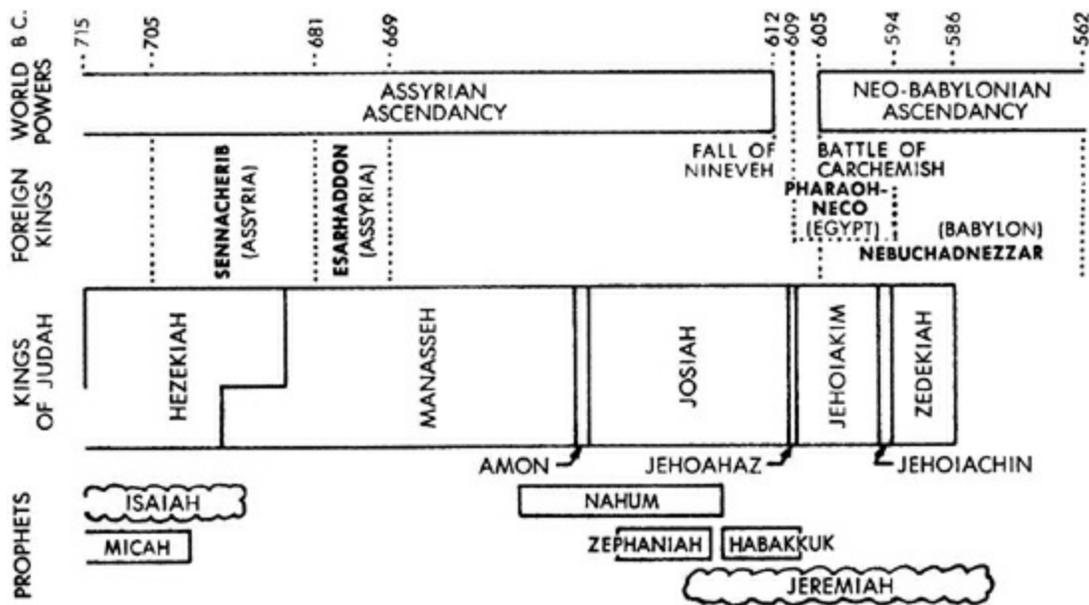
After the fall and captivity of Israel, the

kingdom of the south (Judah) was left alone to perpetuate a testimony for God. Ahaz, coregent with Hezekiah over Judah at the time of Israel's fall,⁵ did not champion God's cause because he was an evil king. But Hezekiah, his son, was a God-fearing young man whom God used to purge the corruptions of Ahaz and restore true worship to the kingdom. Study the ministries and trials of Hezekiah in 18:1—20:21.

#### **D. FALL OF JERUSALEM (25:1-26)**

The fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. is the last tragic event reported in 2 Kings. God had waited and pleaded long with the people to turn from sin to Him, but they would not. The king, the priests, and the people were utterly corrupt. And so the Babylonian captors came and demolished the city and Temple, and took the people captive. Read this key chapter carefully.

## SETTING OF THE SURVIVING KINGDOM OF JUDAH CHART 51



Three influences listed below might have spared Judah from the fate already suffered by Israel.

1. *The example of Israel.* Israel's captivity by a foreign power was really a judgment for Israel's sins against God. Israel worshiped other gods, and so did not look to God for deliverance from Assyria. Was Judah guilty of the same sins? The threat from outside was a situation very similar to that of Israel. [Chart 51](#) shows the names of some of the foreign kings which played a part during these closing centuries of Judah.

(Compare [Chart 4](#).)

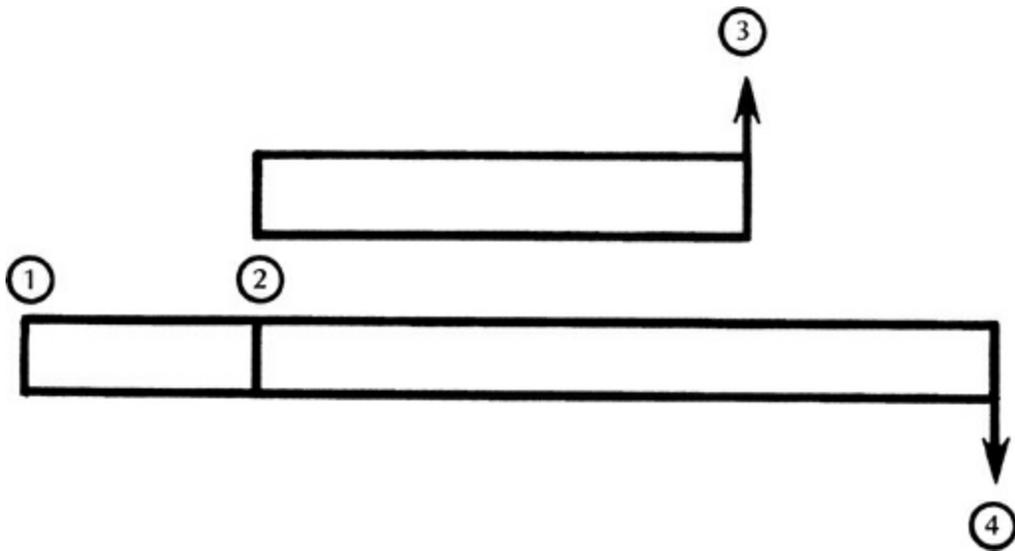
2. *The reform programs of Judah's kings.* There were two good kings of the surviving kingdom of Judah: Hezekiah and Josiah. Both instituted extensive religious reforms, though the benefits were only temporary ([Charts 45](#) and [51](#)). See 18:1-8 and 22:1—23:30.

3. *The ministries of the prophets.* The prophets are shown on [Chart 51](#). Isaiah and Jeremiah were the key prophets of this period. Their message was mainly one of denunciation of sin and warning of judgment. It could not be said of Judah, as it also could not be said of Israel, that the people were not given many warnings to repent of their evil ways.

But the people “mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose

against His people, until there was no remedy” (2 Chron 36:16).

The accompanying diagram represents the crucial experiences of God’s people, beginning with the institution of rule by kings. Identify each of the four crucial events (see [Chart 45](#)).





throughout 2 Kings. Make a list of the various spiritual lessons taught about these subjects in the book. Your conclusions will reflect both the character of man and the character of God.

## **XII. FURTHER STUDY OF 2 KINGS**

1. Study the life and work of Elisha.

2. Jeremiah was Judah's leading prophet during the years leading up to the Babylonian Captivity. Read the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, and study the prophet's life and ministry.

## **XIII. SELECTED READING FOR 1 AND 2 KINGS**

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 275-82.

Baxter, J. Sidlow. "Judges to Esther." In *Explore the Book*, vol. 2.

Bruce, F. F. *Israel and the Nations*, pp. 13-

104.

Crockett, William Day. *A Harmony of the Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.*

Ellison, H. L. "I and II Kings." In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 300-301.

Finnegan, J. *Light from the Ancient Past*, pp. 129-91.

Free, J. P. *Archaeology and Bible History*, pp. 146-225.

Gates, John T., and Stigers, Harold. "1 and 2 Kings." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, pp. 307-9.

Krummacher, F. W. *Elijah the Tishbite.*

Morgan, G. Campbell. *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, pp. 176-206.

Pfeiffer, Charles F. *The Divided Kingdom.*

Pink, Arthur W. *Gleanings from Elisha.*

Schultz, Samuel J. *The Old Testament Speaks,*

pp. 141-228.

Unger, Merrill F. *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, pp. 188-288.

_____. *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 298-304.

Whitcomb, John C. *Solomon to the Exile*.

Wood, Leon. *A Survey of Israel's History*, pp. 287-376.

_____. *Elijah, Prophet of God*.

1. G. Campbell Morgan, *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, p. 177.

2. First and 2 Samuel were called I and II Kingdoms in the Septuagint version.

3. Carl E. De Vries, "Solomon," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 802.

4. Coverage by 2 Chronicles is included in the outline, for future reference.

5. Some Bible students hold that Hezekiah

began reigning *after* Israel's fall. Refer to outside sources for a discussion of this question. What view does [Chart 45](#) represent?

## *1 and 2 Chronicles: Judah During the Years of Monarchy*

The two books of Chronicles focus primarily on the religious foundations and fortunes of Judah, the covenant people of Jehovah, during the years of the kings. Their content is solid history, but the selective character of that content reveals a thoroughgoing theological and spiritual purpose in all the books' pages. Of that purpose Gleason Archer writes that the books were

composed with a very definite purpose in mind, to give to the Jews of the Second Commonwealth the true spiritual foundations of their theocracy as the covenant people of Jehovah.

This historian's purpose is to show that the true glory of the Hebrew nation was found in its covenant relationship to God, as safeguarded by the prescribed forms of worship in the temple and administered by the divinely ordained priesthood under the protection of the divinely authorized dynasty of David. Always the emphasis is upon that which is sound and valid in Israel's past as furnishing a reliable basis for the task of reconstruction which lay ahead. Great stress is placed upon the rich heritage of Israel and its unbroken connection with the patriarchal beginnings (hence the prominence accorded to genealogical lists).¹

If the books of Chronicles were written after the Babylonian Captivity was over, one can see why the writer emphasized such things as heritage, covenant, Temple,

dangers of apostasy, and Messianic hopes in the Davidic line. For now that the Jews had returned to their homeland under Ezra's leadership, they needed every encouragement and persuasion to rebuild the theocracy that had collapsed over a hundred years earlier. The books of Chronicles are a "clear warning to the people never again to forsake the temple and the worship of the living God."²

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

Review the general contents of 2 Samuel and the two books of Kings, since much of their reporting is duplicated in Chronicles. (More than half of the content of Chronicles is included in Genesis, 2 Samuel, and Kings.) Despite the duplication, do not consider your study of Chronicles as a repeat exercise. Like all other books of the Bible, 1 and 2 Chronicles serve a distinct function in

the canon of Scripture. For example, the books of Kings narrate the political and royal fortunes of God's elect people, and 1 and 2 Chronicles look at these in the light of the sacred and ecclesiastical. This is something like one's study of John's gospel, where it is found that John repeats much of the narrative of the other three gospels, but he emphasizes interpretation and reflection.

## II. BACKGROUND OF 1 AND 2 CHRONICLES

### A. TITLE

In the Hebrew Bible the books of Chronicles are one, carrying the title "The accounts of the days." Jerome viewed the text as *a chronicle* of the entire divine history, and his Latin titles were translated for the later English Bibles as 1 and 2 Chronicles.³

### B. DATE AND AUTHOR

Chronicles was written in the latter half of the fifth century B.C., probably between 450 and 425. Some Bible students suggest that Chronicles and Ezra were originally one consecutive history (e.g., compare 2 Chron 36:22-23 and Ezra 1: 1-3a). It is very likely that Ezra was the author.

### C. PLACE IN THE CANON

Observe on [Chart 1](#) that Chronicles is the last book listed in the Hebrew Bible. (See [Chart 46](#).) Note that it appears in the list long after Kings. This suggests that the early Jews looked upon it as very distinct from Kings, despite the similar historical reporting.

In our English Bible, 1 and 2 Chronicles appear immediately after the books of Kings (just as the four gospels appear together).

### D. CHRONICLES COMPARED WITH KINGS

As noted earlier, Chronicles and Kings

have much in common, as to content. But the differences are very clear and consistent. The following tabulation shows various contrasts:

KINGS	CHRONICLES
1. prophetic perspective (e.g., judgments)	priestly perspective (e.g., hopes)
2. wars very prominent	Temple very prominent
3. the fortunes of the thrones	continuity of the Davidic line
4. record of both Israel and Judah	record primarily of Judah
5. morality	redemption

On the different perspectives noted above, see [Chart 47](#).

The books of Chronicles are more selective than Kings, illustrated in the fact that the Northern Kingdom of Israel is hardly mentioned. The author makes prominent the unbroken (though at times slender) thread of the covenant promise from the earliest days and through the Davidic dynasty, represented by the house of Judah (cf. 1 Chron 28:4). Hence the

inclusion of:

- a) The genealogies (1 Chron 1-9), where the Davidic line, the descendants of Levi and the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin are of chief interest.
- b) The high points of Judah's history up to the captivity.
- c) The prominent place given to the Temple, priesthood, and other worship items.

### **III. SURVEY OF 1 CHRONICLES**

1. Follow the procedures of survey study suggested in the preceding chapters.
2. What strikes you about the first nine chapters?
3. Who is the main character of chapters 10-29?
4. What chapters have much to say about the Temple? (Note: The phrase "house of

God” or “house of the LORD” is the usual designation for the Temple in Chronicles.) Is the Temple built during the years of these chapters?

5. Read 29:22b-30. How is this an appropriate conclusion to the book? Compare “Adam” (1:1) with “all the kingdoms of the lands” (29:30).

6. Study carefully the survey [Chart 53](#). In what sense are chapters 1-9 *introductory* to chapters 10-29?

7. Note the two-part outlines.

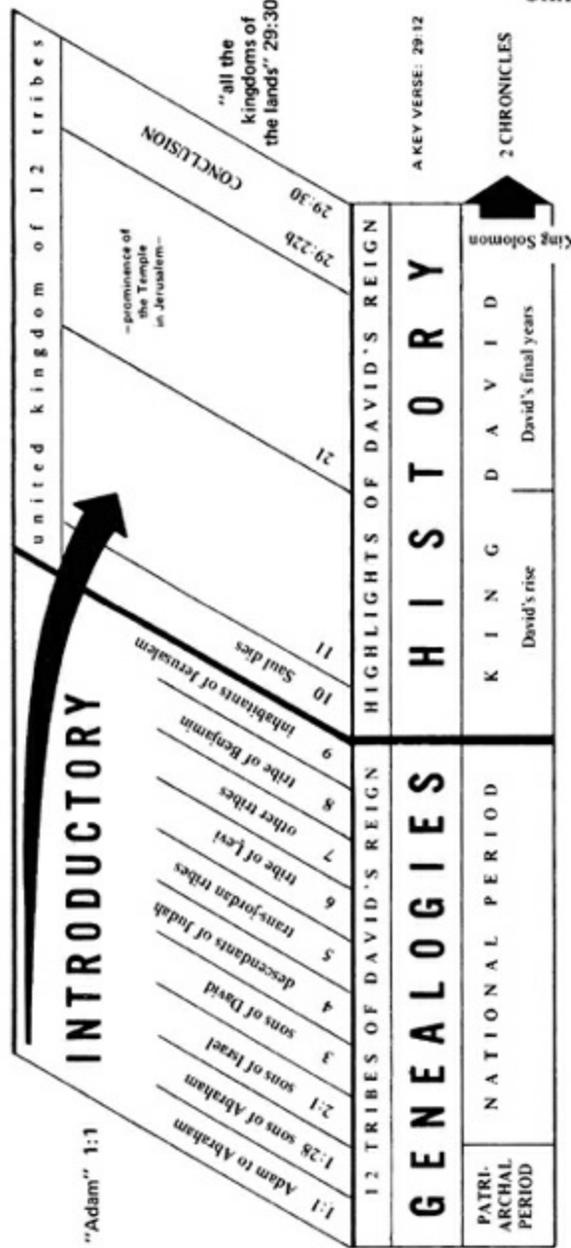
8. According to the chart, how is the book organized around the subject *David*!

# 1 CHRONICLES HIGHLIGHTS OF DAVID'S REIGN

all Israel gathered to David 11:1

## DAVID

he died in a ripe old age 29:28



1 and 2 KINGS: Prophetic judgments; historical data of Israel and Judah  
1 and 2 CHRONICLES: Priestly hopes; spiritual outlook on fortunes of Judah only

Much of 1 Chronicles is reported in 2 Samuel.

## IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 1 CHRONICLES

### A. GENEALOGIES (1:1—9:44)

The genealogies of 1 Chronicles are not exhaustive, but rather selective, to support the main purposes of the book cited earlier. H. L. Ellison cites a few examples of this

selectivity.

It is plain that the Davidic line and the descendants of Levi are the chief interest (note the pointed omission of the house of Eli, which did not serve the Jerusalem temple). Next in importance are the two tribes especially connected with the monarchy, Judah and Benjamin.⁴

## **B. DAVID'S REIGN AND THE TEMPLE PLANS(10:1—29:30)**

Review what you studied in 2 Samuel and 1 Kings about these two subjects. Then observe what new material is added by 1 Chronicles. Account for the additions, in view of Chronicles' purposes.

## **V. APPLICATIONS OF 1 CHRONICLES**

1. Many spiritual lessons can be learned from the genealogies of this book (chaps. 1-

9). See how many you can find. (Sometimes the lessons are only implied.)

2. Practical truths abound in the stories of chapters 10-29. Write a list of these.

## **VI. FURTHER STUDY OF 1 CHRONICLES**

1. Compare the genealogical lists of 1 Chronicles with those interspersed throughout Genesis.

2. Read various books which treat the subjects of Chronicles' authorship, trustworthiness, and sources of material.⁵

## **VII. SURVEY OF 2 CHRONICLES**

1. Follow the usual survey procedures.

2. Who is the main character of chapters 1-9? What chapters concentrate on the Temple?

3. Who was Solomon's successor? What is

the main content of chapters 12:1—36:16?

4. What two very tragic events are recorded in this book, as far as the nation of Judah was concerned? What chapters report these?

5. Read 36:17-23. How do these verses conclude the book?

6. Study the survey [Chart 54](#). Note the simple outline at the top which divides the book into two major parts.

7. Note how the verses 1:1 and 36:22 are compared.

8. Study carefully the outline about the Temple, at the bottom of the chart. G. Campbell Morgan sees the Temple as *the* key to Chronicles.

In the books of Chronicles, Israel, the Northern Kingdom, is out of sight. There are references to it, but only

when it is absolutely necessary to show relationship to Judah. Judah is in view, only to fix attention upon David. David is the central personality.... Yet the purpose of the writer was not that of dealing with Judah or with David, BUT OF DEALING WITH THE TEMPLE OF GOD.⁶

9. Note on the chart the references to four reformations. Read the Bible passages.

## **VIII. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 2 CHRONICLES**

### **A. SOLOMON'S REIGN AND THE TEMPLE PROJECT(1:1—9:31)**

The extent of Solomon's domination was far-reaching: from the Euphrates River in the east and north, to the border of Egypt in the west and south. (See [Map L](#).) This may have represented as much as fifty thousand square miles. John Gates writes:

It might seem impossible ... with two such strong contending powers as Egypt to the south and Assyria to the north ... to build so large an empire, but such was the case at the beginning of Solomon's reign. At this time, the kingdom of Egypt was ruled by the weak and inglorious Twenty-first Dynasty; and the power of Assyria was in a state of decline.⁷

Solomon was an expert in such fields of knowledge as botany and zoology. God used this to His own glory when He inspired Solomon to write books like Proverbs, where spiritual truths are illustrated by the pictures afforded by the physical world. Read some of the Proverbs, keeping this background in mind. (It should be noted here that Solomon's biblical writings—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and at least two psalms, 72 and 127—comprised

an important part of his ministry, even overshadowing, in the perspective of the ages, the part he played in building the Temple.)

The Temple which Solomon built was the first large single structure undertaken by any Israelite ruler. The king realized something of the importance of this building he was about to erect, and also something of his own insignificance (2 Chron 2:4-6). The Temple was to be not only a central place of worship but the actual dwelling place of Almighty God. That is why Solomon called the house “great” (see 2 Chron 2:5). And David had said of it: “The house that is to be built for the LORD shall be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all lands” (1 Chron 22:5).

Some of the prominent features of the Temple, including its size, layout, furniture,

and associated buildings, are noted below.

1. The erection of the Temple was begun in 966 B.C., in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, 480 years after the Exodus from Egypt. The Temple took seven years to build. This was a comparatively short time for such a spectacular work, but, as *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* points out, (1) much of the preparation had been completed beforehand; (2) the building was relatively small, though very ornate; (3) a huge personnel was employed in the task.⁸

2. The pattern for this building had been given David by the Lord (1 Chron 28:19), and David had given the pattern to Solomon (1 Chron 28:11-12; 2 Chron 3:3). The divine origin of the blueprints is not contradicted by the similarities to Phoenician architecture of that day.

3. The Temple was similar to the

tabernacle in its overall layout. Both the Temple and the tabernacle had two prominent areas, known as the “holy place” and the “most holy place” or “holy of holies.” In the text of Kings and Chronicles, these Temple areas are called by the following names:

	1 Kings 6:17,20	2 Chron 3:5, margin, 8
the holy place	“the house”	“the great house”
the most holy place	“the inner sanctuary”	“the room [lit., house] of the holy of holies”

Great as was Solomon’s task in overseeing the construction of the Temple, his greater responsibility was his spiritual leadership of the people. God said that His dwelling among the children of Israel depended upon Solomon’s faithfulness. But Solomon, great and wise as he was, failed in his faithfulness to God, and the idolatry which he later introduced (1 Kings 11:1-13) caused the whole nation to be unfaithful to God.

## **B. SPLIT OF THE KINGDOM(2 Chron 10:1-19)**

Read this chapter and compare it with 1 Kings 12. Also review your earlier studies of this subject (chap. 13).

## **C. FALL OF JUDAH AND CAPTIVITY TO BABYLON(2 Chron 36:1-21)**

Read this passage, and compare it with the reporting by 2 Kings 25:1-26.

## **D. DECREE OF CYRUS (2 Chron 36:22-23)**

The book of 2 Chronicles ends on a bright note. Read the verses, noting the prominence of the Temple. Compare the decree to rebuild (36:23) with the reporting of the destruction (36:19). How many years had transpired between these events? (See [Chart 48](#).) Read Isaiah 45:1-7, 13, which is Isaiah's earlier prophecy that it would be King Cyrus who would free God's exiles and encourage them to return to their homeland.

## **IX. KEY WORDS AND VERSES OF 2 CHRONICLES**

Read the key phrases and verses cited on [Chart 54](#). Add others which you may have observed in your studies.

## **X. APPLICATIONS OF 2 CHRONICLES**

1. List at least five spiritual lessons learned from the life of Solomon.
2. What does the book teach about God?
3. Look for various applications of the accounts of the four reformations listed on [Chart 54](#).
4. What do the last two verses teach you?

## **XI. FURTHER STUDY OF 2 CHRONICLES**

Compare the parallel accounts of 2 Chronicles and the Kings books.

## **XII. SELECTED READING FOR 1 AND 2 CHRONICLES**



Crockett, William Day. *A Harmony of the Books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.*

McClain, Alva J. *The Greatness of the Kingdom.*

Morgan, G. Campbell. *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, pp. 208-35.

Young, Edward J. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 381-95.

#### TEMPLE

Heaton, E. W. *The Hebrew Kingdoms*, pp. 133-64. This is a chapter on Israel's worship.

Smith, Arthur E. *The Temple and Its Teaching.*

#### COMMENTARIES

Baxter, J. Sidlow. "Judges to Esther." In *Explore the Book*, vol. 2.

Ellison, H. L. "I and II Chronicles." In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 339-64.

Keil, C.F. *The Books of the Chronicles*.

Payne, J. Barton. "First and Second Chronicles." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, pp. 367-421.

Whitcomb, John C. *Solomon to the Exile*.

1. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 389.

2. John Phillips, *Exploring the Scriptures*, p. 84.

3. The word "chronicles" appears often in 1 and 2 Kings, and once in Chronicles (1 Chron 27:24).

4. H. L. Ellison, "I and II Chronicles," in *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 341.

5. Reference works are cited under Selected Reading.

6. G. Campbell Morgan, *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, p. 210.

7. John T. Gates, "1 Kings," in *The Wycliffe*

*Bible Commentary, p. 314.*

**8.** *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, p.317.*

*Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther:  
Return of the Jewish Remnant  
from Exile*

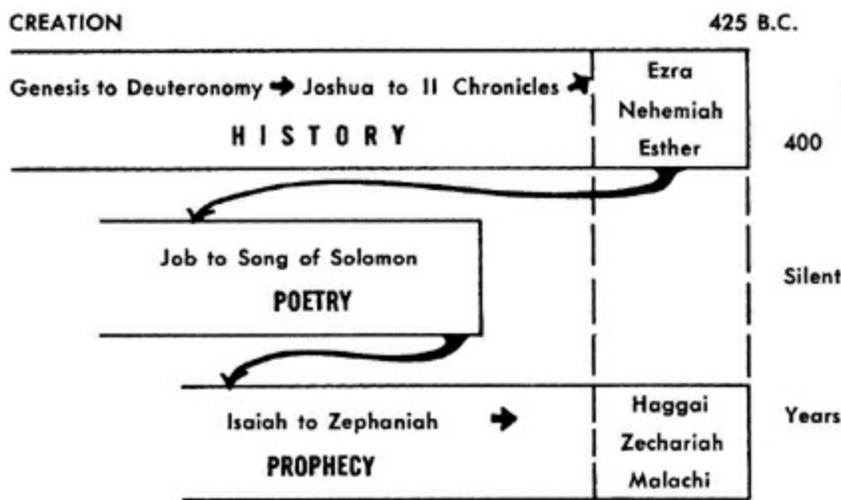
*Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and *Esther* are the last three books classified under the historical section of our English Old Testament. The first two report the fulfillment of the earlier prophecies that after seventy years of captivity God would gather His people and bring them back to the land of Canaan (e.g., Jer 29:10-14).¹ Thus, the historical portion of the Old Testament ends on a bright note.

The restoration of Israel, in their regathering to the homeland of Canaan, was important for various reasons. For Israel, it showed that God had not forgotten His promise to Abraham concerning the land of

Canaan (e.g., read Gen 13:15 and note the strength of the phrase “forever”). Hence, the *relocation* of a returning remnant. Hope for a missionary outreach to Gentiles was stirred up in the *revival* of true worship, for a key mission of Israel was to show heathen nations of the world what true worship of the true God was. And then, the restoration was directly related to the life and ministry of the coming Messiah, in the *renewal* of the Messianic promises. For example, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Zion were some of the geographical places woven into the promises concerning Jesus’ coming. In about four hundred years Jesus would be born of the seed of David in *Bethlehem*, *not* in Babylon. The Holy Land of *promise*, *not* a land of captivity, was where His people would be dwelling when He would come unto them, “His own” (John 1:11).

## I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

1. Note the location of these books in the Old Testament canon. Chronologically, the group is correctly located in our Bibles, because here are recorded the last events of Old Testament history (i.e., up to about 425 B.C.). But the historical setting of these books is often obscured in the mind of the Bible reader, because the books that follow them (poetical and prophetic books, through Zephaniah) in our present Bible arrangement actually revert back in time. [Chart 55](#) shows the chronological setting of these last three historical books (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther).



2. The best preparation for the study of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther is a review of the books immediately preceding them: Kings and Chronicles. Recall that these latter books record the successes and failures of the two kingdoms of God's chosen people—Israel and Judah—and of their eventual fall and captivity in foreign lands as a divine judgment for sin. The overall account is a classic illustration of the eternal law of returns, a law of cause and effect. The effect was judgment; the cause was sin.

When we come to Ezra and Nehemiah, we

are in a new and bright era of Israel's history—the period of *restoration*, involving a return from captivity to the homeland of Canaan. Fix in your mind the following simple outline of the context of Ezra and Nehemiah as you prepare to survey the books.

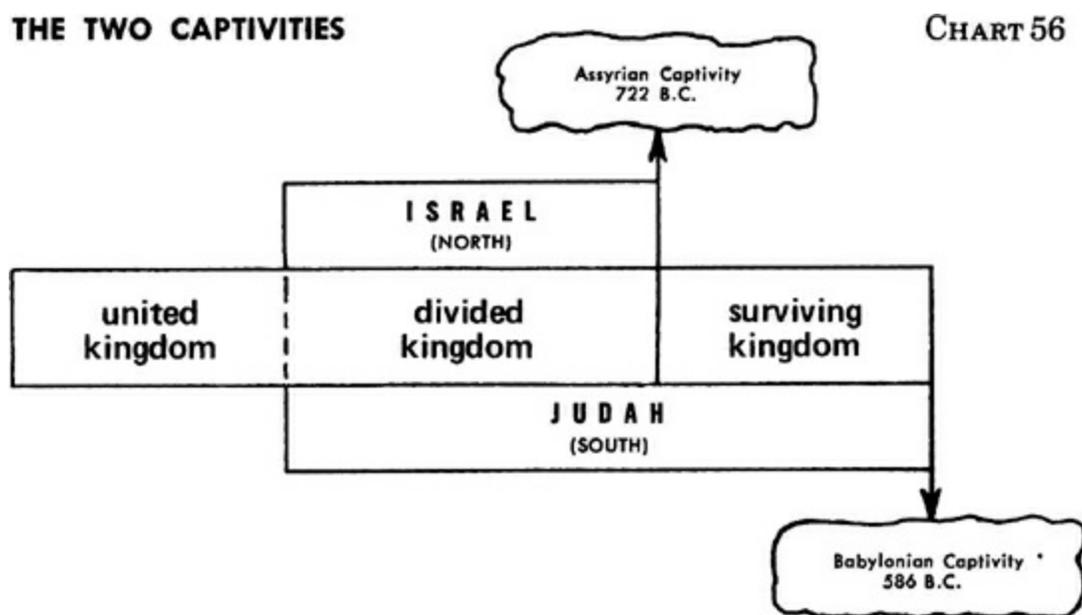
Kings and Chronicles		Ezra, Nehemiah
CAUSE	EFFECT	SEQUEL
SIN	JUDGMENT	RESTORATION
( during the kingdom years )	(captivity)	( return to the land )

There would have been no restoration for Israel were it not for the grace of God. The restoration was surely not deserved. And before there was even a captivity, the restoration was scheduled on a prophetic timetable by a gracious God who, in the forthcoming captivity period, would be calling out of the communities of Jewish exiles in Babylon a remnant of believers whom He could bring back to the promised

land. With these He would perpetuate His covenanted blessings for the generations to come.

3. Read Jeremiah's earlier prophecies about captivity and return in Jeremiah 25:11-14 and 29:10-14.

4. Spend time acquainting yourself with the following historical antecedents of these books. Some of this material will be review of things studied earlier.

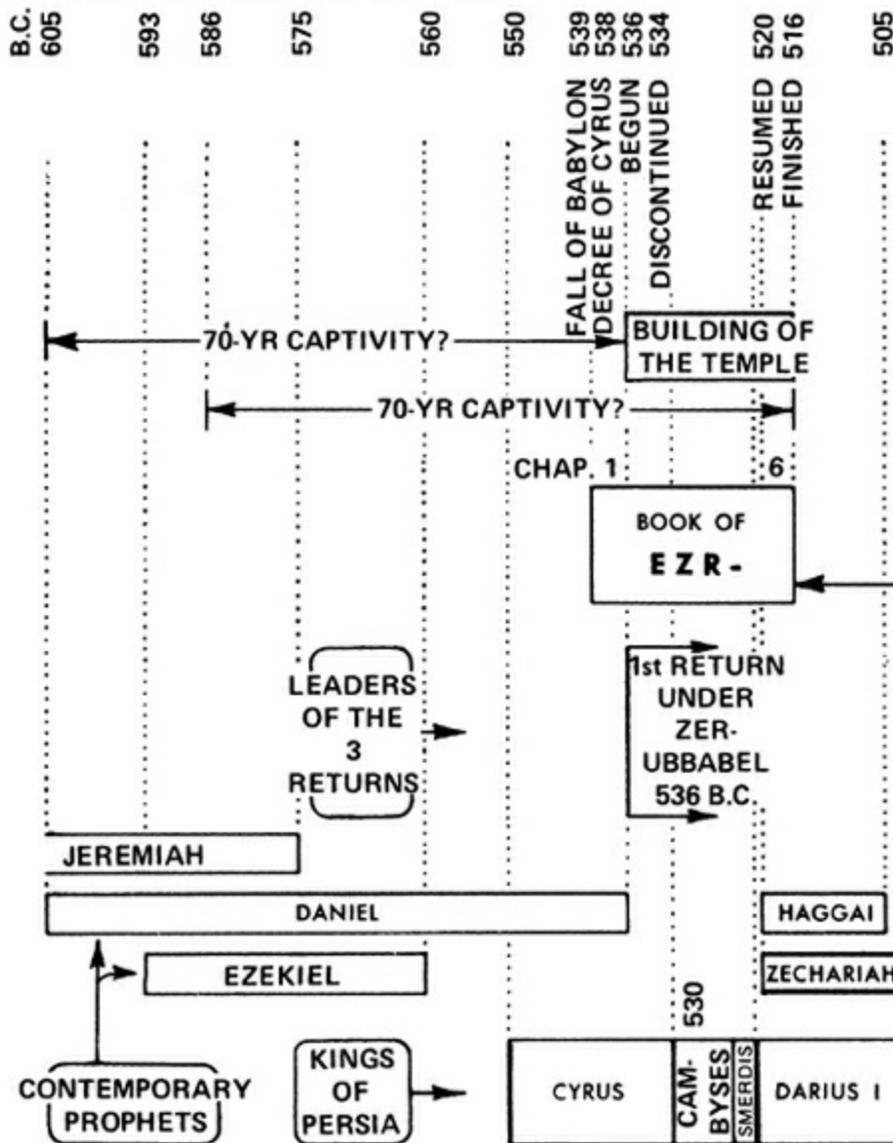


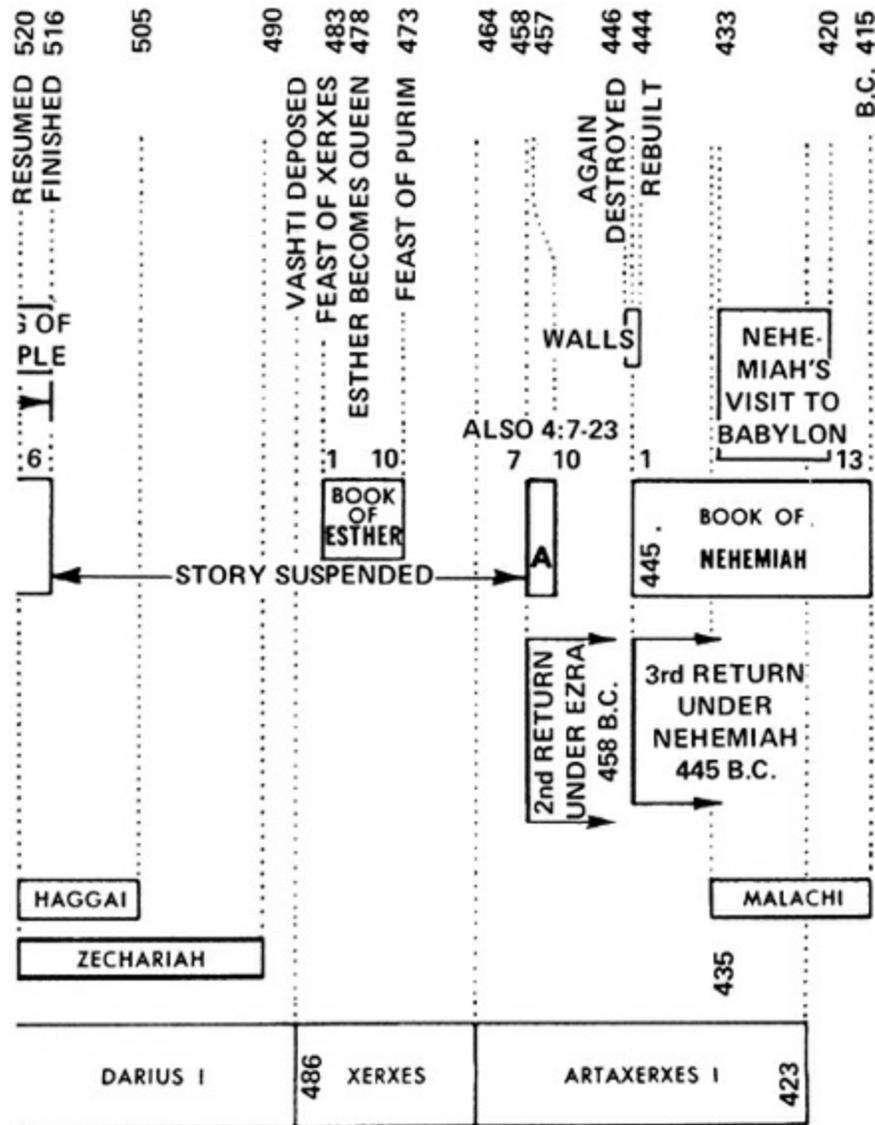
## a) The Two Captivities

The word “restoration,” as applied to

Ezra's day, refers to the *return* of God's people to Canaan *from captivity*. That captivity took place in two stages, which are known as the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. See [Chart 56](#).

### HISTORICAL SETTING OF EZRA-NEHEMIAH-ESTHER





1) Assyrian Captivity (fall of Samaria, 722 B.C., recorded in 2 Kings 17)

Most of the people and rulers of the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were deported to Assyria and scattered among the inhabitants there. (Locate Assyria on [Map O](#).) *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible*

*Dictionary* comments on what happened to these people and their offspring in the years that followed:

The Ten tribes taken into captivity, sometimes called the Lost Tribes of Israel, must not be thought of as being absorbed by the peoples among whom they settled. Some undoubtedly were, but many others retained their Israelitish religion and traditions. Some became part of the Jewish dispersion, and others very likely returned with the exiles of Judah who had been carried off by Nebuchadnezzar.²

2) Babylonian Captivity (fall of Jerusalem, 586 B.C., recorded in 2 Kings 25)

The fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. sealed the fate of the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar was the captor, and Babylon was the place of exile.

Second Kings closes with an account of this tragic event in Judah's history. Read chapter 25 again to appreciate the theme of the restoration books.

(Note: Unless otherwise stated, the names "Israel" and "Judah," denoting the chosen people of God, will be used interchangeably throughout the next chapters.)

## b) Duration of the Babylonian Captivity

Before Judah was taken captive, Jeremiah had prophesied that the duration of exile would be seventy years³ (read Jer 25:11-12; 29:10; 2 Chron 36:21). The exile began with Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Judah in 605 B.C. (2 Chron 36:2-7), and ended with the first return of the Jews to Canaan in 536 B.C.⁴ (Ezra 1). See [Chart 57.5](#) Keep this chart before you while you are surveying the three books.

## c) Contemporary Rulers

The Jews in exile in Babylonia were subject to the kings of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, such as Nebuchadnezzar. When Cyrus, king of Persia, overthrew Babylon in 539 B.C., the rule of Babylonia was transferred to the Persian Empire. Cyrus's policy of liberation for the exiles in Babylonia brought about the first return of Jewish exiles to the land of their fathers. Observe the names of the Persian kings who succeeded Cyrus on [Chart 57](#). The names of Darius and Artaxerxes appear frequently in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. (Observe this in an exhaustive Bible concordance.)

#### d) Jewish Leaders of the Restoration

The three key leaders of the returning Jews were Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were appointed by Cyrus and Artaxerxes, respectively, as governors of the Jewish returnees. Ezra, a

leading priest of the Jews, was not only the leader of the second return but also a co-worker with Nehemiah on the third. Locate the names of Zerubbabel,⁶ Ezra, and Nehemiah on [Chart 57](#). ‘Note also the dates associated with each of the three returns to Judah:

536 B.C. First return—under Zerubbabel

458 B.C. Second return—under Ezra

445 B.C. Third return⁷—under Nehemiah

Fix in your mind the other dates and events cited on the chart.

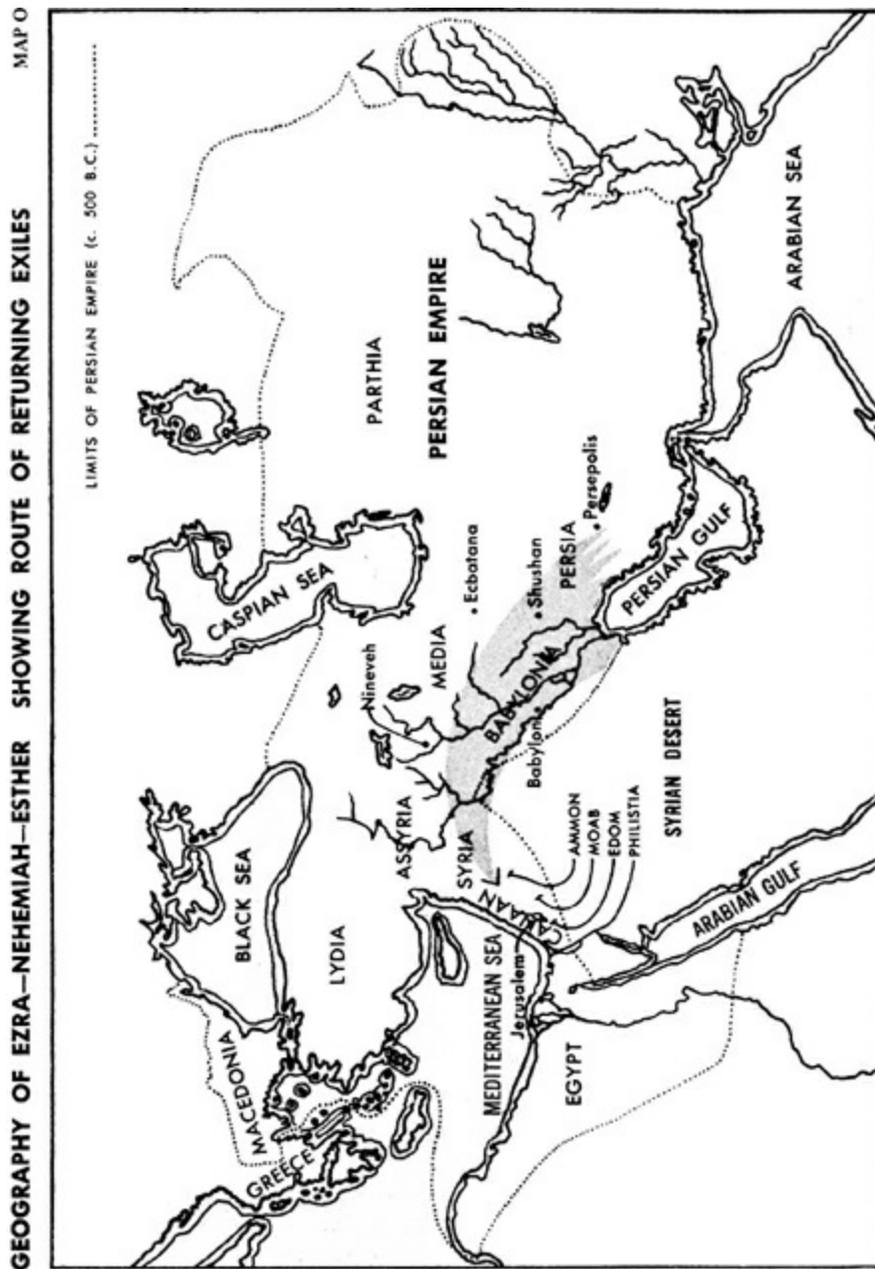
The preaching and teaching ministries of three prophets during the restoration period should not be overlooked. Observe on [Chart 57](#) when Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi ministered. Read Ezra 5:1 and 6:14 for brief but important mention of the influence of Haggai and Zechariah. The name Malachi does not appear in these or any other

historical books. Observe on the chart that most of Malachi's ministry took place during Nehemiah's return visit to Babylon. Those were years of backsliding on the part of the Jews in Canaan, when the first spiritual zeal had subsided. Hence, the message of Malachi was mainly about sin and judgment because of sin.

The prophet Daniel went into exile with the first contingent of Jews in 605 B.C. and was ministering in Babylon in the service of Darius the Mede (who was made king of Babylon by Cyrus, Dan 5:31; 9:1) when the exiles received permission to return (cf. Dan 1:21; 6:28). Though aged Daniel did not return to Jerusalem with the exiles, he supported the project in spirit (see Dan 9:1-25).

5. Observe on [Chart 57](#) the periods covered by each of the three books of Ezra,

Nehemiah, and Esther. Note the suspension of the story of Ezra for a number of years. Note also that Esther chronologically fits between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra, during the reign of Xerxes.



6. Study the two maps related to the story

of these books. [Map O](#) shows the route of the returning exiles, and [Map P](#) shows the major places of postexilic Palestine, when the Jews settled down in their homeland.

## II. BACKGROUND OF EZRA

### A. TITLE AND PLACE IN THE CANON

The book of Ezra is named after its principal character. (If Ezra was its author, this would also account for the title.) Actually, the name Ezra does not appear in the story until 7:1, but he still may be regarded as the key person in the book.

In our English Bible, Ezra follows 2 Chronicles, picking up the story where 2 Chronicles leaves it (cf. 2 Chron 36:22-23 with Ezra 1:1-3). In the Hebrew canon, Ezra and Nehemiah were considered as one historical book⁸ and were located just before Chronicles.

## B. DATE AND AUTHORSHIP

The traditional view is that Ezra wrote the book which bears his name. If he also wrote 1 and 2 Chronicles, which is very possible, then we have in these three books a continuous historical record by the one author. (Compare the third-and first-person references to Ezra in such verses as 7:1,11,25,28; 8:15,16,17,21.)

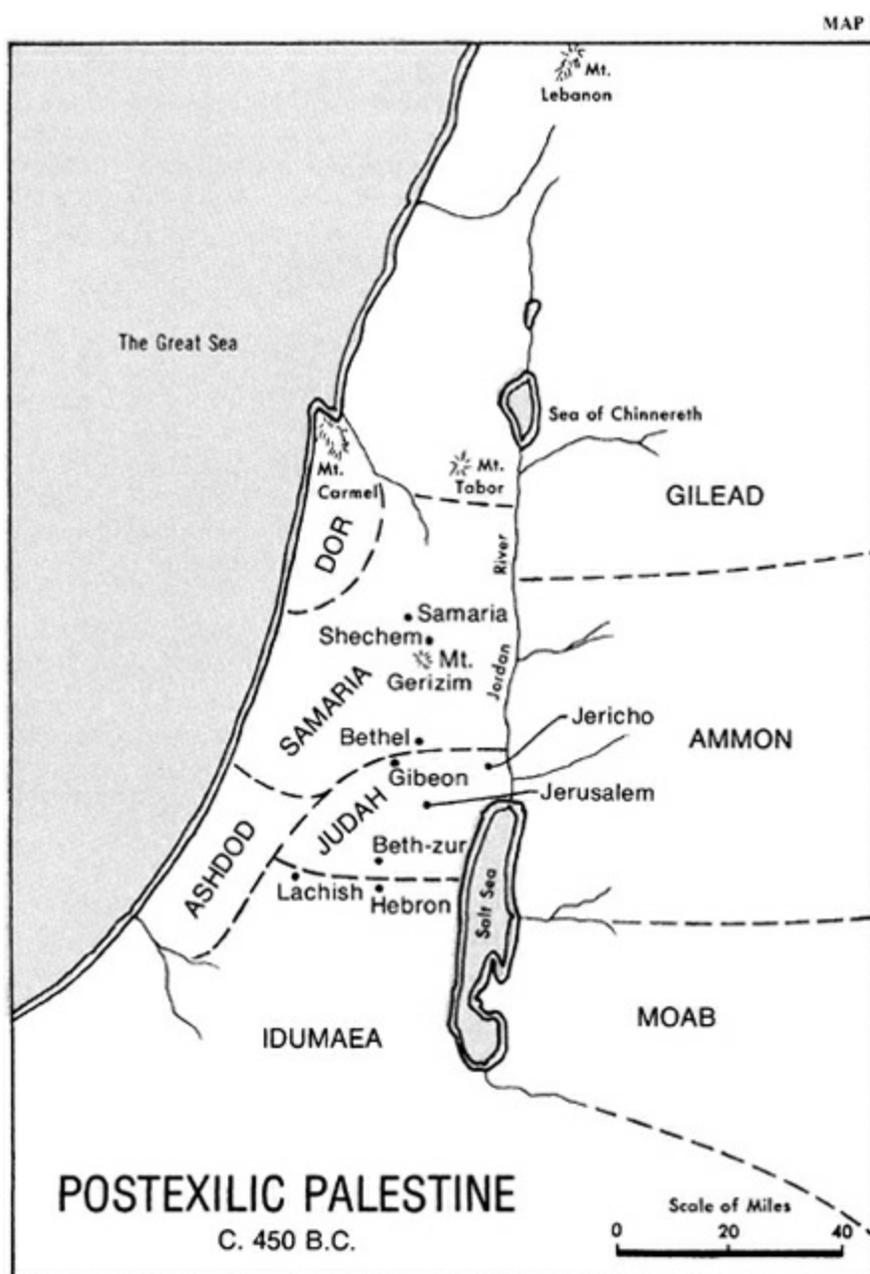
Ezra may have written this book at about 450 B.C., soon after he arrived in Jerusalem (458 B.C.).

## C. THE MAN EZRA

Ezra has always been considered a key figure in Jewish history. Just as Moses led Israel from Egypt to Canaan, Ezra led the Jews from Babylon to the land of their fathers. Ezra's name means "helper" (from the Hebrew *'ezer*, "help"). He ministered to his fellow Jews in captivity, and he led a

group of them back to Jerusalem in 458 B.C. When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem thirteen years later, Ezra helped him in ministering to the people about spiritual matters (cf. Neh 8:9).

Ezra is referred to in the Bible as a priest and scribe (e.g., Ezra 7:6, 21).⁹ One of his key ministries was to revive the people's interest in the Scriptures. Some believe that Ezra was the author of Psalm 119, the great "Word" psalm. In any case, he loved the Word and loved to teach it.



Hebrew tradition says that Ezra served in Babylon as a high priest, that he originated the Jewish synagogue form of worship, and collected the Old Testament books into a unit. Read Ezra 7:1-5 and observe that Ezra was a descendant of Aaron, the high priest of Moses' day.

## D. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Read Ezra 1:1; 4:5, 24, and 7:1 for the references to three important kings of Persia: Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes.¹⁰ You will recall these names from your study of [Chart 57](#). How the account of Ezra proceeds chronologically with reference to these kings is shown on [Chart 58](#).

It can be seen from [Chart 57](#) how Ezra is not a continuous or complete historical record of any one period, but follows the principle of selectivity. For example, its author passes over the period from the completion of the Temple (516 B.C.) to Ezra's journey to Jerusalem (458 B.C.).¹¹ Bible authors were inspired to select only those materials of the historical record which had a bearing on the subject being discussed. This should always be kept in mind when studying Bible history. (It may be observed here also that the two books of Ezra and

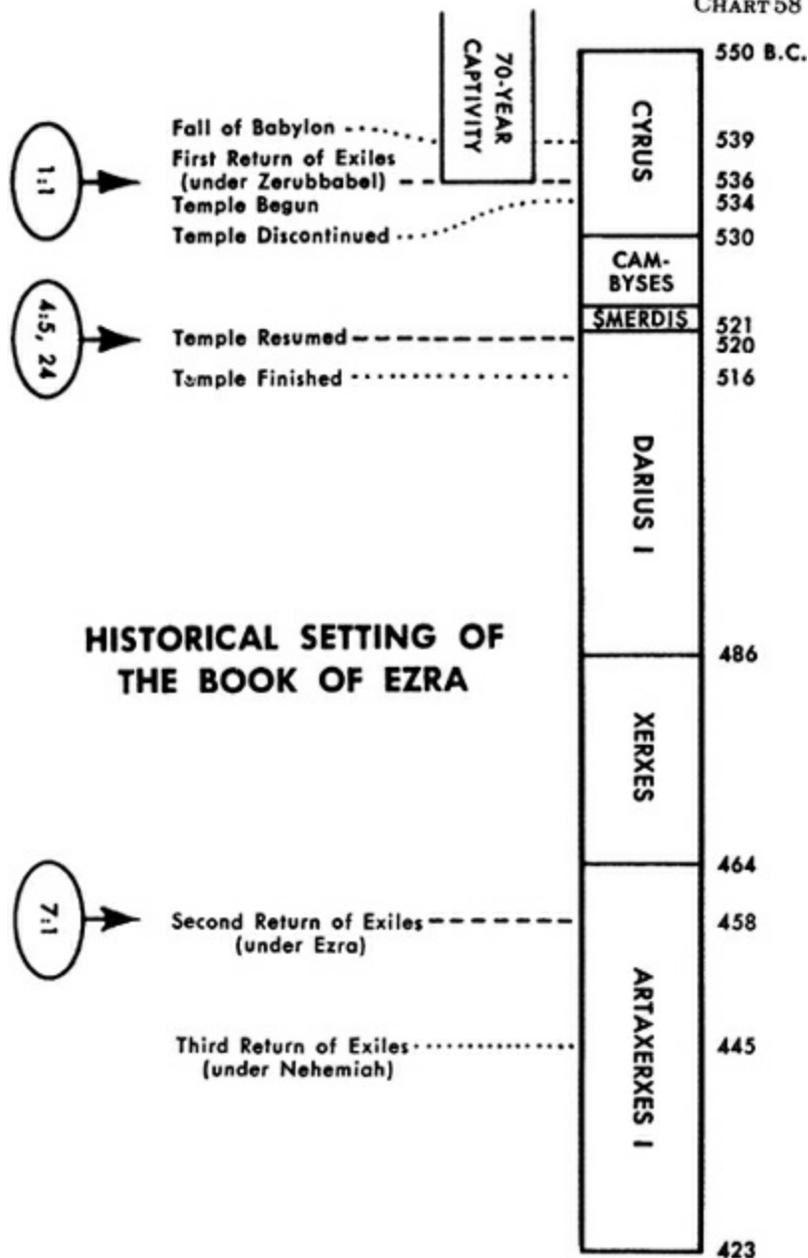
Nehemiah contain practically all that is known of the history of the Jews between 538 and about 425 B.C.)

#### **E. PURPOSES OF THE BOOK OF EZRA**

The book of Ezra shows how the Lord fulfilled His promises, given through His prophets, to restore Israel to their own land.¹² He moved heathen monarchs to show favor to the Jews, and raised up leaders (Zerubbabel and Ezra) and prophets (Haggai and Zechariah) for the grand task of restoration. The restoration involved the physical aspect—moving back to the land of Canaan and rebuilding the Temple buildings; and, more vital, the spiritual aspect—restoring true worship, reestablishing the authority of God's Law, and initiating reforms in the everyday life of the Jews.

### **III. SURVEY OF EZRA**

1. First scan the book, observing such things as the number of chapters, length of chapters, and type of content. Concerning content, how much of the following is found in Ezra: action, conversation, description, listings, letters, prayers? Mark your Bible wherever blocks of the last three types appear. What are some of your first impressions of the book?



2. Next read the book chapter by chapter. As you read, become aware of the reasons for each new chapter division as the book progresses. Assign chapter titles, and record these on paper. (Note: 8:33 replaces 9:1 as the beginning of a new unit of thought.)

3. Where are references made to kings?

Mark these places in your Bible, and locate these kings on [Chart 57](#).

4. Mark in your Bible the letters recorded in Ezra.

5. Compare the beginning and ending of the book. Does the beginning introduce, and does the ending conclude?

6. Where is the first appearance of the man Ezra in the book? Who is the leader mentioned in 2:2a? How often does he appear in chapters 1-6? Does he appear in chapters 7-10? (An exhaustive concordance will quickly answer this.)

7. Where is the decree of Cyrus recorded? The first journey to Canaan? The decree of Artaxerxes? The second journey?

8. Try to identify *groupings* of content:  
a) the main subjects of the two divisions (chaps. 1-6 and 7-10)

b) the main subjects of the four sections (chaps. 1-2; 3-6; 7-8; 9-10) Compare your conclusions with the outlines shown on [Chart 59](#).

9. In your own words, what is the main theme of Ezra?

10. Compare your survey studies with the items shown on [Chart 59](#).

11. The ten chapters of Ezra are divided into two main parts, with 7:1 beginning the new section. The first section concerns the first return of exiles under the leadership of Governor Zerubbabel; the second section is about the second return, under the leadership of Ezra the priest. How many years elapsed between the two returns?

12. The main work accomplished on the first return was the rebuilding of the Temple. On the second return, Ezra's main task was to bring his people to a place of

repentance, confession of sin, and restitution, so that true worship of God could be restored. The sin of mixed marriages (between Israelites and the heathen) was a major defilement at this time. How did this sin affect the religious life of Israel?

13. Observe, from the dates shown on the chart, the duration of the time between chapters 6 and 7. Consult [Chart 57](#), and note that the book of Esther is located in this period.

14. The names of the three important kings of Persia—Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes—are placed on the chart where they relate to the story.

15. In chapters 4-7, Ezra records much of the official correspondence involving the kings' offices and having to do with the Jews' permission to return to Canaan.

Originally these letters were written in Aramaic, which was the official language of diplomatic discourse in those days. Ezra preserved the letters in their original Aramaic form. This is one of the few Aramaic sections in the Hebrew Bible. Identify the sender and addressee in each case: 4:11-16; 4:17-22; 5:7-17; 6:6-12; 7:11-26.

16. Compare the two sections identified on the chart as *The Work*. Why were these activities important in the life of the Jews?

#### **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF EZRA**

##### **A. RESTORATION UNDER ZERUBBABEL (chaps. 1-6)**

A simple outline shows the content of this first half of the book.

##### **I. The Journey (1:1—2:70)**

##### **A. Decree of Cyrus (1:1-4)**

B. Preparations for the Journey  
(1:5-11)

C. List of Returning Exiles (2:1-70;  
scan Neh 7:5-73 for a similar list)

## II. The Work (3:1—6:22)

Work Begun (3:1-13) (536 B.C.)

Work Opposed (4:1-24) (534 B.C.)

Work Resumed (5:1—6:12) (520 B.C.)

Work Finished (6:13-22) (516 B.C.)

(Locate the above four dates on [Chart 57](#).)

The last two verses of the above section could be called key verses for Ezra. They summarize the first return of Jewish exiles from captivity in 536 B.C., with the aid of God and through the favor of an Assyrian king (6:21-22). When the core is extracted from these verses, a bright note of gladness is the emphasized concluding message: “The sons of Israel ... ate ... with joy, for the LORD had caused them to rejoice.”

## B. REFORMS UNDER EZRA (chaps. 7-10)

As the survey [Chart 59](#) shows, the subject of these chapters is similar to that of the first half of the book. The two main parts are “The Journey” (7:1—8:32), and “The Work” (8:33—10:44).

1. *The journey (7:1—8:32)*. (Study the section with the following four points in view.)

- a) The permission (7:1-26)
- b) The psalm (7:27-28)
- c) The people (8:1-14)
- d) The pilgrimage (8:15-32)

About sixty years transpired between chapters 6 and 7. They were probably years of spiritual decline for Jews in Judah. The coming of Ezra the scribe with a second contingent of returning exiles was very timely, for Ezra was a man of God who had

a heavy burden to teach Israel the “statutes and judgments” of God (read 7:10, KJV). So his ministry was bound to touch not only the lives of those making the journey with him, but also the lives of those already in the land.

The story of the book of Esther fits chronologically between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra. The divine providence shown to the Jews during the reign of Xerxes, predecessor of Artaxerxes, may have influenced Artaxerxes to show favor to the Jews during his reign, such as encouraging them to return to their homeland (7:11-26).

2. *The work (8:33—10:44)*. The building of the Temple had been completed during Zerubbabel’s governorship (6:14), so Ezra did not have this responsibility when he arrived in Jerusalem. Yet his work centered about the Temple. Read 7:18-20, 27 to recall

what one of his tasks was, of a physical nature. Also read 7:10 again and note the spiritual ministry which Ezra intended to engage in during his stay in Jerusalem. Obviously, everything he accomplished is not recorded in the book of Ezra. But that which is recorded shows how effectively Ezra was used of God to minister to the Jews in Palestine.

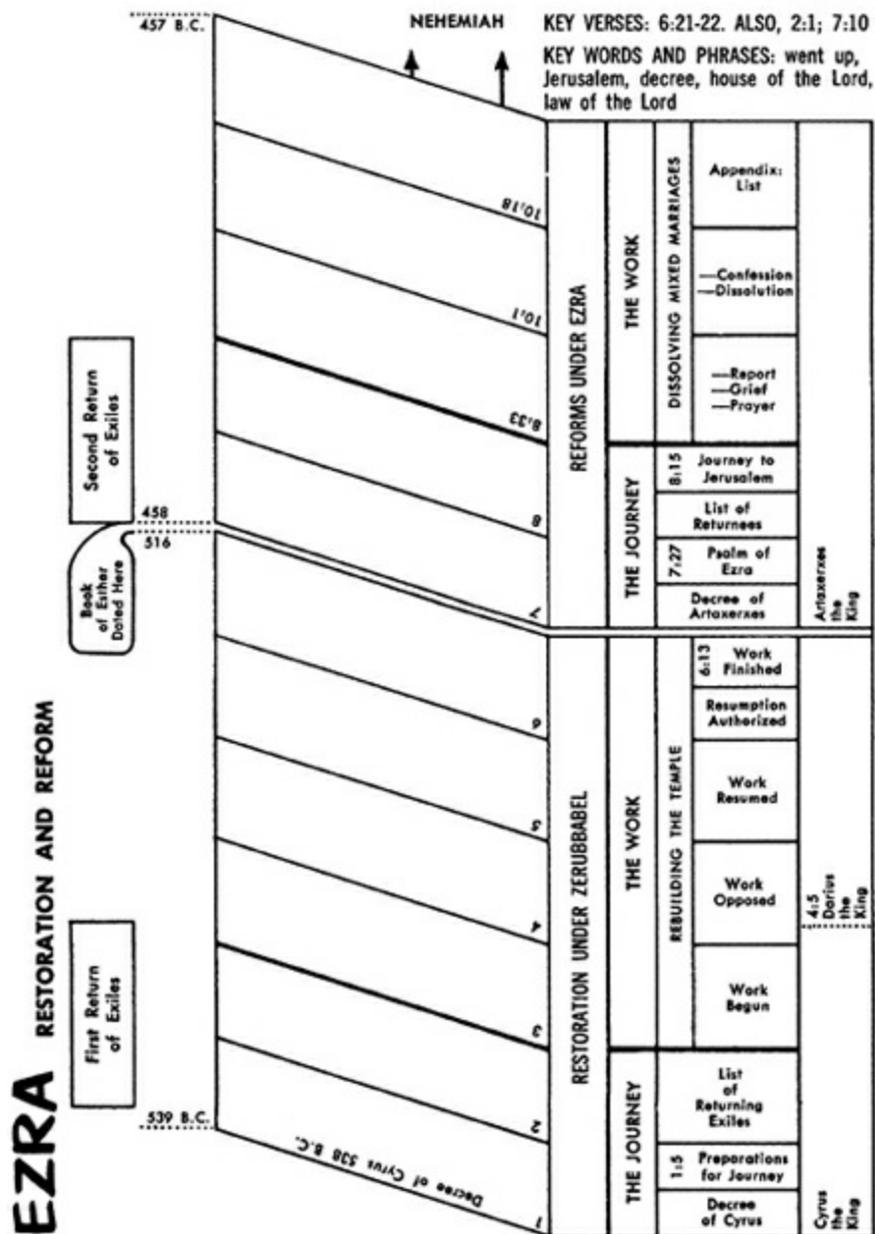
Study these chapters with the following outline in view:

I. The Program (8:33-36). In these verses are recorded the two projects which were first given attention when Ezra's group arrived in Jerusalem. What were they? For the Temple beautification project, the Jews had the assistance of the king's presidents and governors on the western side of the Euphrates River, who "supported the people and the house of

God” (8:366). The program lasted for about four months (cf. 9:1a and 10:9).

II The Problem (9:1-4). Read Exodus 34:15-16 and Deuteronomy 7:1-3 for the Law which God had given His people and which they were now violating. The guilty ones were not only of Ezra’s group of returnees, but also of the Jews already settled in the land. The problem did not originate overnight. Why was Ezra’s grief so intense?

III. The Prayer (9:5-15). This is one of the Scripture’s prominent examples of a prayer of contrition and confession. Study it carefully.



IV. The Penitence (10:1-4). Ezra's example of contrition was contagious, as these verses indicate. Someone other than Ezra suggested a way of deliverance (vv. 2-4). Could this have been Ezra's strategy of silence concerning hope—to cause the people *themselves* to recognize that they

had come to the end of the line, and that they *must* cry out for mercy? Make a study of these important phrases in this paragraph:

“We have been unfaithful to our God.”

“Yet now there is hope.”

“Let us make a covenant with our God.”

“Be courageous and act.”

V. The Propitiation (10:5-17). The story of Ezra ends by showing how the sin of mixed marriages was dealt with, and how peace with God was thereby restored. (Recall the words “hope” and “covenant” of 10:2-3.)

The price of restoration was high. This is perhaps the main truth of these closing verses of Ezra. Observe the following in your study:

a) Firm authority of God’s spokesman

(10:5).

- b) Deep remorse (10:6).
- c) Thorough investigation (10:7-8, 14).
- d) No one excused from examination (10:8).
- e) Sense of fear (10:9, 14).
- f) Tragic consequences involved in the solution (10:44).
- g) Way to restoration (the word “propitiation” in this outline means atonement, or restored fellowship by sacrifice): confession of sin (10:11a), offering for sin (10:19), dissolution of marriage (10:116).

## **V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES OF EZRA**

Some key words and phrases of Ezra are: “went up,” “Jerusalem,” “decree,” “house of the LORD,” “hand of the LORD upon him,” “law of the LORD.” The Word of God is

prominent throughout the book, under various designations. Look up each verse cited here and jot down the word or phrase used: 1:1; 3:2; 6:14, 18; 7:6, 10, 14; 9:4; 10:3, 5.

## **VI. APPLICATIONS OF EZRA**

1. What are some important spiritual qualifications of God's servants?

2. What lessons about worship and praise can be learned from this book?

3. Satan always tries to oppose God's work. What can Christians do to prevent such opposition, or overcome it when it exists?

4. Does God use unbelievers to fulfill tasks in His work? If so, how and why? Can you cite examples on the contemporary scene?

5. What constitutes a mixed marriage today, in the sense in which it was a sin of

Ezra's time? Why is it such a dangerous evil?

## **VII. BACKGROUND OF NEHEMIAH**

### **A. TITLE AND PLACE IN THE CANON**

The book of Nehemiah is named after its main character and its opening words (1:1a). In all Old Testament canonical lists it has been classified as a historical book. Both Hebrew and Greek Bibles of the earliest centuries treated Ezra and Nehemiah as one book. The two-book classification of our English Bibles may be traced back to the Latin Vulgate Bibles.

### **B. DATE AND AUTHORSHIP**

Authorship of the book may be attributed to Nehemiah, who probably wrote most of it around 420 B.C. Some parts of the book contain his memoirs (1:1—7:5; 11:1-2; 12:27-43; 13:4-31). The list of Jewish families given in 7:5-73 was from a

document already existing (the list is practically identical with that of Ezra 2:1-70). The third-person references to Nehemiah in 8:9; 10:1; 12:26, 47 do not contradict his authorship when the context is recognized.¹³

### C. THE MAN NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah was born of Jewish parents in exile, and was given the name *Nehem-Yah*, meaning “the comfort of Jehovah.” We may gather from this that Nehemiah’s home was a godly one. At a young age he was appointed to the responsible office of being cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. This was the contact that God used later to secure imperial permission for the return to Jerusalem of the third contingent of exiles, namely, Nehemiah and his project crew.

Nehemiah was truly a man of God, filled with the Spirit. He had a sensitive ear to

God's voice concerning even the details of the work he was doing (2:12; 7:5). Prayer was a natural and essential part of his life. He knew what work was, and he worked and inspired others to do so. When opposition arose from the enemy, he stood strong and tall. He was alert also to the subversive plots of false brethren within the Jewish commonwealth. And when some of his own people became discouraged, he turned their eyes to the help of God, and found a ready response. Leader, worker, soldier, servant of God—this was Nehemiah.

#### D. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There is a period of twelve years after the book of Ezra closes (457 B.C.) before the book of Nehemiah begins its story (cf. Ezra 7:8; 10:16-17; and Neh 1:1; 2:1). Then Nehemiah records events of the next twenty years (445-425 B.C.).¹⁴

Refer to [Chart 57](#) and note the following:

1. Artaxerxes I was king of Persia¹⁵ when Nehemiah ministered.
2. 458 B.C.—Second return of Jews to Jerusalem, led by Ezra.
3. 446 B.C.—The enemies force the Jews to cease building the walls, and virtually destroy the parts already built (Ezra 4:23). News of this reaches Nehemiah (Neh 1:3).
4. 445 B.C.—Nehemiah leads a small group of exiles to Jerusalem to organize the Jews already there to rebuild the walls. Nehemiah is appointed by Artaxerxes to be governor of Judah (a province of Persia at this time).
5. 444 B.C.—The walls project is completed (Neh 6:15).
6. 433 B.C.—Nehemiah goes to Babylon on

official business (cf. 2:6 and 13:6). The date 433 B.C. is derived from Nehemiah 5:14.

7. 425 B.C.—Nehemiah returns from Babylon (Neh 13:7).

It must have been a heartwarming experience for Ezra when he learned that such a zealous believer as Nehemiah had arrived in Jerusalem with a new contingent of Jewish exiles.

While Nehemiah served as governor of Judah, Ezra was still ministering to the spiritual needs of the Jews there. (Ezra plays an important part in chapters 8 and 12 of Nehemiah.)

Nehemiah also counted on the spiritual services of the prophet Malachi during those last years of Old Testament history. Many of the evils denounced in the book of Malachi are part of the historical record of the book

of Nehemiah.

## **E. PURPOSES**

In general, the book of Nehemiah seeks to show how God favored His people, so recently exiled, by strengthening their roots in the homeland of Judah in the face of all kinds of opposition.

Specifically, the book shows how the broken-down walls of Jerusalem and the failing faith of the Jews were restored, through (1) the competent leadership of Nehemiah, a man of prayer and faith; and (2) through a host of Jewish brethren, who responded to the divine challenge to rise and build.

## **VIII. SURVEY OF NEHEMIAH**

1. Scan the book, chapter by chapter, observing such things as organization of a theme, and the prevailing atmosphere.

## 2. Concerning organization:

Is there an introduction and conclusion to the book?

Is the book mainly narrative? How much, if any, is autobiographical?

Is there a progression?

Is there a turning point?

Observe the places in the book where *lists* appear. (These are of various kinds.)

3. Concerning atmosphere, what is the general tone of the book? Reread the first few verses of each chapter and observe the *intensity* of the tone involved. Note especially these verses: 1:4; 2:1; 4:1; 5:1; 6:1; 8:1; 9:1; 13:1.

4. Observe also the simplicity in which the action is described. There are no embellishments of a litterateur attempting to give color to the drama. The intensity of the

action remains even in the simplicity of the reporting. One writer has remarked, “We see throughout the writing of an honest, earnest man,—and through him the history closes with a sublime dignity.”¹⁶

5. What are your first impressions of the book of Nehemiah? Does any passage of the book stand out prominently in your mind? If so, what?

6. Now reread the book of Nehemiah more slowly. Record chapter titles on paper. (Note the divisional points at 6:15; 7:736; 12:27; and 12:44 shown on [Chart 60](#). Why are divisions made at these places?)

7. Always be on the lookout for key words and phrases as you study.

8. Identify the main characters of the book. Among other things, note when Ezra appears in the story. Also, who are the most frequently mentioned enemies of Nehemiah?

9. Make a note of Nehemiah's prayers in the book's first and last chapters.

10. What is the key project of the story? How is the book organized around this project? Where is the first activity of that project recorded? What verse records the project's completion? How long did the project last? Try making some outlines of the book's story.

11. In your own words, write out a theme for the book. Also, suggest a title.

12. Study carefully the survey [Chart 60](#). Compare its observations and outlines with your own work thus far.

13. Observe that 7:736 marks a turning point on [Chart 60](#). Some Bible students locate the main division at 7:1, which would make the passage 7:1-73a the opening of the second half of the book. Because of the nonnarrative nature of most of this passage,

it may be considered either as the close of the first half or the opening of the second half of the book. The reason for including 7:1-73a in the first half of the book is that it more greatly emphasizes the aspect of *physical* security (cf. 7:1-4), whereas at 7:736 the narrative begins to focus on building for *spiritual* security (cf. 8:1).

14. The structure of the book of Nehemiah is very simple: two equal main parts, with each chapter adding a new point to the chapters preceding it. Study the various two-part outlines.

15. Relate the outlines on the chart to the suggested title.

16. Scan the book once again with this survey chart in mind. This will bring together in your mind the many unrelated observations which you may have made along the way.

# **IX. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF NEHEMIAH**

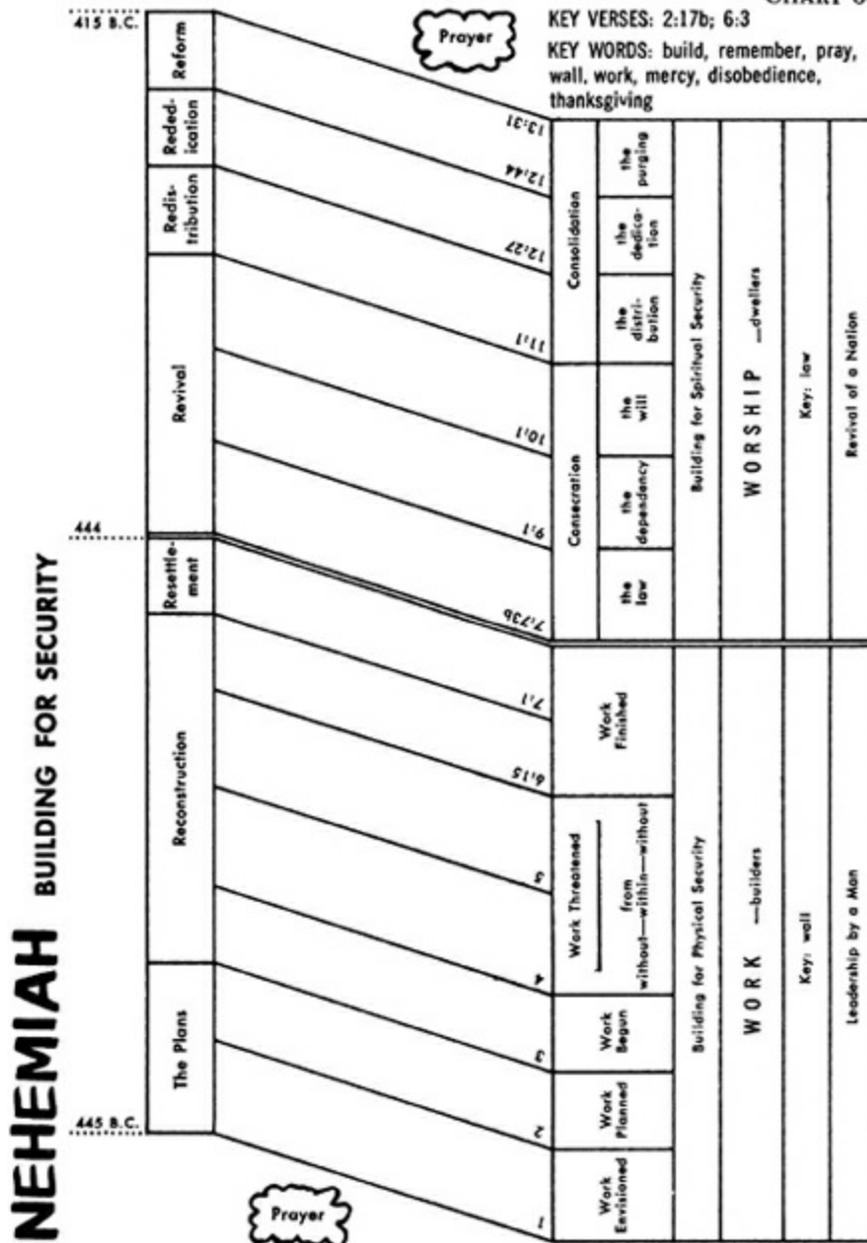
## **A. PRAYERS**

Prayer is prominent throughout the book of Nehemiah. Study especially the prayer of 1:4-11, noting confession, claim, plea, and underlying tone. Then make a comparative study of these references to prayer: 1:4-11; 2:4; 4:4-5, 9; 5:19; 6:9, 14; 13:14, 22, 29, 31.

## **B. BUILDING PROJECTS (chaps. 1-7)**

The historians Ezra and Nehemiah have recorded for us practically all that is known of Jewish history during the restoration period from 538 to 425 B.C. Nehemiah's contribution was the firsthand account of the part he played, especially in the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, a project not accomplished during the years covered by the book of Ezra.

It all began for Nehemiah while he was serving as cupbearer in the palace of Artaxerxes, king of Persia. When Nehemiah received news of the affliction and reproach of the Jewish remnant in Judah, and the most recent desolation of Jerusalem's walls and gates, his heart burned with a sense of urgency that something must be done. How God stirred Nehemiah to lead his fellowmen in rebuilding what had been broken down—the city's walls, but, more important, the city's faith—is told in these chapters. Use the following outline as you study the narrative:



- I. Work Begins (3:1-32).
- II. Work Continues Despite Opposition (4:1—6:14).
  - A. Opposition from Without (4:1-23).
  - B. Opposition from Within (5:1-19).

C. Opposition from Without (6:1-14).

III. Work Is Finished (6:15—7:73a).

A. Building Program Completed (6:15-19).

B. Jerusalem Guarded (7:1-4).

C. Families Resettled (7:5-73a).

The completion of the building project was a blow to the enemies of Israel. Nehemiah reports that they were much cast down, “for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God” (6:16). (The two verses of 6:15-16 are Nehemiah’s concluding words for the reporting of the building project.)

**C. REVIVAL (7:736—10:39)**

A major turn is made in the book of Nehemiah at 7:736. The shift is from the

physical and material rebuilding to building for spiritual security. The reading of God's Word is given no higher honor than in chapter 8; thanksgiving and penitence are blended together in sublime and startling proportions in the prayer of chapter 9; and the people's determination to prove the sincerity of that prayer by action is wonderfully exemplified in chapter 10. The people solemnly covenanted "to walk in God's law," which they were proud to claim as having come to them through "Moses, God's servant" (10:29). Among other things, they said, "We will not neglect the house of our God" (10:39).

The passing of time would tell how faithfully they and their children would keep this covenant.

#### **D. CONSOLIDATION (11:1—13:31)**

The last chapters of Nehemiah record

important aspects of Israel's life as they entered the phase of consolidation. Those aspects are: the nation's size and distribution; the nation's defense; and the nation's purity. The same subjects appeared earlier in the book, but in a slightly different context. **Chart 61** gives a survey of this final section of Nehemiah. Mark the divisions in your Bible, with the outlines, as a guide for your reading.

NEHEMIAH 11:1—13:31		CHART 61	
11:1	12:27	12:44	13:31
REGISTERED LISTS	OFFICIAL DEDICATION	NECESSARY REFORMS	
families	walls	laws	
The nation's size and distribution	The nation's defense	The nation's purity	

## X. KEY WORDS AND VERSES OF NEHEMIAH

Some of Nehemiah's key words are: build, remember, pray, wall, work, mercy, disobedience, thanksgiving. Suggested key verses are 2:176 and 6:3. Look for others.

## XI APPLICATIONS OF NEHEMIAH

1. Nehemiah is an invigorating and challenging book, showing what God can do through a remnant of believers who rise to God's call through His servant to restore a vital, worshipful relationship with Him. John C. Whitcomb makes this appraisal of the book:

It must be said ... that no portion of the Old Testament provides us with a greater incentive to dedicated, discerning zeal for the work of God than the Book of Nehemiah. The example of Nehemiah's passion for the truth of God's Word, whatever the cost or consequences, is an example sorely needed in the present hour.¹⁷

Problems, pains, prayer, and perseverance are some of the ingredients of the success story of Nehemiah. What other ingredients

have you observed in your study of the book? Think back over the chapters and list at least ten spiritual lessons on *service for God* taught by Nehemiah.

2. Follow this pattern of analogy as you apply various parts of the Nehemiah story:

BOOK OF NEHEMIAH	ILLUSTRATIVE OF
the believing Jews	Christians
broken-down walls	aspects of the Christian life in need of restoration (e.g., prayer, worship, service)
rebuilding the walls	revival and restoration

3. The subject of revival is often discussed by Christians, but less often experienced. Revival is the renewal of the believer's intimate relationship with God. The price of revival is high, but the way is simple. These three chapters present that way, in the correct order:

chapter 8: the work of God's Word (exposure to, and understanding of the

Word)

chapter 9: the experience of genuine prayer (confession of sin, and worship of God)

chapter 10: decision and action (in the spirit of sacrifice)

Reflect on these truths, especially as they apply to Christian living.

## **XII. BACKGROUND OF ESTHER**

Now we return to a time earlier than Nehemiah, for Esther's setting is dated between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra.¹⁸ The Old Testament history of Israel closes with the last chapter of Nehemiah (c. 425 B.C.). Were it not for the events of the book of Esther, however, there may not have been a story for Nehemiah to record. Esther was included in the biblical account to show how God's chosen people were spared extermination during their exilic years. It is a story that

should inspire Christians today to an increased trust in God, who sovereignly controls world history and preserves His own children.

#### **A. TITLE**

The title “Esther” is assigned to this book because Esther is the main character. Jews call the book *Megilloth Esther* (“Esther Roll”) because it is one of the five rolls assigned for reading at Jewish holidays.¹⁹

#### **B. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE**

Authorship of the book is unknown. The author was probably a Jew living in Persia during the latter half of the fifth century B.C., when the action of the book took place. Some have suggested Ezra or Nehemiah as possible authors, on the basis of similarity of writing style.

#### **C. PLACE IN THE CANON**

The book of Esther is listed last in the historical books of the English Bible, and eighth in the “Writings” (*Kethubhim*) section of the Hebrew Bible. Though its canonicity has been challenged by some, it has remained firmly in the canon.²⁰ The Jews have always accepted the book as canonical.

#### D. THE LADY ESTHER

Esther was a Jewish orphan maiden who lived in Shushan, Persia’s principal city. She was reared by a cousin, Mordecai, who was an official in the king’s palace (2:5-7, KJV). King Xerxes (Ahasuerus)²¹ chose Esther to be the new queen of Persia after he had divorced his wife. Through Esther’s influence, Jews living in Persia were spared extermination.

The name Esther (*ester*) may have been derived from the Persian word for “star” (*sitareh*). Esther’s Hebrew name was

Hadassah (2:7), which means “myrtle.”

It is interesting to note that only one other book in the Bible is named after a woman: Ruth. One writer has made this comparison: “Ruth was a Gentile woman who married a Jew. Esther was a Jewish woman who married a Gentile.”²²

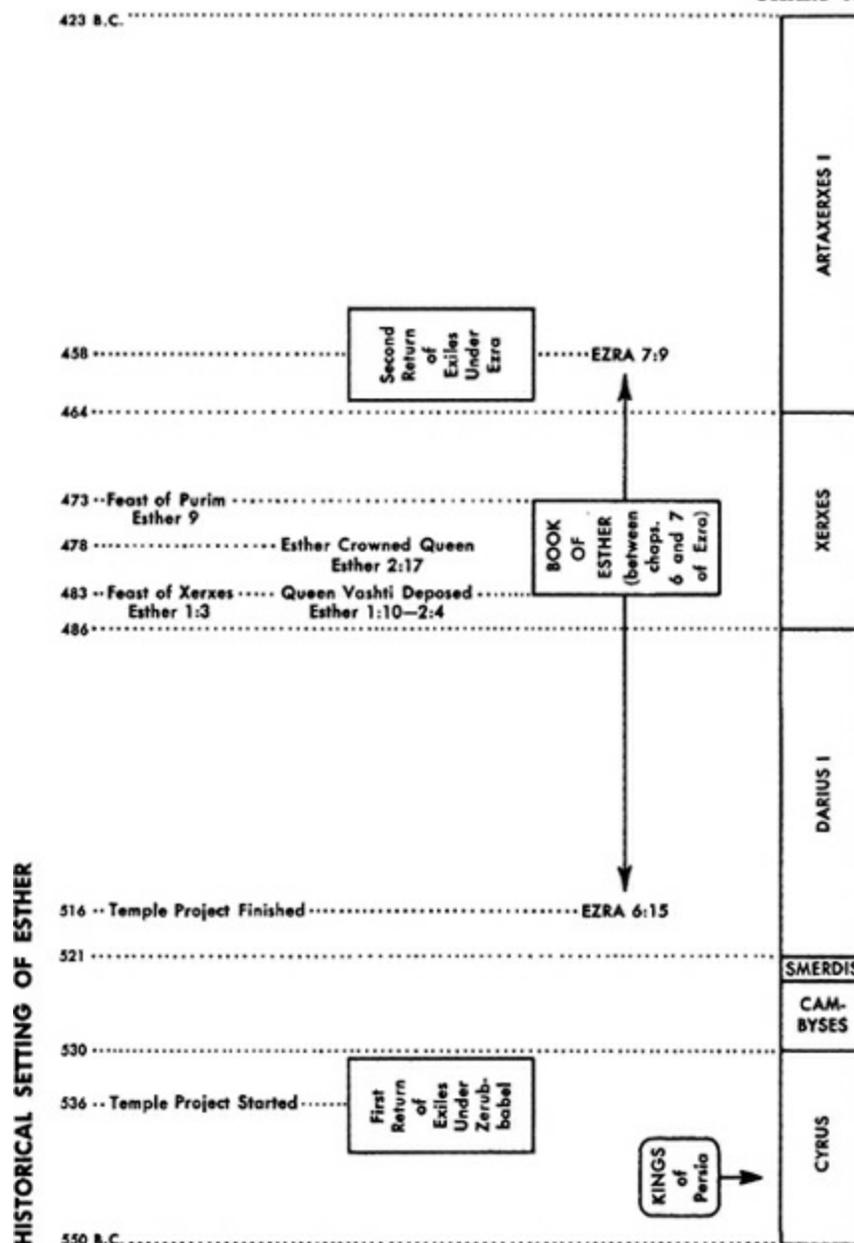
The story of Esther reveals a woman of very commendable character. Among her traits were genuine piety, faith, courage, patriotism, compassion, maturity, and natural charm. Your study of the book of Esther will show how such a woman was used of God in the interests of His chosen people, the Jews.

#### E. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

History always originates in *places*, so it is helpful first to visualize the geography of the book of Esther. Refer to [Map O](#) and observe the location of Shushan (Gr., *Susa*)

in Persia,²³ where Esther lived and served as queen. (This is the same city where Daniel had received a vision from God about eighty years earlier, Dan 8:2.) Some have estimated that between two and three million Jews were living in Persia and Babylon during the time of the book of Esther. Read Esther 1:1 and note the extensive domain of Xerxes, king of Persia: 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia.

The story of Esther took place between the first return of exiles under Zerubbabel (536 B.C.) and the second return under Ezra (458 B.C.). [Chart 62](#) shows the major points of this historical setting.



Observe the following:

1. The events of this book cover a period of more than ten years (483-473 B.C.). If one would see in 10:1 an indirect reference to the death of King Xerxes (d. 464 B.C.), then it could be said that the book covers a span of about twenty years.

2. Xerxes was the king of Persia during all of this period.

3. All of the book is dated between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra.

4. The book opens with a feast (Xerxes) and closes with a feast (Purim). The former was to honor the king and his empire; the latter was to commemorate the Jews' deliverance.

It is interesting to observe that around the time of the book of Esther, three great world battles were fought (Salamis, Thermopylae, and Marathon), and two great world leaders died (Confucius and Buddha).

#### **F. PURPOSE OF THE BOOK**

The major purpose of the book of Esther is to show how a host of Jews living in exile were saved from being exterminated by the hand of a Gentile monarch. Though no name for God appears in the book, the divine

Providence pervades the narrative.²⁴ It is the same One who preserved the nation of Israel in the oppressions of Pharaoh, and through such devastating judgments as those of the wilderness journeys, the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and Hitler's mass slaughters.

### **XIII. SURVEY OF ESTHER**

1. Follow the usual procedures of survey study. After you have scanned the book, read the entire story more slowly. Because of its intriguing plot, the book holds one's attention throughout.

2. Four people are the main characters of the narrative: King Ahasuerus, Esther, Mordecai, and Haman. Observe the part played by each, as you read the story.

3. Where is the turning point of the Jews'

situation?

4. Try making an outline of the book. In your own words, state the book's theme.

5. Study survey [Chart 64](#). Compare its outlines with your own observations.

6. Observe the elevation of a Jewess, Esther, in chapter 2, and the exaltation of a Jew, Mordecai, in chapter 10.

7. What were the occasions for the feasts of the book? Note the comparison made of the feasts of chapters 1 and 9.

## **XIV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF ESTHER**

### **A. THE JEWS ARE THREATENED**

A key word of the book is "Jew." The singular form appears eight times; the plural form, forty-three times. The term *Jew* is derived from the word *Judah*. Since most of the returning exiles were of the tribe of Judah, the title Jew was applied to them,

and extended in later years to all Hebrew people.

The fate of the Jews throughout centuries of unbelief has been one endless tragedy. Wars, famines, broken homes, political upheaval, plagues, and premature death were some of the judgments of the years of judges and kings. Then came the deprivations of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities; coldness of heart in the four hundred years before Christ; and a worldwide dispersion to the present day for the rejection of the Messiah. The slaughter of millions of Jews by the Hitler regime reveals how much hatred the human race is capable of heaping upon a people.

The story of Esther concerns deliverance for the Jews during *exile* years. The book does not intend to extol the Jew, but to show that the fate of the nation—good or

bad—is in the hands of a sovereign God. There have been tragic pogroms in the history of Israel, but there have also been miraculous deliverances, and the book of Esther records one such deliverance.

As of chapter 3, the extermination of all Jews in Xerxes' empire merely awaited the arrival of the day of slaughter, eleven months later, on the thirteenth of Adar (3:13). That date had been determined by lot ("Pur," see 3:7). The decree was distributed in letter form by couriers throughout the empire, ordering the authorities "to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in one day" (3:13). What made the king sign such a decree? (3:2).

## **B. THE JEWS ARE SPARED (4:1—10:3)**

From time to time God has raised up

women to perform a special work for the blessing of His people. Such was the sovereignly determined lot of Queen Esther, who was in a position to appeal to the king to spare the Jews from the planned pogrom. Her foster father, Mordecai, saw the hand of God in this when he exclaimed to her, “Who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?” (4:14). Study 4:1—7:10, using the outlines of [Chart 63](#).

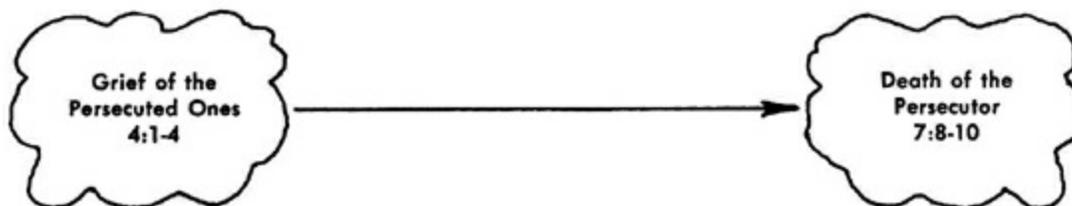
**ESTHER 4:1—7:10**

**CHART 63**

4:1	5:1	6:1	7:1	7:10
Audience with the King Planned		King Favors Esther		King Hangs Haman

Esther's First Banquet

Esther's Second Banquet



The deliverance of the Jews is the story of chapters 8 and 9. This is followed by the

account of Mordecai's exaltation (chap. 10). Use the following outlines when you study these chapters:

8:1	9:17	10:1	10:3
Deliverance of a People	Commemoration of the Deliverance	Exaltation of a Deliverer	
Two Decrees	Two Letters	Two Men	
Decree to Kill Decree to Defend	Feasting Fasting	Ahasuerus Mordecai	

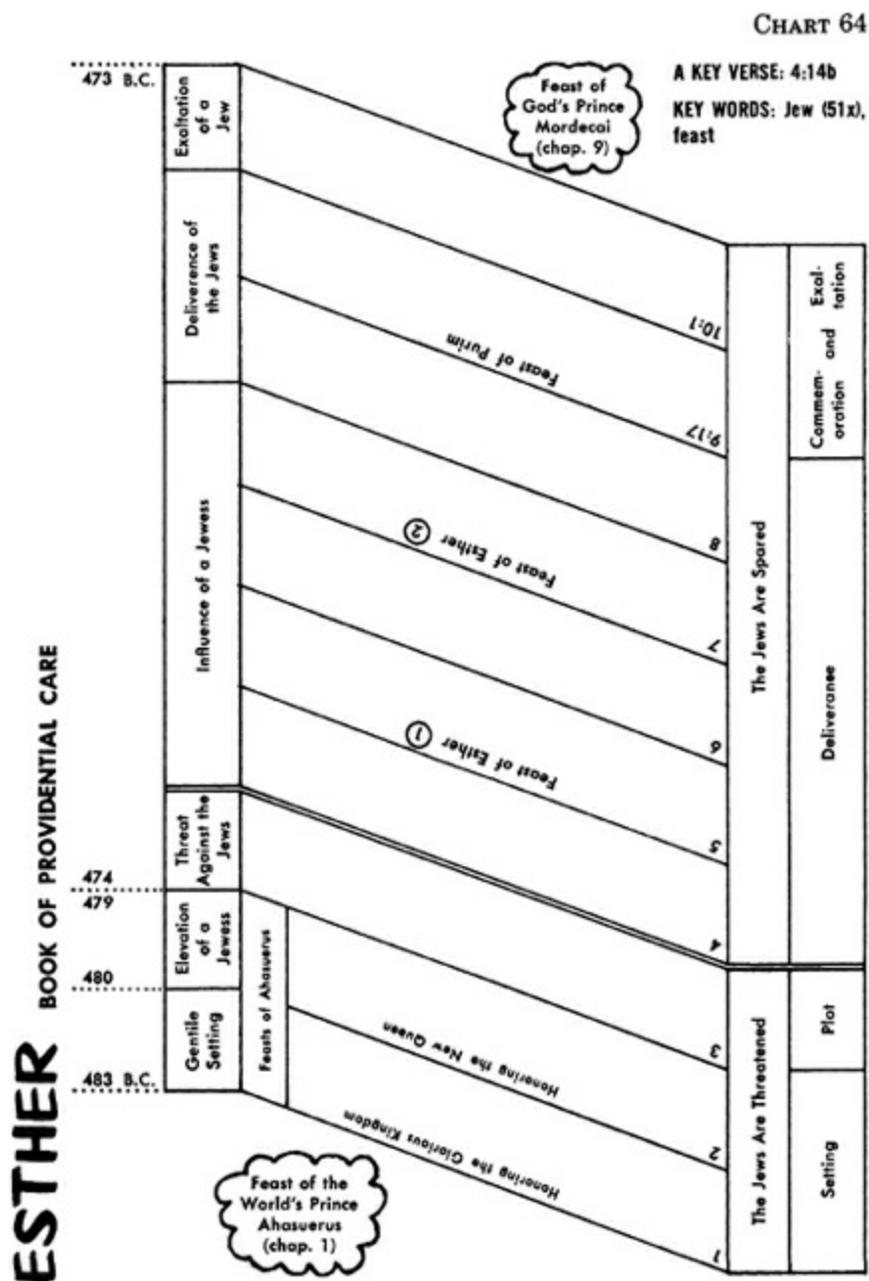
## **XV. KEY WORDS AND VERSES OF ESTHER**

Note the key words and key verse shown on [Chart 64](#). Look for others as you study the book.

## **XVI. APPLICATIONS OF ESTHER**

1. What is divine Providence? What does the book of Esther teach concerning this?
2. What is God's interest in the Jews today, and what is the reason for it?
3. Derive a few spiritual lessons from the key verse, 4:146.

4. God's sovereignty includes the good things He efficiently wills, and the evil things He permits. Show examples of these from the book of Esther.



5. How does the doctrine of divine sovereignty relate to Christian living?

6. When, if ever, is it not evil to refuse to obey civil law? Does Acts 5:29 relate to this question?

## **XVII. FURTHER STUDY IN EZRA-NEHEMIAH-ESTHER**

1. Make biographical studies of the main persons of these books, including Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Zerubbabel, Ahasuerus, Mordecai, Haman.

2. In a Bible dictionary, read brief descriptions of the ministries of the prophets during these years. (See [Chart 57](#) for their names.)

3. Study more about the Temple rebuilding project.

4. Study what the New Testament teaches about the Jews' destinies in end times (e.g., Rom 11).

5. As noted earlier, the name of God does not appear in the book of Esther. Also, there

are no explicit references to prayer, worship, the Law, Jerusalem, or the Temple. One explanation of the exclusion is that the Jews living in Esther's time had disassociated themselves from the theocratic institution when they refused King Cyrus's permission to return to Palestine (recorded in the early chapters of Ezra). God's name was not at this time linked with them as such, though continued providence and future covenant dealings with the nation were not thereby annulled. Can you think of other possible reasons?

## **XVIII. SELECTED READING**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 395-406.

Eason, J. Lawrence. *The New Bible Survey*, pp. 195-208.

Free, Joseph P. *Archaeology and Bible History*, pp. 224-54.

Phillips, John. *Exploring the Scriptures*, pp. 87-94.

Whitcomb, John C., Jr. *Study graph on Old Testament Kings and Prophets*.

Whitley, C. F. *The Exilic Age*.

Wood, Leon J. *A Survey of Israel's History*, pp. 377-411.

#### COMMENTARIES AND RELATED STUDIES

Armerding, Carl. *Esther*.

Bruce, F. F. *Israel and the Nations*, pp. 93-119.

Crosby, Howard. "Nehemiah." In Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*.

Ironside, H. A. *Notes on the Book of Ezra*.

Luck, G. Coleman. *Ezra and Nehemiah*.  
Everyman's Bible Commentary.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, pp. 236-82.

Pfeiffer, Charles F., and Harrison, Everett F. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, pp. 423-57.

Pfeiffer, Charles F., and Vos, Howard F. *The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands*.

Redpath, Alan. *Victorious Christian Service*.

1. Although the book of Esther is not about this return, its story is dated during the time span of Ezra, as will be seen later.

2. Steven Barabas, "Captivity," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 147. Read Ezekiel 36:24, which clearly teaches that the Jews who eventually returned to Canaan were gathered from many countries.

3. The number seventy may have been a round number, as is often the case in Scripture.

4. If Jeremiah's prophecy is interpreted from an ecclesiastical standpoint, with the Temple as the key object, then the seventy-year period extended from the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C. to the year of completion of its reconstruction, which was 516 B.C.

5. Most of the dates of [Chart 57](#) are those of John C. Whitcomb's *Chart of Old Testament Kings and Prophets*.

6. Zerubbabel is probably the Sheshbazzar referred to in Ezra 1:8,11.

7. No large contingent of Jews was involved in this return.

8. The first division into two books in the Hebrew Bible was made in A.D. 1448.

9. The phrase "scribe skilled" (Ezra 7:6) is translated by the Berkeley Version as "scribe, well versed."

10. The references to Ahasuerus (Xerxes) and Artaxerxes in 4:6-7 are part of the parenthesis 4:6-23, inserted out of chronological order with

a purpose.

11. There is a brief reference to this interim period in the parenthesis of 4:6-23. (Ahasuerus, 4:6, is probably Xerxes, though some identify him as Cambyses, son of Cyrus.)

12. Isaiah prophesied concerning Cyrus two hundred years before Cyrus was born. Read Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-4.

13. See *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 435, for an explanation of this.

14. Some of this material is a review of the historical setting described earlier in the chapter.

15. Persia at this time included the vast territory from India to Ethiopia, Judah being one of its provinces.

16. Howard Crosby, "Nehemiah," in Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, p. 1.

17. John C. Whitcomb, "Nehemiah," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 435.

18. See [Chart 57](#). The reason for studying

Nehemiah directly after Ezra is to maintain the continuity of the theme of Ezra-Nehemiah.

19. The book of Esther is read at the Jews' Feast of Purim (March 14-15).

20. Some Bibles (e.g., Catholic) add "Additions to Esther" (identified as 10:4–16:24) to the canonical book, intended mainly to compensate for the absence of the name of God. The fact that no portion of the book of Esther has yet been discovered in the Qumran area (place of the Dead Sea Scrolls discoveries) indicates that the Essenes of Qumran probably rejected the canonicity of Esther.

21. The term Ahasuerus may have been a Persian title for *king*, rather than a name, similar to the title *pharaoh*. See Esther 1:1-2.

22. John Phillips, *Exploring the Scriptures*, p. 91.

23. The modern name for Persia is Iran.

24. Matthew Henry writes, "If the name of God is not here, His finger is." See 4:14 for an

example of an implied divine Providence.

## **Part 3**

# ***Reflections and Worship During the Monarchial Years***

During the early years of Israel's kingdom, God inspired a few writers to compose for Scripture some poems, songs, and dialogues reflecting the meditations and questions of their hearts and minds. These are the five books which comprise the third section of our English Old Testament, called the "Poetical Books." The books are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.¹ Psalms is the example par excellence of Hebrew poetry. Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes are usually classified contentwise as "Wisdom Literature," because their message represents the wise observations and interpretations of everyday life.

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Solomon

1. There, are poetical passages in other parts of the Old Testament as well. (E.g., Exod 15; Deut 32; Judg 5; 2 Sam 22; Hab 3. See *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 671, for a list of shorter poems.)

## ***Job: Knowing God Better Through Adversity***

The book of Job answers questions asked by people who believe in God but who are stunned or mystified by the complex problem of pain. Here are some of those questions:

Does justice triumph?

Is God intimately concerned about the lives of His children?

Why are some godly people crushed with tragedy?

What are the enduring values of life?

Is Satan real?

Is there a life beyond the grave?

The very fact that God inspired a book

like Job to be written and included in the canon of the Holy Bible is strong evidence of His love for His children. This book records His perfect answers to the many agonizing questions about life. Through those answers, severe trials and testings in life take on a new quality and Peter's words, bringing Christ into the picture, shine forth in all their splendor: "That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:7).

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

Job is the first of the five poetical books.² Therefore, it is helpful to become acquainted with the various aspects of poetic literature, so the language and style of these five books will be more intelligible.

## A. OLD TESTAMENT POETRY

1. *Purposes.* The underlying purpose of the poetic books is common to all Scripture, whether the book be didactic or inspirational. Apply 2 Timothy 3:16-17 here. Because the poetic books are charged with feeling, they appeal especially to the human emotions and will, and so are very persuasive in exhorting and reproofing.

The poetic writings deal with problems and experiences common to all mankind, which make them timeless and universally attractive. J. Sidlow Baxter writes of this.

These books portray real human experience, and grapple with profound problems, and express big realities. Especially do they concern themselves with the experiences of the *godly*, in the varying vicissitudes of this changeful life which is ours under the sun. Moreover, experiences which are

here dealt with were permitted to come to men in order that they might be as guides for the godly ever afterward. These experiences are here recorded and interpreted for us by the Spirit of inspiration through “holy men of old” who spoke and wrote “as they were moved” by Him. Thus, in these poetical books we have a most precious treasury of spiritual truth.³

*2. Main Types.* There are three main types of Hebrew poetry: lyric, didactic, and dramatic.

a) lyric. This type is called lyric because the poetry was originally accompanied by music on the lyre. Religious lyric poetry expresses the poet’s emotions as they are stirred by and directed toward God. Most of the Psalms are lyric. W. T. Purkiser observes that “while there had been lyric poetry even before Moses, the form grew in beauty and

sensitivity until it reached its highest point of perfection in David, the ‘sweet singer of Israel.’”⁴

b) didactic. This is sometimes referred to as a gnomic type, because the unit of thought is a gnome, or maxim. The main purpose is to share observations and evaluations of life, not to communicate feeling as such. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are examples of this type.

c) dramatic. In Hebrew drama, the action is mainly that of dialogue, to get across thoughts and ideas. Job and the Song of Solomon are of this type.

3. *Characteristics.* Some of the distinguishing characteristics of Hebrew poetry are the following:

a) Hebrew poetry does not depend on rhyme or meter as such, but is built around a thought pattern.⁵ This allows the author

much liberty in terms of the structure of a single line, and accounts for the large variety in line lengths, from very short to very long.

b) The unit of Hebrew poetry is the line. A pair of two lines (called *distich*) usually constitutes a verse. But *tristichs* (three lines) are common, and some stanzas include *tetrastichs* (four lines) and *pentastichs* (five lines). (Read Psalm 37 and note the variety of combinations of lines.)

c) Hebrew poetry brings out the color and vitality of the Hebrew language. The language's makeup invites this. For example, the most prominent part of speech in Hebrew is the verb, the action word. The language's grammatical structure is simple and direct. (There is no indirect speech in the Hebrew Old Testament.) Metaphors and antitheses⁶ appear often in the text, and

repetition is a common device. Whatever is written is the experience, thoughts, and emotions of the author. In choosing words to share such a testimony, the Hebrew author avoids abstract philosophical and theological terms, and uses concrete and pictorial ones.

d) Parallelism is the essential feature of Hebrew poetry. It is the structure of a verse which shows a correspondence between two or more lines of that verse. For example, after a statement has been made in the first line of a verse, that thought is repeated, enlarged, or even contrasted in the remaining line or lines. Basically, there are three types of parallelism in Hebrew poetry:⁷

(1) Synonymous. Here the second line is a repetition of the thought of the first line (Psalm 37:2,6,10,12).

(2) Antithetic. The second line expresses an idea contrasted with that of the first (Psalm 1:6; 30:5; 37:9).

(3) Synthetic. The second and later lines enlarge upon or complete the thought of the first line (Psalm 2:6; 19:7; 24:9; 37:4,5,13; 95:1-3; ROV 16:3,5; Job 19:25).

Other characteristics of Hebrew poetry will be cited from time to time in the course of these next few chapters on the poetical books. For example, in the next section of this chapter (Background) the literary style of the book of Job is discussed.

As you begin your survey of this third section of the Old Testament (“Poetical Books”), it will be helpful to review the prominent themes of the books of the two preceding sections (“Law,” and “History”). The following list of words chosen by J.

Sidlow Baxter suggests the leading subjects of each of the seventeen books.⁸ Go through the list and see if you know why each word was chosen to represent each book. You might want to use different words in some cases. This exercise will be a good review of your surveys thus far.

#### LAW

Genesis—Destitution

Exodus—Deliverance

Leviticus—Dedication

Numbers—Direction

Deuteronomy—Destination

#### HISTORY

Joshua—Possession

Judges, Ruth—Declension

1 Samuel—Transition

2 Samuel—Confirmation

1 Kings—Disruption

2 Kings—Dispersion

1, 2 Chronicles—Retrospection

Ezra—Restoration

Nehemiah—Reconstruction

Esther—Preservation

Later, when you have finished surveying each of the five poetical books, you will want to look back and compare the themes of those writings. As a preview to the group, read the following lists, which identify the

# main subjects of the books.9

Job:	The Problem of Pain	Blessing Through Suffering
Psalms:	The Way to Pray	Praise Through Prayer
Proverbs:	The Behavior of the Believer	Providence Through Precept
Ecclesiastes:	The Folly of Forgetting God	Verity Through Vanity
Song of Solomon:	The Art of Adoration	Bliss Through Union

Some Bible students see an overall progression of teaching in the group of five books. Do you observe any progression?

Refer to [Chart 3](#) and observe at the bottom of the chart the period during which the poetical books were written.

## II BACKGROUND OF JOB

### A. THE MAN JOB

1. *Name.* There are two possible literal meanings of the name Job. If the name's origin is in the Arabic language, it means "one who turns back" (i.e., repents). If its origin is Hebrew, it means "the hated

(persecuted) one.” It is interesting that both of these meanings are reflected in experiences of Job as recorded in the book bearing his name.

2. *Biography and descriptions.* Job was a real person, not a fictitious character, as some critics contend. Read Ezekiel 14:14-20 and James 5:11 for clear evidence of this. Listed below are a few things known about this man.

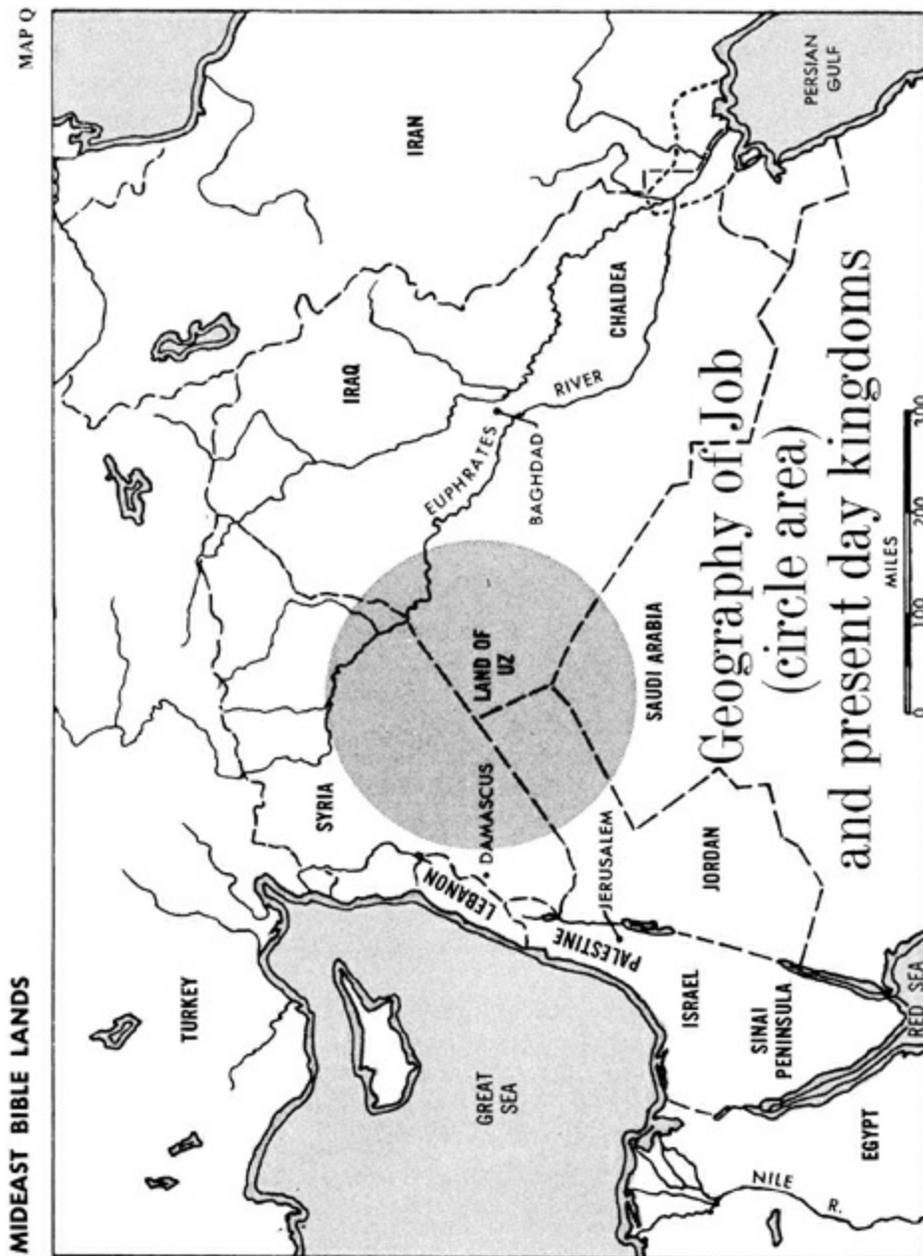
a) Job was a native of the land of Uz (1:1). This region was somewhere northeast of Palestine, near desert land (1:19), probably between the city of Damascus and the Euphrates River. This would place the region near the boundary lines of present-day Iraq and Saudi Arabia (see [Map Q](#)). Read 1:3 and note that Job was from an area called “the east.”

b) Job probably lived before or around the

time of Abraham. This is partly indicated by the fact that the book of Job does not mention any Israelite covenant relationship with God, which is the core of Hebrew history from the call of Abraham (Gen 12) onward.¹⁰ Also, thereafter is no reference to Hebrew institutions (e.g., the Law). The family-altar worship of 1:5 was before or outside the Mosaic-type worship, with its priests.¹¹ Based on the above observations, the man Job lived sometime between the tower of Babel event and the call of Abraham, or shortly thereafter.¹² Read Genesis 11:9—12:1 to fix this chronological setting in your mind. Then read the words of God in Job 39 and note the different kinds of animals, including the horse, with which Job was familiar. Man's habitat has not changed radically during the long course of world history!

c) Some have suggested that Job was as old

as sixty when the experiences of the book took place. Whatever his age, we know nothing of his earlier life. Questions which remain unanswered include: Who were his parents? From whom did he first learn about God? How widespread was his witness for God?



d) Job was very wealthy (read 1:3,10). He and his sons were homeowners in a large city of the region (cf. 1:4; 29:7). (The ruins of over three hundred ancient cities in the area of Uz have been discovered by archaeologists, indicating a very active civilization in this region in those early days.)

e) He was a respected and popular judge and benefactor of his fellow citizens (29:7-25).

f) He was a righteous man in God's eyes (read 1:1,5,8; cf. also Ezek 14:14-20 and James 5:11). What does the last phrase of Job 1:5 suggest about his relationship to God?

g) He lived to a very old age. If Job was as old as sixty when he was first tested (chap. 1), then he was at least two hundred years old when he died (42:16-17). Compare this

with the longevities of the people listed in Genesis 11:10-26 (cf. also Gen 25:7).

As you survey the book of Job and read the Bible text, you will become better acquainted with Job as a person.

## B. THE BOOK OF JOB

*1. Title.* The book is named for its main character, not for its author. The book of Ruth is another example of a writing so named.

*2. Author and date.* The human author is anonymous, and the date of writing uncertain.¹³ Such is the case for many Bible books. Among those suggested as writer are Moses, Solomon, a contemporary of Solomon's (cf. 1 Kings 4:29-34), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, a prophet of the captivity, and Job. Most scholars are agreed that the author lived at a time later than Abraham and Moses. If he was a contemporary of

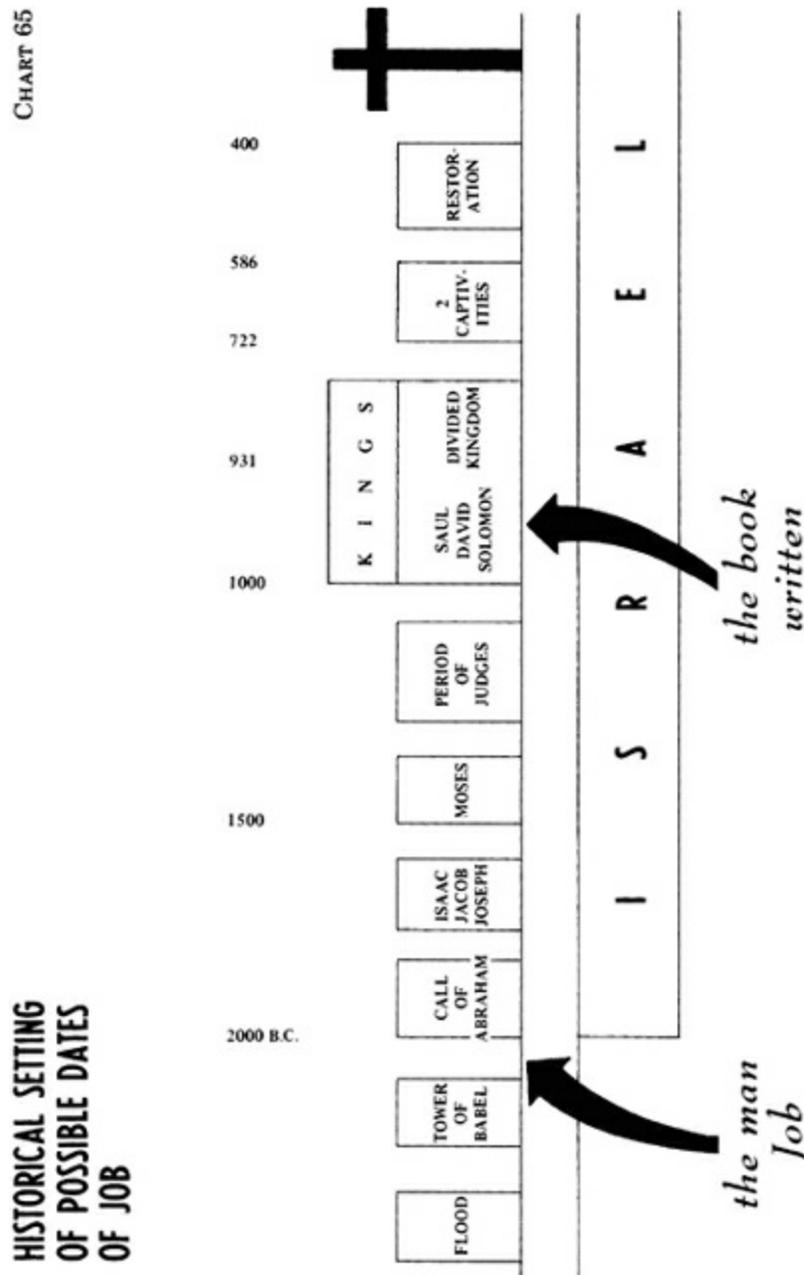
Solomon, an approximate date of writing would be 950 B.C. One writer supports an early date before the prophets and before exile.

The grandeur and spontaneity of the book and its deeply empathic recreation of the sentiments of men standing early in the progress of revelation point to the early pre-Exilic period, before the doctrinal, especially the eschatological, contribution of the prophets.¹⁴

**Chart 65** shows the historical setting of possible dates involving the man Job and the book written about him.

The book's authority and dependability rest not on the human aspect of its authorship, but on divine revelation. Only God could reveal such things as the conversation between Himself and Satan,

recorded in chapters 1-2.



3. *Purposes.* Job is a book about a physical and spiritual experience of an ancient patriarch whose faith was tested to the uttermost. Its main purposes are not to teach Israelite history, Messianic prophecy, the

ABC's of how to be saved, or the mission of the Church. These are the big tasks of other parts of Scripture. The underlying purposes of Job are the following:

- a) To reveal who God is.
- b) To show the kind of trust He wants His children to have. (For example, trust God even though you cannot fully account for your circumstances.)  
Approval by God means “tried and found true” (cf. Rom 16:10, Berkeley).
- c) To reveal His favor toward His children and His absolute control over Satan.
- d) To answer man's questions about why a righteous person may suffer while an evil man may be healthy and prosperous. The fourth purpose (d) above) is placed last because, although the book's entire story is about this problem of pain, the answer to the problem is found in the

areas of the first three statements. Stated simply, *who God is* determines *what He does*; therefore, we must *trust Him without reservation*.

4. *Doctrinal content.* The book of Job makes reference, directly or indirectly, to most of the key doctrines of the Bible. Subjects for which the book is particularly known are:

a) Doctrine of God.

b) Doctrine of man.

c) Nature. Many references to God's creation appear throughout the book. Included are such astronomical facts as:

names of stars and constellations (38:31-32)

suspension of the earth in space (26:7)

the earth as a sphere (22:14, margin)

(Scan chaps. 38 and 39, which are filled with similar references.)

- d) Satan.
- e) Sin and righteousness.
- f) Affliction, discipline, and blessing.
- g) Justice.
- h) Faith.

In your survey study you will be observing these and other doctrines. Does it surprise you that such a great variety of truth was revealed to men of God even before the Scriptures began to be recorded?

*5. Style.* As noted earlier in this chapter, Job is classified as dramatic poetry. The book is recognized even in the secular world of literature as the most magnificent dramatic poem ever written. Thomas Carlyle wrote, “There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit.”

Since poetry is the language of the heart,

Job reveals the innermost thoughts of men more so than their outward deeds. The poetry section of the book (3:1—42:6) uses the poetic structure of parallelism in its arrangement of lines. Recall the three main kinds of parallelism. Then read each of the examples from Job cited below.

a) synonymous (4:9)

b) antithetic (16:20)

c) synthetic (4:19-21)

In drama, not everything spoken by the actors is necessarily true. This is so in the book of Job, where, for example, Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, give their own interpretations of Job's afflictions, and are later rebuked by God for not speaking "what is right" (42:7). (The speeches of Job's three friends take up nine chapters of the book.)

*6. Relation to other books of the Bible. As*

noted earlier, all the books before Job, from Genesis to Esther, are for the most part historical in nature. If Job lived before or outside the Abrahamic setting, an interesting comparison may be made between the poetical and historical books. This is shown on [Chart 66](#).

The book of Job is intimately related to the New Testament, even though it is explicitly quoted only once by a New Testament book (1 Cor 3:19, quoting Job 5:13). The problems and questions of the man Job are answered completely and perfectly in Christ. It should be very clear why Christ's ministry is the culmination and interpretation of all Old Testament history. E. Hevenor relates this book to Christ's ministry correctly:

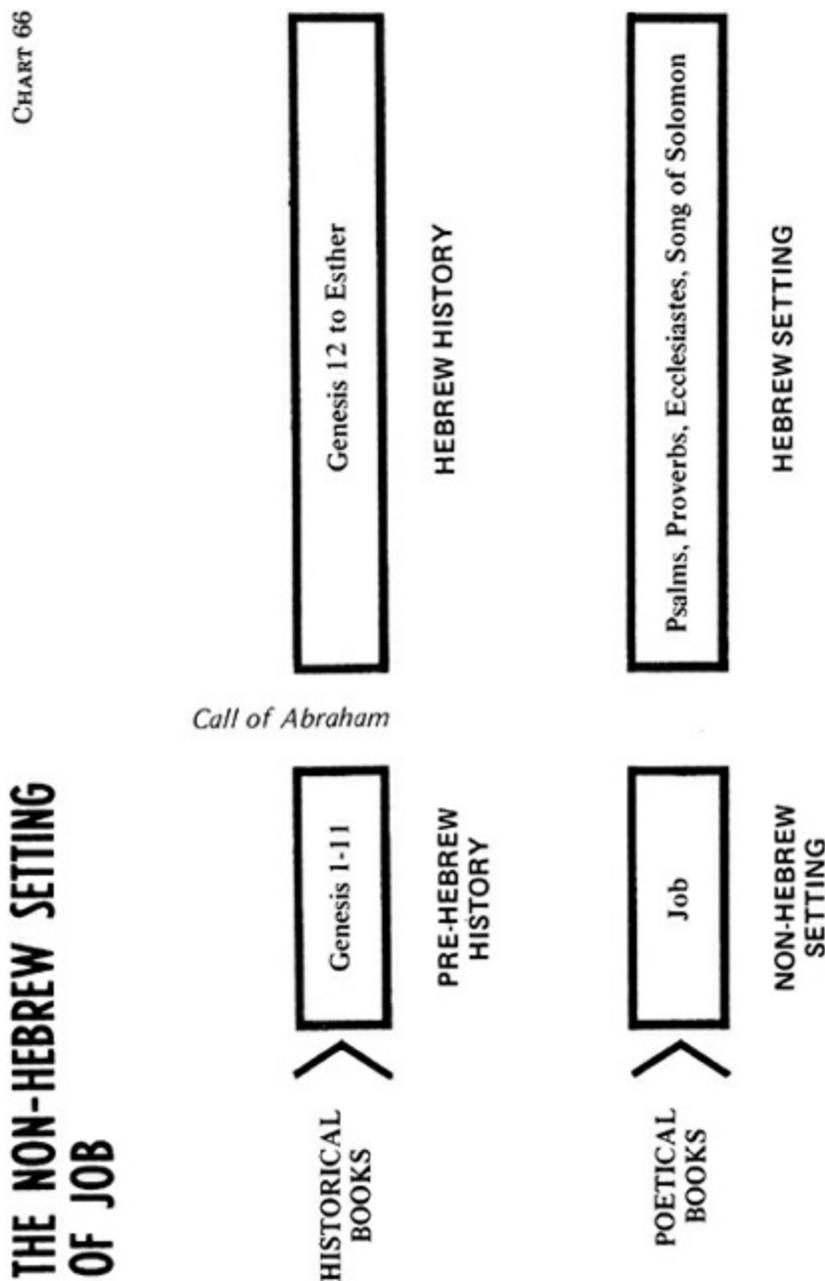
Like the other books of the Old Testament Job is forward-looking to

Christ. Questions are raised, great sobs of agony are heard, which Jesus alone can answer. The book takes its place in the testimony of the ages that there is a blank in the human heart which Jesus alone can fill.¹⁵

Were it not for the atoning work of Christ neither the faith of Job nor that of any other Old Testament saint would have availed to bring them into the heavenly city, written about in Hebrews.

These men of faith I have mentioned died without ever receiving all that God had promised them; but they saw it all awaiting them on ahead and were glad, for they agreed that this earth was not their real home but that they were just strangers visiting down here. And quite obviously when they talked like that, they were looking forward to their real home in heaven.... And now

God is not ashamed to be called their God, for *he has made a heavenly city for them* (Heb 11:13-16, TLB, italics added).



### C. THE MAIN CHARACTERS OF JOB

The book's five main characters are Elihu,

Job, and Job's three friends: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Read 2:11-13 and 32:1-5 for a brief introduction to these men. Since they are key characters in most of the book's drama, it would be helpful now to learn more about them and their views on life before surveying the book. Study the following descriptions and refer back to them during the course of your studies.¹⁶ Enlarge or revise the descriptions along the way.

### *1. Eliphaz.*

- a) Two possible meanings of the name: "God is fine gold"; or "God is dispenser."
- b) Native of Teman (2:11), a city of Edom, southeast of Palestine, which was traditionally famous for its wise men (Jer 49:7).
- c) The leading spokesman of the three friends.

- d) The “scientist” of the group; his speeches show clearer reasoning and more considerate criticism than those of the other two friends.
- e) Noble, sincere, wise, courtly.
- f) Two of his main contentions: God is perfectly pure and righteous; and, man brings trouble on himself (see 5:7).

## *2. Bildad.*

- a) Name means “Son of contention.”
- b) Native of Shuah (Sukhu of the Euphrates region?) (2:11).
- c) A traditionalist (cf. 8:8-10); more argumentative than Eliphaz.
- d) Charged Job with godlessness (8:13).
- e) One of his main contentions: God never twists justice (see 8:3).

## *3. Zophar.*

- a) Name means “hairy,” or “rough.”
- b) Native of Naamah, or Naamath (2:11), probably of North Arabia.
- c) Possibly the oldest of the three friends.¹⁷
- d) A dogmatist and moralist; blunt; sometimes displayed a holier than-thou attitude
- e) Charged Job with boasting (11:2-6).
- f) One of his main contentions: God knows iniquity when He sees it (see 11:11).

#### *4. Elihu.*

- a) Name means “He is my God.”
- b) Native of Buz (possibly of Arabia or Syria).
- c) The youngest of the four men, not an intimate companion of Job’s three friends.
- d) One of his main contentions: God is good

(see 33:24). Of the four men, Elihu gave the best diagnosis of Job's plight, saying that sufferings are often God's way of refining the righteous. He did not go far enough in his diagnosis, however.

### **III. SURVEY**

The book of Job is a good example of the necessity of making an overview of the text in general before analyzing its small parts. For example, we might read one of the speeches of Job's three friends and reach very wrong conclusions if we did not first relate the speech to the total story, which includes how Job's plight originated (chaps. 1-2), and what God thought of the three friends' interpretations (e.g., 42:7).

#### **A. A FIRST SCANNING**

1. How many chapters are there in the book?

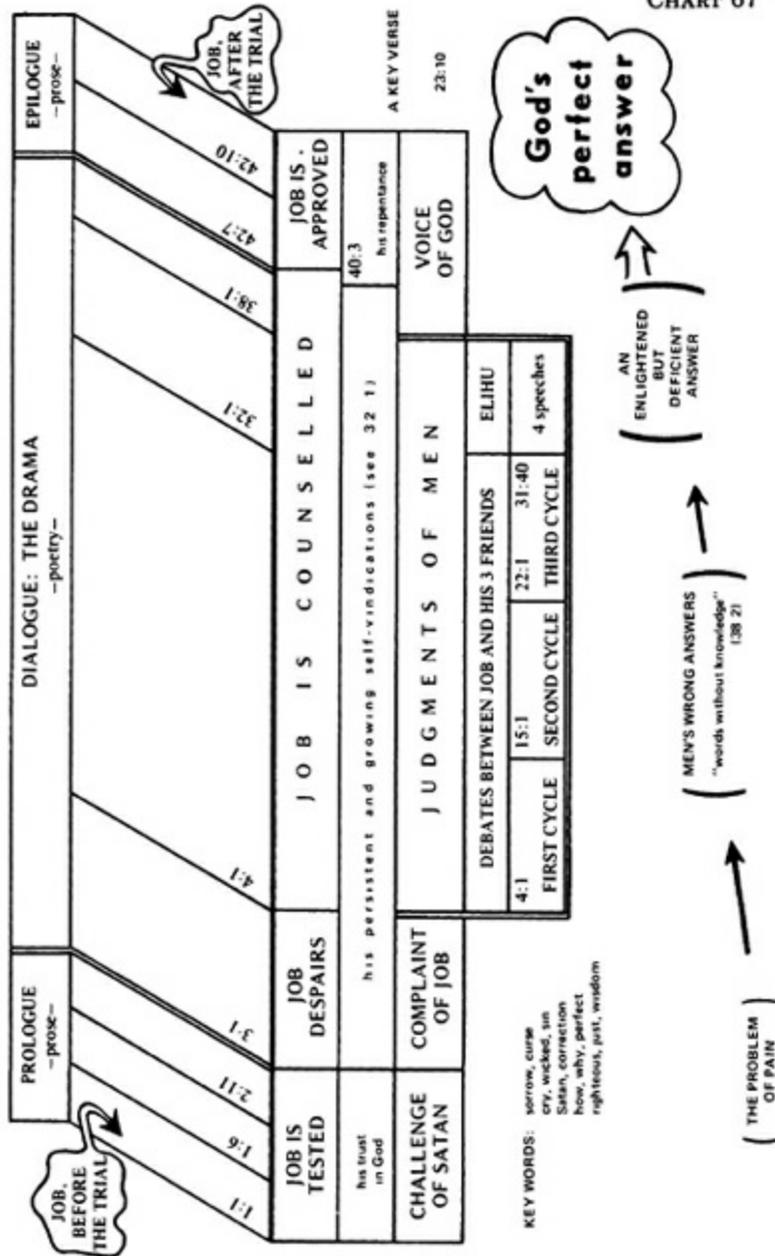
2. Scan the opening phrases of the chapters. Would you say the book is mainly action, or mainly discourse? Where in the book do the speeches begin, and where do they end?¹⁸

## B. CHAPTER CONTENT

Now scan the book again, and identify more specifically the content of each of the chapters. For the speeches (3:1—42:6) you need now only note who the speakers are. Sometimes a speech covers more than one chapter (e.g., Eliphaz's speech of chaps. 4-5). Only two chapters of the poetry section contain speeches that are shorter than a full chapter (see chaps. 40, 42). Record the speakers of each chapter on a work sheet that has four columns under the names of Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

Read each of the following sections, and record the theme of each on paper:

# JOB KNOWING GOD BETTER THROUGH ADVERSITY



1:1—2:13	4:1—14:22	38:1—42:6
	15:1—21:34	
3:1-26	22:1—31:40	42:7-17
	32:1—37:24	

The first three passages of the middle column (above) represent the debates between Job and his three friends. The

speeches of Elihu are recorded in 32:1—37:24.

### C. SURVEY CHART

**Chart 67** is a survey chart of Job, showing the book's organization by various outlines. Refer to this chart as you make the following observations and complete the study suggestions:

1. Note how the book opens (“Job Before the Trial”), and how it closes (“Job After the Trial”). Read the passages involved.
2. Observe the three-part outline of style at the top of the chart.
3. Study the outlines shown below the base line. Check out these outlines with the results of your own survey study. You may need to scan the biblical text at some places to verify an outline. Justify the location of main divisions at 38:1; 40:3; and 42:7.

4. What is the basis for dividing the controversies of chapters 4-31 into three cycles? (Refer back to your work sheet, showing the alternations of speakers in the dialogues.)

5. Observe the progression at the bottom of the chart, beginning with “The Problem of Pain.”

6. Read these other choice passages of Job at this time: 1:21; 5:17; 14:14; 16:21; 19:23-27; 26:7-14; 28:12-28; 42:1-6.

7. You may wonder why such a large portion of the book is devoted to the wrong diagnoses and arguments of Job’s three friends. If their main charge was that Job’s suffering was caused by his personal sins, do you suppose their own security was imperiled by the possibility of the same kind of suffering befalling them? If so, does this partly explain their persistence in dealing

with Job?

## IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

Of the many important subjects of the book of Job, three are especially prominent: Satan, the problem of pain, and genuine trust.

### A. SATAN

Much can be learned about Satan from the book of Job. For example, Satan is not a name representing impersonal evil; Satan is the personal enemy of God and His children. The persons and events of the narrative of Job are real persons and actual events. “There was a man.... There was a day.... Then Satan ... smote Job” (1:1, 6; 2:7). This is precise, genuine history. And, lest one think that Satan is no longer active in accusing the children of God, the last book of the Bible reveals the sober truth of

Satan's continuing work until end times: "The accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night" (Rev 12:10; cf. 1 Pet 5:8).

Satan first appears in the story of man in the Garden of Eden. Recall the account of his beguiling Adam and Eve (Gen 3:1-7). The text refers to him as "the serpent." How do you know that this was Satan? (Cf. Rev 12:9.) Why is Satan antihumankind? Note that the name *Satan* literally means "adversary." Of its nineteen appearances in the Old Testament, fourteen are in Job. The name *devil* means "slanderer," and is found only in the New Testament (sixty times).

## B. THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

The book of Job is the Bible's fullest treatment of this vexing problem. The summary given below shows how the book

opens with the problem and concludes with the solution.

1. The Problem of Pain: Why do the righteous suffer, and the wicked prosper?
2. The Wrong Answer of Job's Three Friends: Suffering is God's judgment for sin.
3. The enlightened answer of Elihu: Suffering is God's way to teach, discipline, and refine.
4. God's perfect answer: Suffering is a test of trusting God for who He is, not for what He does.

### C. GENUINE TRUST

The book of Job teaches that the person with genuine trust worships God basically for *who* He is. That person may have unanswered questions as to why God does

what He does, but he still worships God wholeheartedly for who He is. Job the combatant became Job the worshiper when he heard God reveal Himself to His smitten child (38:1 ff.). E. Hevenor writes: “The Word came through a fresh vision of God... That Word brought a transformation which the word of man had been totally unable to achieve.... The Word convinced Job that he could trust such a God.”¹⁹

## V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

Some of the main key words of Job are: sorrow, curse, cry, wicked, sin, Satan, how, why, perfect, righteous, just, and wisdom. Read 23:10 as a key verse of the book. Choose others from the Bible text.

## VI. APPLICATIONS

1. What do you think are God’s purposes

in permitting Satan to exercise certain powers, limited though these powers may be?

2. If Satan is the Christian's active archenemy, what help does the child of God have in such a daily warfare? Does the book of Job give any answers? Read what the New Testament teaches in Luke 22:31-32 and 1 Peter 5:6-11.

3. Does all suffering of believers originate the way Job's did? What answers to this question do the following passages give: Psalm 66:10; John 9:1-3; Philippians 3:8; Hebrews 2:18; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:21; 3:18; 4:12-14; 5:10?

4. How is a believer's suffering related to Christ's suffering, according to these verses: 2 Corinthians 1:5-7; Philippians 3:10-11; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 4:13; 5:1?

5. How would you answer the following

challenge of an unbeliever concerning the problem of pain:

If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both.²⁰

6. What is the connection, if any, between physical sickness and sin?

7. Some of Job's words reveal the depths of despondency to which a child of God may sometimes fall. What preventives from this mood of despair does the Christian have today? What antidotes for despair does the believer have?

8. "Neither is there any daysman [umpire, arbiter, mediator] betwixt us, that might lay

his hand upon us both” (Job 9:33, KJV). This was Job’s cry for firsthand contact with God. In what ways is Jesus, as Mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5), the answer to man’s needs?

9. The balance of justice will come to rest in eternity. To what extent does retribution for sin fall in this life?

10. Some Christians experience trial over such a long period of time that they begin to wonder if God is even aware of their plight. Where can they find help?

11. What does the book of Job teach about the ministry of comforting others?

12. Why must God reveal Himself to man if man is to know truly who He is? (Read John 14:9.) In what sense is Jesus the revelation of God the Father?

13. Read Job 23:14. In what ways is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God

encouraging to Christians?

14. Bildad's last words (Job 25) are fatalistic, leaving man without hope. How do God's love and the cross of Calvary shed light on such hopelessness?

15. What are some of the good fruits of God's chastening His children? (Cf. 33:19-30.)

16. Many people deny the truth of 34:12, and accuse God of injustice and coldness for allowing such catastrophes as the drowning of whole villages by a tidal wave. What are your thoughts about this?

17. What is genuine confession of sin? What is the place of such confession in the heart of a Christian?

18. Apply Hebrews 11:6 to the trying experience of suffering. Observe the references to physical suffering in Hebrews 11.

19. Why is revelation from God, such as the Holy Scriptures, a necessary ingredient of Christian counseling?

20. Read James 5:11 and 1:12 in the light of the book of Job. What do the verses teach?

## VII. FURTHER STUDY

1. Extend your study of the Bible's teachings about Satan by reading the various passages listed in *Unger's Bible Handbook*, pages 520-21.

2. Read C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*.

## VIII. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 418-23; 438-49.

Manley, G. T. *The New Bible Handbook*, pp. 186-91.

Purkiser, W. T. *Exploring the Old Testament*, pp. 209-14; 238-49.

Schultz, Samuel J. *The Old Testament Speaks*, pp. 279-85.

Young, Edward J. *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 281-86; 309-21.

#### COMMENTARIES

Delitzsch, F. *The Book of Job*, vols. 1, 2.

Heavenor, E. S. P. "Job." In *The New Bible Commentary*.

Kline, Meredith G. "Job." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

Morgan, G. Campbell. "The Book of Job." In *The Analyzed Bible*.

Zoeckler, Otto. "Job." In Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*.

#### OTHER SOURCES

Blair, J. Allen. *Living Patiently*.

Lewis, C. S. *The Problem of Pain*.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Answers of Jesus to Job*.

Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Handbook*.

2. In ancient times the Jews regarded Job, Proverbs, and Psalms as the *major* poetical names. They called them *Books of 'Emeth* ("Truth"), the word '*emeth* representing the first letters of the names of each of the three books '*ioy* (Job), *meshallim* (Proverbs), and *tehillim* (Psalms).

3. J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, 3:11.

4. W. T. Purkiser, *Exploring the Old Testament*, pp. 213-14.

5. A few passages reflect something of rhyme in Hebrew (e.g., Job 10:9-18; Psalm

6. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase which ordinarily means one thing is used of another thing in order to suggest

a likeness between the two (e.g., “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf.” Gen 49:27). An antithesis is a contrast of ideas (e.g., Psalm 1:6).

7. See Purkiser, pp. 211-13, for descriptions of other types of parallelism.

8. The list is from Baxter, 3:10.

9. The middle list is from John Phillips, *Exploring the Scriptures*, p. 98; the right-hand list is from Baxter, 3:13. Used by permission.

10. If Job was a contemporary of Abraham, or lived after him, then he was a believer outside the covenant family of Israel (cf. Acts 14:17).

11. The “burnt offerings” of 1:5 are not Levitical offerings, according to this view.

12. References to a Job as early as 2000 B.C. appear in extrabiblical texts. The footnote of the Berkeley Version at 42:16-17 reads, “His many years [140] suggest the period of Abraham.”

13. This open question of human authorship and date does not limit one’s study of this remarkable book of the Old Testament.

14. Meredith G. Kline, "Job," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 460.

15. E. Heavener, "Job," in *The New Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., p. 422.

16. This procedure is deductive in nature. If one followed the inductive approach here, he would arrive at character descriptions of the men *after* he had completed studying the Bible text.

17. Some feel that Eliphaz was the oldest of the three men, for which Oriental courtesy gave him the right to speak first in a group. than-thou attitude.

18. The format of such versions as the *New American Standard Bible* is excellent for a study of a book like Job. The prose (narrative) is printed in the usual style, and the speeches, which are dramatic poetry, are printed in stanzas made up of single lines.

19. Heavener, pp. 442-43.

20. See C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, pp.

14 ff., for answers to this challenge.

***Psalms: “Bless the Lord, O My Soul”***

Psalms is one of the most practical books of the Bible, wondrously suited to the human heart. It is especially dear to every child of God, perhaps because there is no experience of the believer which does not find its counterpart in the Psalms. Someone, in speaking of the whole Bible as “the Temple of Truth” and the different books as different rooms of that temple, has called Psalms “The Music Room.” It is filled with heavenly music suited to man’s every experience. Here the Holy Spirit sweeps every chord of human nature: from the low, wailing note of Psalm 51, to the high, exultant note of Psalm 24. That Psalms was a favorite book of the first-century believers

is shown by the fact that of the New Testament's 283 direct quotations from the Old Testament, 116 are from Psalms.

## I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

1. Be acquainted with the various literary devices used by the authors of poetic writing. Some of the main ones are:

- a) Simile: comparison of two things, usually employing the words *as* or *like* (e.g., "He will be like a tree," Psalm 1:3).
- b) Metaphor: comparison of two things without using the words *as* or *like* (e.g., "The LORD is a sun and shield," Psalm 84:11).
- c) Hyperbole: exaggeration for effect (e.g., "Every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my couch with my tears," Psalm 6:6).
- d) Personification: applying personality

traits to inanimate objects (e.g., “All my bones will say, ‘Lord, who is like Thee,’” Psalm 35:10).

e) Apostrophe: addressing inanimate things (e.g., “What ails you, O sea, that you flee?” Psalm 114:5).

f) Synecdoche: representing the whole by a part, or a part by the whole (e.g., “the arrow that flies by day,” Psalm 91:5).

2. Praise and prayer are keynotes of the psalms. Before surveying the book, think much about what is genuine praise and what is genuine prayer.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. NAME**

When the individual lyrics of David and the other authors were brought together as one anthology, possibly as early as 500 B.C., the Hebrew title given to the anthology was

*Tehillim*, meaning “praise songs.” The Greek Septuagint translators gave the title *Psalmoi*, meaning “songs to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument,” and this was the Greek title used in the days of Jesus (read Acts 1:20). Thus, our English title *Psalms* is really an ancient title, even in pronunciation. The term *Psalter*, by which this book is sometimes called, is derived almost letter for letter from the Greek word for “stringed instrument.”

## **B. PLACE IN THE BIBLE**

In the Hebrew Scriptures the scroll of Psalms appeared at the beginning of the third division called “Writings.” (Recall the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible as Law, Prophets, and Writings; cf. Luke 24:44.) As such, this collection of sacred songs was the inspired prayer and praise book of the nation of Israel. In the fourfold grouping of

books in our English Bibles (Law, history, poetry, prophets), the book of Psalms is the second book of the third division.

### C. AUTHORS

The book of Psalms is commonly spoken of as David's because he wrote the larger number of individual psalms (seventy-three are ascribed to him in their titles).¹ He was known as "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam 23:1), and had an extraordinary combination of talents. On one occasion he was referred to as being "a skillful musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man; and the LORD is with him" (1 Sam 16:18; cf. 2 Sam 6:5, 15; 1 Chron 16:4-5; 2 Chron 7:6; 29:25; Amos 6:5).

Twenty-seven psalms are ascribed to authors other than David. They are descendants of Korah, ten; Asaph, twelve;

Solomon, two; Ethan, one; Heman, one; and Moses, one.

Fifty psalms are anonymous. However, there is reason to believe that some of these were written by David. For example, Psalm 2 is ascribed to David in Acts 4:25. And Psalm 1 seems to be by the same author. Also compare 1 Chronicles 16:7-22 with Psalm 105 and 1 Chronicles 16:23-36 with Psalm 96.

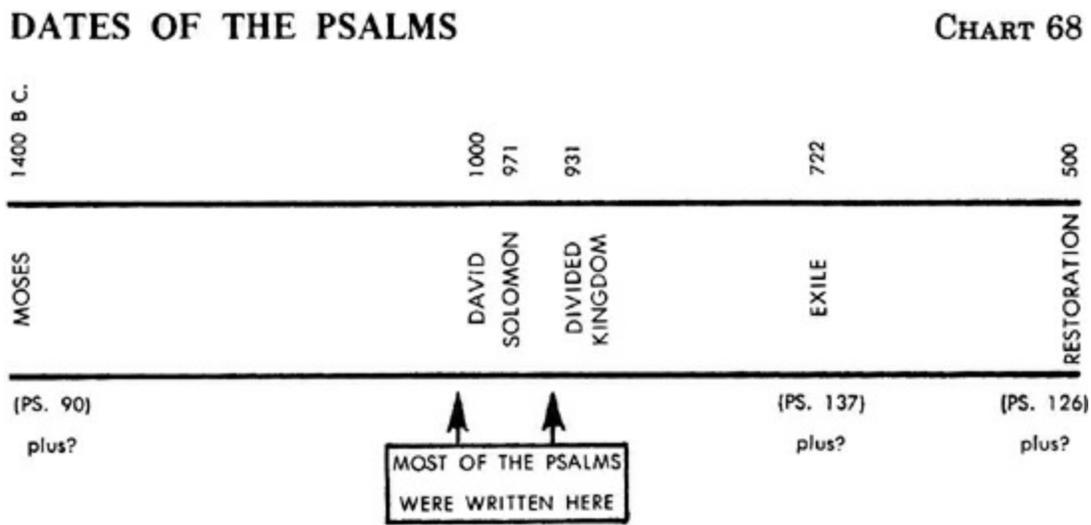
David also arranged the Temple service of song (1 Chron 25), probably writing much of its music.

See [Chart 70](#) for the general identification of authors of each group of psalms.

#### D. DATES

On the basis of authorship and historical references of some of the psalms, we may conclude that most of the psalms were written over a period of about five hundred

years, between 1000 and 500 B.C., as shown by [Chart 68](#).



See [Chart 70](#) for a suggestion as to how the groups of psalms were collected into one unit during Old Testament times. Actually, very little is known-about the facts (who, when, why, and so forth) of this collection process.²

## E. TYPES

Because many subjects are treated by the psalms, they have a wide application. The psalmist may be reviewing the past (history);³ envisioning the future

(prophecy); or reflecting the present (experience). In all of the psalms the writer is responding to the very real fact of a living God and His relation to men. Thus, it is not surprising to find that the outstanding subjects of the psalms have to do with God: the person of God, the Son of God, the Word of God, the works of God, and the people of God.

When classified more specifically as to subject matter and attitude of writing, many types emerge. These are the major types:⁴

1. *Didactic.* (E.g., Psalms 1,5,7,15,17,50,73,94,101.) Such psalms might be called psalms of formal instruction.

2. *History.* (E.g., Psalms 78,105,106,136.) These psalms are almost wholly composed of references to historical events of the nation of Israel. A summary of the highlights of practically all of Israel's history is given in

the historical psalms. References to historical events appear frequently throughout the book of Psalms.

3. *Hallelujah*. (E.g., Psalms 106,111-13, 115-17, 135, 146-50.) The theme of praise in these psalms is obvious.

4. *Penitential*. (E.g., Psalms 6,32,38,51,102,130,143.) Confession of sin occupies the greater part of each of these. Psalm 51 is the classic example of this type of psalm.

5. *Supplication*. (E.g., Psalm 86.) The psalmist cries to God in his own need, or he intercedes for another's need.

6. *Thanksgiving*. (E.g., Psalms 16,18.) The note of praise and thanksgiving pervades the whole book of Psalms, but some individual psalms are particularly thanksgiving psalms.

7. *Messianic*. (E.g., Psalms 2, 20-24, 41,68,118.) There is a strong prophetic

character of the Psalms. Many of the hymns prophesy the suffering and sorrows of God's people, Israel, and their coming deliverance, restoration, and blessing in a future glorious Kingdom. But, most of all, they prophesy of Christ in His two advents: His first advent in humiliation, and His second advent in glory. Such psalms are called Messianic psalms. Some of the Old Testament's most minute prophecies of Christ are found here. They are about His person (God and man); His character (righteous and holy); His work (death and resurrection); and His offices (priest, judge, and king).

8. *Nature.* (E.g., Psalms 8,19,29,33,65,104.) God's handiwork is an inspiring subject for any poetical writing.

9. *Pilgrim.* (E.g., Psalms 120-34.) This group of psalms, each bearing the title "Song of Degrees," was probably a

hymnbook used by the Jews on their pilgrimage up to the Temple on the occasions of the national feasts.

10. *Imprecatory.* (E.g., Psalms 35,52,58,59,69,83,109,137,140.) The imprecatory (cursing) passages of these psalms are generally looked upon with a great deal of perplexity. Many cannot understand how such utterances could be acceptable to God. The problem is answered when one recognizes the age and the setting of their writing. Gleason L. Archer writes:

It is important to realize that prior to the first advent of Christ, the only tangible way in which the truth of the Scripture could be demonstrated to human observers was by the pragmatic test of disaster befalling those who were in error and deliverance being granted to those who held to the truth. As long as the wicked continued to

triumph, their prosperity seemed to refute the holiness and sovereignty of the God of Israel. A Hebrew believer in the Old Testament age could only chafe in deep affliction of soul as long as such a state of affairs continued. Identifying himself completely with God's cause, he could only regard God's enemies as his own, and implore God to uphold His own honor and justify His own righteousness by inflicting a crushing destruction upon those who either in theory or in practice denied His sovereignty and His law.⁵

### **III. SURVEY**

1. Study the survey [Chart 70](#), and observe that the 150 psalms are divided into five groups. These divisions date back to ancient times. We do not know the original reasons for identifying groups as such. Some think

that each group was compared with each book of the Pentateuch. (See those comparisons on the chart.) The old rabbis are known to have called Psalms the “Pentateuch of David.” There is no clear-cut topical outline of these five parts of the book of Psalms.⁶

2. Note on the chart that each of the five groups of Psalms ends with a doxology. Read and compare the doxologies. G. Campbell Morgan sees these as the clue to the content of each of the five divisions. He says that an examination of the doxologies “will reveal a certain conception of God, and an attitude of the soul in worship resulting from such conception.”⁷ His outline centered on “worship” is shown on the chart.

3. Scan the book of Psalms and observe that most of the psalms have superscriptions

—sometimes referred to as titles.⁸ (Note: Do not confuse the ancient superscription with titles assigned by the publisher. For example, the superscription of Psalm 14 is “For the choir director. *A Psalm* of David.” The title assigned by the NASB editors is “Folly and Wickedness of Men.”) These were not part of the original psalms, but were added later, probably at least before 200 B.C. In the superscription are words indicating such things as (1) occasion of the psalm;⁹ (2) type of psalm (e.g., *tepillah*, “prayer”); and (3) musical instructions (e.g., *lammenasseah*, “to the choir leader”). The superscriptions do not have the weight of dependability as does the inspired biblical text itself, but the best rule of thumb is to accept them as they stand.¹⁰

4. Scan each psalm individually, reading the first line of each stanza of each psalm. This can be done in a short time if you are

using a version (such as NASB) which clearly shows the stanza divisions. Such an exercise will help you get the overall *feel* of the book of Psalms. It will also help you identify whether the psalm is a meditation, a prayer, a hymn of praise, or a prophecy.

5. Read the *New American Standard Bible* titles printed at the top of the psalms. List these on paper. Then study the list from the standpoint of subject matter (content). Among other things, look for groups of psalms, contentwise. Compare your studies with the two outlines on [Chart 70](#) about “Worship” and “Topical Likeness to Pentateuch.” Try making your own five-point outline of the Psalms, identifying content at least in a general way.

6. Compare the first and last psalms. How does each serve as the book’s introduction and conclusion, respectively?

## IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

### A. DAVID

David, who wrote so many of the psalms, has given the reader an insight into the rich and varied experiences of his life with God, to the extent that no other writer has done. Anyone familiar with David's life cannot fail to be struck with this fact. He was, at different times in his life, a humble shepherd boy, a servant in the king's palace, a successful warrior, a fugitive, a great king, an exile, an old man. He was sometimes poor and sometimes rich, sometimes hated and sometimes beloved, sometimes persecuted and sometimes honored, sometimes obscure and sometimes prominent, sometimes profligate and sometimes penitent, sometimes sad and sometimes joyful. But in all these varied experiences, and under all these changing

circumstances, David talked to God, pouring forth his heart, his thoughts, his feelings to his Maker. David's utterances to God at these times are recorded in the psalms, and, as the psalms are inspired by the Holy Spirit, they show us what kind of talking to God and what kind of heart attitude is acceptable to Him when we, too, pass through similar experiences.

## B. NAMES OF GOD

God Himself is the key Person of the Psalms, for without Him there could be no song at all. In studying the different psalms, it is always interesting to observe how God is identified, whether by name, attribute, or action ascribed to Him.

Four names of God are prominent in Psalms: *El*, *Adonai*, *Jehovah*, and *Shaddai*. The meanings of the names, and the frequency of each in the five books of the

Psalms, are tabulated in [Chart 69.11](#)

NAMES OF GOD IN THE PSALMS

CHART 69

HEBREW NAME ¹²	KING JAMES TRANSLATION	MEANING	BOOK I 1-41	BOOK II 42-72	BOOK III 73-89	BOOK IV 90-106	BOOK V 107-50
EI 13	God	Almighty One	67	207	85	32	41
Adonai	Lord	Sovereign Lord	13	19	15	2	12
Jehovah	Lord	Covenant Maker and Fulfiller	277	31	43	101	226
Shaddai	Almighty	Provider; Blessor		1	1	1	

1213

### C. WORSHIP AND PRAISE

Many of the psalms are about Mount Zion, its sanctuary, and worship by God's people. Beginning at Psalm 90, most of the hymns are of a liturgical nature, associated with public worship. It is not difficult to see why Psalms is sometimes called the hymnbook of Scripture. Praise is the dominant note of these psalms. The last five psalms (Psalms 146-50) are the climactic group, and are appropriately called "The Great Hallel," or "The Hallelujah Chorus." This is what C.H. Spurgeon writes of Psalm 150:

We have now reached the last summit of the mountain chain of Psalms. It rises high into the clear azure, and its brow is bathed in the sunlight of the eternal world of worship. It is a rapture. The poet-prophet is full of inspiration and enthusiasm. He stays not to argue, to teach, to explain; but cries with burning words, “Praise him, Praise him, Praise ye the Lord.”¹⁴

#### D. SIN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Since man’s worship of God is a prominent theme in the Psalms, the spiritual conditions for such access to a holy God are referred to throughout the book. Psalm 1, which in many ways introduces the whole book of Psalms, clearly distinguishes between the righteous man and the wicked man. The righteous man fellowships with God; sin is a wall that separates sinful man from God. Scroggie compares this subject with just one

part of the New Testament when he says, “Scarcely less distinct in the Psalms than in the Johannine Writings is the clean-cut distinction between sin and righteousness, the wicked and the righteous.”¹⁵ The prominence of this subject in Psalms is supported by the repetition of such words as these:

“righteous” and “righteousness”—over 130 times

“sin” and “iniquity”—at least 65 times¹⁶

“good” and “evil”—about 40 times each

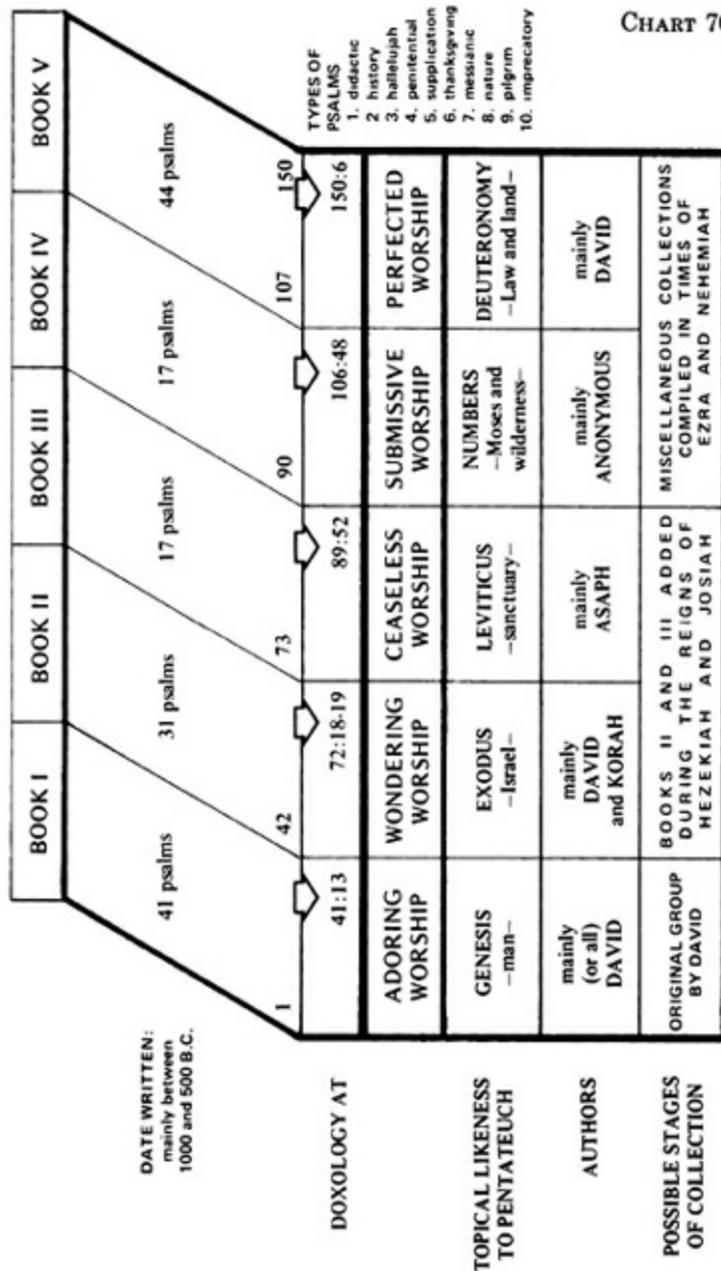
“judgment” and its cognates—more than 100 times

#### **E. PROPHECIES OF CHRIST**

As noted earlier, the Messianic psalms prophesy about the person and work of Christ. In many ways the prophecies supplement what the New Testament

records about Christ. For example, we read in Matthew 27:35-36 that men nailed Jesus to the cross; that they parted His garments among them and cast lots over His vesture; that they sat around the cross and watched His sufferings. The gospels also record a few words which Jesus spoke at this time. But they do not reveal much of the thoughts and feelings of Jesus. It is Psalm 22 that affords us the experience of listening to Jesus communing with His Father in that dread hour. See the NASB marginal note at 27:35; Psalm 22 is a prophecy of Christ. We recognize the agonized cry of the opening verse of the psalm, and such verses as 16 and 18 show that the prophecy goes far beyond any of David's experiences.

# PSALMS BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL



- TYPES OF PSALMS**
1. didactic
  2. history
  3. halilujah
  4. penitential
  5. supplication
  6. thanksgiving
  7. messianic
  8. nature
  9. pilgrim
  10. imprecatory

The Messianic psalms speak of Christ as the royal Messiah (Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 61, 72, 89, 110, 132); the suffering Messiah (Psalms 22, 35, 41, 55, 69, 109); and the Son of man (Psalms 16, 40). Other Messianic psalms are: Psalms 23, 24, 31, 50, 68, 96-98, 102, 118.

## **V. APPLICATIONS**

The psalms are unsurpassed for devotional reading. Every reader can identify with them because their authors write as those totally dependent on God's grace and mercy, which He gives to undeserving sinners. Only eternity will reveal how many souls in desperation have fled to a psalm for help and strength.

The ministry of the psalms in public services is also immeasurable. For example, what psalms especially come to mind when you think of a funeral service?

## **VI. FURTHER STUDY**

Make extended studies of the following subjects:

1. prophecy in the Psalms
2. applying the imprecatory psalms in the

Christian setting

3. the Word of God in Psalms, especially in Psalm 119

## VII. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Manley, G. T. *The New Bible Handbook*, pp. 191-98.

Purkiser, W. T. *Exploring the Old Testament*, pp. 209-37.

Scroggie, W. Graham. *Psalms*, 1:9-44.

Wyngaarden, Martin J. "Psalms." in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4:2487-94B.

Young, Edward J. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 281-300.

### COMMENTARIES AND OTHER AIDS

Alexander, Joseph A. *The Psalms Translated and Explained*.

Armerding, Carl. *Psalms in a Minor Key.*

Delitzsch, Franz. *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms.*

Gaebelein, A. C. *The Book of Psalms.*

Jensen, Irving L. *Psalms. Self-Study Guide.*

Kirkpatrick, A. F. *The Book of Psalms.*

Leslie, E. A. *The Psalms.*

Leupold, Herbert C. *Exposition of the Psalms.*

Maclaren, Alexander. *The Psalms.*

Morgan, G. Campbell. *Notes on the Psalms.*

Perowne, J. J. Stewart. *The Book of Psalms.*

Rhodes, Arnold B. *The Book of Psalms.*

Scroggie, W. Graham. *The Psalms.*

Spurgeon, C. H. *The Treasury of David.*

Yates, Kyle M. "Psalms." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary.*

1. The following is a classification of the psalms by authorship as designated by the superscriptions:

David: Psalms 3-9; 11-32; 34-41; 51-65; 68-70; 86; 101; 103; 108-10; 122; 124; 131; 133; 138-45

Descendants of Korah: Psalms 42; 44-49; 84-85; 87

Asaph: Psalms 50; 73-83

Solomon: Psalms 72; 127

Ethan: Psalm 89

Heman: Psalm 88

Moses: Psalm 90

Anonymous: all other psalms

2. See W. Graham Scroggie, *The Psalms*, 1:15-18.

3. Scroggie says that “without the Psalter our knowledge of the religious history of Israel, as that may be derived from the Historical Books, would be not only imperfect but misleading” (Ibid., 1:27). See this cited work, pp. 28-29, for

a comprehensive list of historical facts appearing in the Psalms.

4. One way to study the psalms systematically is to study them group by group, according to the classifications cited here.

5. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 437.

6. Scroggie says, "The Psalter is the hymn book of the Hebrews, and a hymn book does not lend itself to formal analysis" (W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 1:107).

7. G. Campbell Morgan, *Notes on the Psalms*, p.9.

8. One hundred sixteen psalms have superscriptions.

9. When studying a particular psalm, use the historical superscription to advantage. For example, the superscription of Psalm 3 states that it is a psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son. By reading the historical account of this in 2 Samuel 15, the psalm

becomes clearer. Most Bibles show such cross-references (e.g., 2 Sam 15) in the marginal notes (or footnotes).

10. See Archer, pp. 428-30, for a discussion of superscriptions.

11. From Scroggie, *The Psalms*, 1:36.

12. Associated forms of the name words are included (e.g., *Elohim* is included under El). For an enlightening study on the names of God, see Nathan J. Stone, *Names of God in the Old Testament*.

13. The King James text does not distinguish between *Adonai* (“Lord”) and *Jehovah* (“LORD”). (Use Strong’s *Exhaustive Concordance* for identifying which Hebrew word is being translated.)

14. C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 7:449.

15. Scroggie, *The Psalms*, 1:30.

16. John Sampey says, “Seven of the best known poems in the collection are so charged

with a sense of sin and of its deadly fruits that they have been known for centuries as the Penitential Pss (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143)” “Psalms,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4:2493).

## *Proverbs: Walking in the Fear of the Lord*

Proverbs is the second of three Bible books designated as “Wisdom Literature,” the other two being Job and Ecclesiastes. Wilbur M. Smith identifies the “wisdom” theme of Proverbs as a message about the fear of God.

The book of Proverbs contains the distilled essence of wisdom which is based upon a fear of God, setting forth in remarkable figures of speech, with innumerable contrasting clauses, what is right and what is wrong, in the sight of God, pertaining to man’s conduct.... The basic truth constantly affirmed in Proverbs is expressed in the famous statement, “The fear of the Lord is the

beginning of wisdom” (1:7 and 15:33).¹

## I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

1. Review what you have already studied about poetic literature.

2. What different things does the word *wisdom* suggest to you? With the help of a concordance, study what the New Testament teaches about true wisdom. Compare your findings with the following description of the Old Testament concept of wisdom:

[In the Old Testament there are] six different Hebrew words setting forth various aspects of wisdom, as discernment, knowledge, meditation, prudence, etc. Wisdom among the Hebrews differs from wisdom among other Oriental peoples in that it rested firmly on the conviction of a personal and holy God. It assumes that the

universe is regulated by reason and law. It is practical and not speculative as it was with the Greeks. Its exhortations have a universal application—it is interesting to note that neither the word Israel nor Jerusalem is even referred to in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or Job. Wisdom is derived from experience and is often expressed in similitudes and parables taken from nature, rarely by historical events. The wise man, according to the Old Testament, is one who walks in the way of the Lord, which is a way of truth and righteousness, whose life is consequently blessed by God, and is a benediction to those within his family and circle of influence, and brings contentment to his own heart.²

## **II. BACKGROUND**

God inspired the writing of Proverbs

partly as an antidote to the spiritual apostasy of His people, Israel. Like all Scripture, the book of Proverbs arose out of an immediate, local setting, involving people and their relationships to each other and to God. An understanding of the setting and characteristics of this twentieth book of the Bible greatly enhances one's study of its text.

#### A. TITLE

The common title of the book is "Proverbs," from the opening phrase "The proverbs of Solomon" in 1:1. The Hebrew word for "proverb," *mashal*, comes from a root meaning "to be like," or "to represent." This is very appropriate, since most proverbs use *comparison* to teach their truths. (An example: "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" 25:28, KJV.) Proverbs are

terse maxims about conduct and character, primarily in the realms of the spiritual, moral, and social. Read the following verses of other books where the word “proverb(s)” appears:

Numbers 21:27—first appearance of the word in the Bible

1 Samuel 10:12—first citation of a proverb

2 Peter 2:22—a New Testament citation of a biblical proverb

## B. AUTHORS

Most of the biblical proverbs originated with Solomon, son of David. (Read 1:1; 10:1; and 25:1, which are the opening verses of the three largest sections of the book.) Chapters 30 and 31 are assigned to Agur and Lemuel, respectively, whose identities are unknown.³ The section 22:17—24:34 is attributed to “the wise men” (see 22:17; cf. 24:23). Read 1 Kings 4:31 for a reference to

such a class of men. If the wise men of Proverbs 22:17 lived before Solomon's time, Solomon may have been the one to assemble their writings and add them to his own. The proverbs of chapters 25-29 were written by Solomon and edited about two hundred years later by a committee appointed by King Hezekiah (c. 700 B.C.). Some think that this group called "men of Hezekiah" (25:1) may have included Isaiah and Micah, who were contemporaries of Hezekiah.

Solomon is the author of three books of the Bible. One commentator has suggested this possibility of the books being written at different stages of his career:⁴

Song of Solomon—written when he was young, and in love

Proverbs—written during middle age, when his intellectual powers were at their peak

Ecclesiastes—written in old age, when he was disappointed and disillusioned with the carnality of much of his life

### C. DATE

As noted above, most of Proverbs was written by Solomon. This would date his work around 950-900 B.C.⁵ See [Chart 71](#). Hezekiah's collection was formed around 700 B.C. It is reasonable to conclude that the various groups of proverbs were brought together as one book around that date, namely 700 B.C.⁶

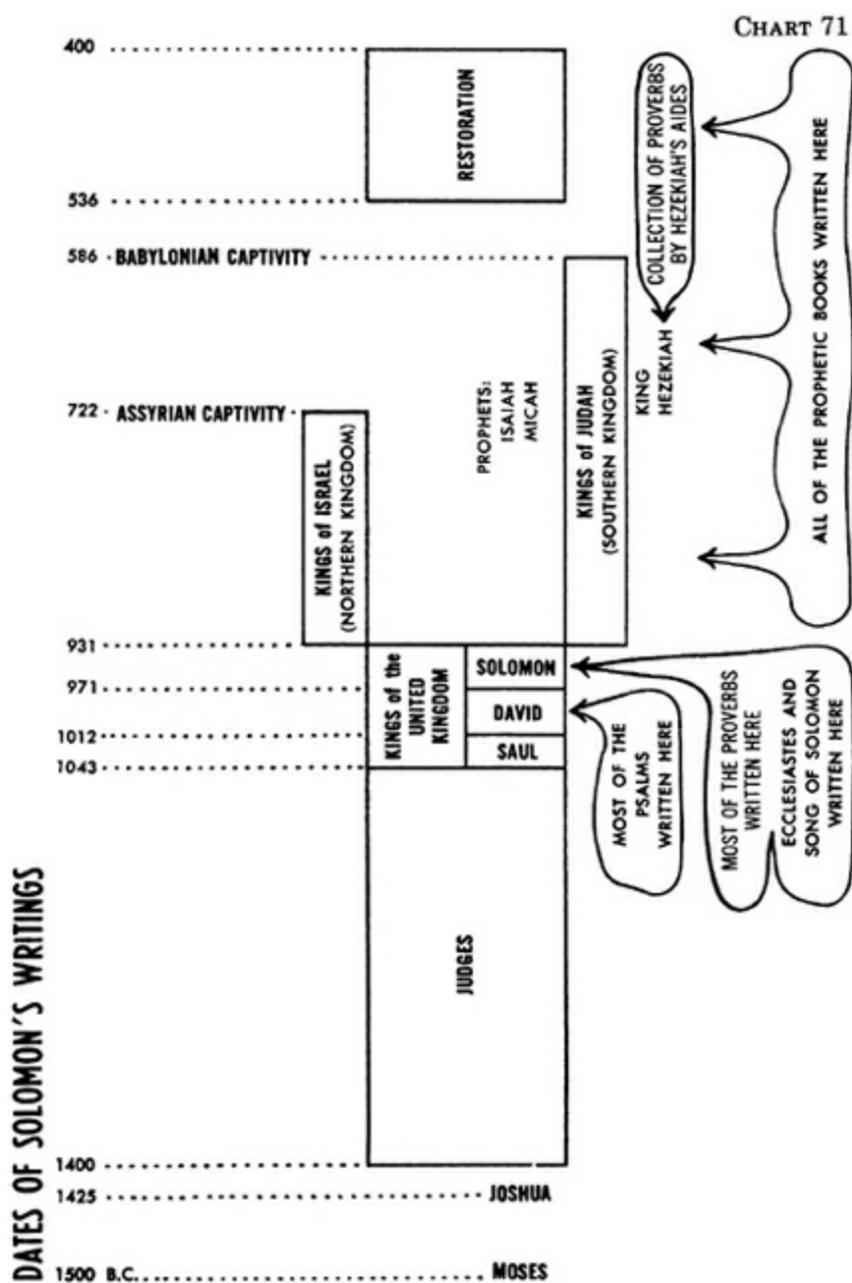
Refer to [Chart 71](#) again, and note how close Proverbs and Psalms are as to time of writing. David's psalms give us a vivid view of the *worship* by God's people before the kingdom's decline, and the book of Proverbs reflects the zealous concern of believers for a righteous *walk*. The prophets came later, during the years of Israel's apostasy and

idolatry, to call the people to a saving knowledge of God.

#### D. PURPOSE

Read 1:2-4 and note the book's own statement of its purpose: to impart wisdom. This wisdom is not mere head knowledge, but divinely enlightened understanding of what is good and what is evil (1 Kings 3:9), and a personal experiential knowledge of the Lord.

Solomon also wrote about the purpose of his proverbs in Ecclesiastes 12:9-14. Compare this passage with the phrase "instruction in righteousness" of 2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV).



One cannot help but be impressed after reading Proverbs that God is so vitally interested in the smallest details of the daily walk of His children.

### E. PLACE IN THE BIBLE

In the English canon, Proverbs is the third

of the five poetical books. In the Hebrew canon, it is the second of eleven books in the final section called “Writings.” In both canons it follows Psalms. John Genung says that it holds this leading position, after Psalms, “probably because it would be most natural to begin this section with standard collections nearest at hand, which of course would be psalms and proverbs.”⁷

**Chart 72** shows comparisons of Proverb’s message with that of other Old Testament books.

CHART 72  
PROVERBS COMPARED WITH OTHER OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

BOOKS	KEYNOTES	USES
Books of the Law	revelation and guidance	manual of history and legislation
Books of the Prophets	authority	message for today and tomorrow
Job	questionings and reasonings	answers from God and man
Psalms	worship	handbook of devotion
Proverbs	observation and reflection	guide to practical living

The New Testament writers quote and allude to Proverbs several times. Read the

references listed below.

PROVERB	N.T. QUOTE OR ALLUSION
3:1	Romans 12:16
25:21:22	Romans 12:20
3:34	James 4:6
24:21	1 Peter 2:17
16:7	1 Peter 3:13
11:31	1 Peter 4:18
26:11	2 Peter 2:22
3:11-12	Hebrews 12:5-6
4:26	Hebrews 12:13
10:12	1 Peter 4:8
22:9	2 Corinthians 9:7
25:6-7	Luke 14:10

The epistle of James is one book of the New Testament which concentrates on the conduct of believers, just as Proverbs does in the Old Testament. In fact, James is sometimes referred to as Proverbs of the New Testament.

The relation of Proverbs to Christ is deeper than appears on the surface. Some see Christ foreshadowed in such explicit

passages as 8:22-31; 23:11; and 30:4. A foundational connection is that the wisdom spoken of in Proverbs is found completely in Christ (1 Cor 1:30). “The aspiration in Proverbs is for wisdom to become incarnate (Prov. 8), as indeed it did when ‘all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ became flesh in Christ (Col. 2:3).”⁸ The “wise” man of Proverbs is the righteous man. And no man is righteous except as he is clothed with the righteousness of Christ. So the truly wise man today is the born-again Christian.

### III. LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS

Any reader of Proverbs quickly observes that its style and content are different from other parts of the Bible, such as the book of Genesis, or Matthew. An understanding of such literary characteristics helps one’s study of the book’s text.

## A. TYPE

As noted earlier, the book of Proverbs is classified as “Wisdom Literature.” In Old Testament times Israel was ruled by judges and kings, and ministered to by such groups as priests, prophets, scribes, historians, singers, and “wise men,” or philosophers. King David was both king and singer. His son Solomon was both king and philosopher. Hebrew “wise men” were usually elders associated with schools of wisdom, who shared their practical views of life and the world with their Jewish brethren.

## B. STYLE

The following descriptions show the variety of styles and forms in which the proverbs appear:

1. *Various forms.* Poetry, brief parables, sharp questions, minute stories. For two examples of poems, read the following:

1:20-33 “Wisdom’s Cry of Warning” (a dramatic monologue)

3:1-10 “The Commandment and Reward” (a sonnet)

## 2. *Common devices.*

Antithesis—comparing opposite things  
(16:22)

Comparison—comparing similar things  
(17:10)

Imagery—using picture language (26:27)

Personification—assigning personality to an inanimate thing (9:1)

3. *Prominent teaching method.* Contrast. Scan chapters 10-15 and note the repeated word “but.” Gleason Archer writes,

The constant preoccupation of the ‘book is with the elemental antagonisms of obedience versus rebellion, industry versus laziness,

prudence versus presumption, and so on. These are so presented as to put before the reader a clear-cut choice, leaving him no ground for wretched compromise or vacillating indecision.⁹

4. *Length.* Unit proverbs (one to four verses); and clusters (group of unit proverbs). In the early chapters the common unit proverb is one verse. An example of a cluster is the passage about fools in 26:1-12.

5. *Symmetry.* Most of the proverbs are symmetrical (e.g., the antithetical maxims of two lines connected by the word “but”). But Hebrew writers were not bound by symmetry. “Modern hands itch to smooth away irregularities—often overlooking the fact that an asymmetrical proverb can be richer than a symmetrical.”¹⁰

Note that Proverb-type writings were not exclusively Israel’s. Archaeologists have

uncovered proverbs of other nations as well.¹¹ The main difference is not in style, but in content. Compare the following two proverbs. What is the notable difference?

“Do not lean on the scales, nor falsify the weights, nor damage the fractions of the measure” (proverb of Amen-em-ope, of Egypt).

“Differing weights and differing measures, both of them are abominable to the LORD” (proverb of Solomon, 20:10).

#### **IV. SURVEY**

1. Read the first verse of each chapter of Proverbs. What headings (or titles) appear at these points: 1:1; 10:1; 25:1; 30:1; 31:1? (Also, read 22:17.) Do these verses suggest any organization of the book?

2. Most books of the Bible have an introduction and a conclusion. Look for

these in Proverbs. For the introduction, begin reading the first chapter. How many verses would you identify as an introduction?

3. The identification of a conclusion is more difficult. The last segment is about a virtuous woman (31:10-31). If this is not the conclusion, then the previous segment should be included (31:1-9). But if 31:1 is a part of the conclusion, then the similar heading of 30:1 should also be included. Therefore, one might say that Proverbs concludes with an *epilogue* of two supplements (chaps. 30-31). The introduction, then, could be called a *prologue*. Using 1:1-6 as the extent of that introduction, the basic structure of the book would be this:

1:1	1:7	30:1	31:31
PROLOGUE	M A X I M S	EPILOGUE	

4. **Chart 73** shows the various divisions of Proverbs which we have observed thus far, and includes outlines of content. Answer the following questions on the basis of the chart:

- a) Where in the book is the purpose of Proverbs stated?
- b) What group of chapters develops the primary theme of the book?
- c) Where is there a concentration of one-verse proverbs?
- d) What part of the book is addressed especially to young people? Confirm your answer by these verses: 1:8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 6:1; and so forth.
- e) What groups of chapters are specifically assigned to Solomon?

5. Make a final scanning of the book of Proverbs with survey **Chart 73** in mind.

## V. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

## A. KING SOLOMON

The book of Proverbs is not a narrative about Solomon, but its pages reveal much about this wise man. (Consult a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia for a sketch of his colorful career.)¹² Solomon was a unique character in many ways; he was musician, poet, botanist, zoologist, businessman, administrator, and king. From 1 Kings 3:12 and 4:29 we learn that his wisdom was a direct gift from God. This was in answer to Solomon's petition (1 Kings 3:5-9). He was the author of 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32). Read 1 Kings 3:16-28; 4:29-34; and 10:1-9, noting other things said about Solomon.

## B. PERSONAL ETHICS

The proverbs are God's detailed instructions and exhortations to His people concerning their thought-and-deed life.

Much of the book is addressed especially to young people (e.g., 1:4, 8). The proverbs are mainly about personal ethics, not as the sinner's way to God, but as the believer's walk with God on this earth. Although the book is not intended to elaborate on the way of salvation, such key phrases as "the fear of the LORD" (1:7) tell basically how a sinner is brought into fellowship with God. The counsel of Proverbs is profitable for all people—saved and unsaved—but the unsaved do not gain salvation by attempting to perform its good deeds (cf. Eph 2:8-9).

### C. VARIETY OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

The list of different subjects written about in Proverbs seems endless. Here are some examples:¹³

Topics: wisdom, sin, tongue, wealth, pride, idleness, love, pleasure, success, temperance, morals

Contrasting subjects: God and man; time and eternity; truth and falsehood; wealth and poverty; purity and impurity; justice and injustice; pleasure and misery

Evil people: prating fool; talebearer; whisperer; backbiter; false boaster; speculator

Social relations: master and servant; rich and poor; husband and wife; parents and children

## **VI. KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

Study the list of key words shown on [Chart 73](#). Also read the key verses in the Bible text. There are other verses which could serve as key verses.

## **VII. APPLICATIONS**

The book of Proverbs is filled with commands and exhortations about daily

conduct. The reader has hardly begun reading the book when he is confronted with such words as “If sinners entice you, do not consent” (1:10). God knew that His people would need to be reminded again and again about how to think, speak, and act, so He inspired the writing and collection of Proverbs.

Here are some suggestions for interpreting the maxims of Proverbs, leading to application:

1. Recognize that the proverbs are instructions from the Lord, not mere secular maxims. It is very significant that the name “LORD” (Jehovah) appears eighty-six times in the book.

2. Interpret “wisdom” in the book as representing *righteousness*, or *holiness*, which describes the heart of that person who truly knows God. Likewise, interpret such words

as “fool” and “folly” as representing *wickedness* of the unsaved man.

3. Recognize the device of personification whenever it appears in the book. For example, the foolish woman of 9:13-15 is not primarily an individual person as such, but *spiritual folly*, or *wickedness* (the opposite of *spiritual wisdom*, or *righteousness*).

4. Let the surrounding verses shed light on a proverb when its meaning is unclear. However, because of the miscellaneous character of the listings of many proverbs, it may be necessary to refer to more distant verses (e.g., in another chapter or even in another book) where a similar phrase appears, for its clarification. (For example, the phrase “strange woman” in 20:16 KJV, is partly explained by 2:16.) An exhaustive concordance is a valuable help here.

5. When the most obvious interpretation

of a proverb seems to contradict another Scripture, seek its deeper meaning. (Cf. Prov 10:27 and Gen 4:8; and Prov 16:7 and Acts 14:19.)

6. If a proverb is unclear or ambiguous in the Bible version you are using, compare the reading of a modern paraphrase.¹⁴

7. Let the key verse 1:7 be the controller of all your interpretations of the many proverbs of this book of God.

The book of Proverbs is very practical because it concerns the believer's daily walk. It does not include much doctrine, but it does emphasize practice. One writer describes its Christian purpose thus:

While other parts of Scripture show us the glory of our high calling, this may instruct in all minuteness of detail how to "walk worthy of it." Elsewhere we learn our completeness in Christ (Col

ii.10); and most justly we glory in our high exaltation as “joint heirs with Christ,” etc. (Rom. viii.17; Eph. ii.6). We look into this book, and, as by the aid of the microscope, we see the minuteness of our Christian obligations; that there is not a temper, a look, a word, a movement, the most important action of the day, the smallest relative duty, in which we do not either deface or adorn the image of our Lord, and the profession of His name.¹⁵



## VIII. FURTHER STUDY

Read the book of Proverbs verse by verse, identifying what area of life (e.g., home, business, worship) is referred to in each verse. Then compare the various proverbs under each area, and see how much is taught about each area by the book.

## IX. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 449-58.

Baxter, J. Sidlow. *Explore the Book*, 3:130-40.

Genung, John Franklin. "Proverb," and "Book of Proverbs." In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4:2469-76.

Phillips, John. *Exploring the Scriptures*, pp. 108-11.

Scroggie, W. Graham. *Know Your Bible*,  
1:137-42.

#### COMMENTARIES

Delitzsch, F. *Proverbs of Solomon*, vols. 1, 2.

Harris, R. Laird. "Proverbs." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

Ironside, H. A. *Notes on the Book of Proverbs*.

Jones, W., and Walls, Andrew. "The Proverbs." In *The New Bible Commentary*.

Kidner, Derek. *The Proverbs*.

Zoeckler, Otto. "Proverbs." In Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*.

1. Wilbur M. Smith, *The Incomparable Book*, pp. 36-37.

2. Ibid.

3. Some hold that these two names may be poetic references to Solomon himself.

4. John Phillips, *Exploring the Scriptures*, p. 108.
5. The historical background of chapters 1-29, though sparse, corresponds very closely to the conditions of Solomon's reign. See G. T. Manley, *The New Bible Handbook*, p. 199. Read 29:18; 15:8; and 21:3, 27 for references to the Law and sacrifices of Israel.
6. This assumes that Agur, Lemuel, and "the wise men," noted earlier, lived no later than Hezekiah.
7. G. Campbell Morgan, *Notes on the Psalms*, p. 9.
8. Norman L. Geisler, *Christ: The Theme of the Bible*, p. 96.
9. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 452.
10. Derek Kidner, *The Proverbs*, p. 28.
11. There is strong evidence that heathen writers even borrowed from the canonical Proverbs for their own purposes. See W. Jones

and Andrew Walls, “The Proverbs,” in *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 516.

12. D. A. Hubbard describes Solomon as the “Master Sage,” the “Iron Ruler,” the “Enterprising Merchant,” and the “Peaceful Emperor” (*The New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 1202-4).

13. See W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 1:140-41.

14. Modern paraphrases are the interpretations of the authors writing the paraphrases. They are not intended to be a word-for-word translation of the Bible text. One of the main purposes of a paraphrase is to clarify an ambiguous word or phrase of the Bible text.

15. Otto Zoeckler, “Proverbs,” in Lange’s *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, p. 3.

## *Ecclesiastes: Vanity Under the Sun, But Hope Is in God*

Ecclesiastes is a book that investigates life and tells what kind of life is worth living. It is the quest of a soul who sees only vanity all about him until his eyes are opened to the hope offered by God. The book has been described as a confession of failure and pessimism when God is excluded.

Ecclesiastes is a perplexing book to many, partly because its perspectives and purposes are not understood. The background and survey studies that follow will help to throw light on these important concerns.

### **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

The dictionary defines philosophy as the

investigation of causes and laws underlying reality. Stated simply, philosophy is man's search for truth. Are you acquainted with people who are sincerely and seriously looking for truthful answers to their painful questions about life?

Generally speaking, there are two main schools of thought in philosophy: empiricism and rationalism. Empiricism says that human experience, especially of the senses, is the only source of knowledge. That is, man can know only what he experiences. Rationalism says that human reason is the prime source of knowledge and of spiritual truth. That is, man can know only what he can mentally grasp. A study of Ecclesiastes shows truth vainly being sought for in both ways:

“I made”; “I got”; and so forth (2:4,7, KJV)  
—empiricism

“I set my mind to know” (1:17)—rationalism

The conclusion in both quests is stated over and over again: “All is vanity.” Such a frustration serves to show that if truth is to be known, it must come by *revelation from God*. (See [Chart 74](#).) The God-centered life view which Solomon teaches in the book came from divine revelation.



Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon presents the position of one who is searching for truth and reality and meaning. From this standpoint, then, it would be correct to say that Ecclesiastes is a book of philosophy. The student about to read the book should keep this in mind, to avoid

misinterpretation and to reap maximum instruction.

## II. BACKGROUND

Not many details are known about the immediate setting of Ecclesiastes. This lack only serves to let the book shine forth in its essential quality, as a timeless and contemporary message to all generations since its writing. The things that *are* known about the book's setting are both interesting and important.

### A. TITLE

The title for this book comes from the opening phrase, “The words of the Preacher” (1:1). The word “Preacher” is traced back to the original Hebrew text as follows:

Hebrew—*qoholeth*¹— f r o m *qahal*, “to assemble”

Greek version—*ecclesiastes*—from *ek*, “out

of, and *klesis*, “a calling”

English—*Preacher* (1:1)—one who speaks to an assembly of people

*Ecclesiastes* (title)—one who speaks to an assembly of people In Old Testament days a *qoholeth* was an official speaker to an assembly of people. Other appearances of the word “Preacher” in *Ecclesiastes* are at 1:1, 2, 12: 7:27; 12:8, 9, 10. The word is not found in any other Old Testament book.

## B. AUTHOR

The author is not named in the Bible text. In 1:1 he is identified as “the son of David, king of Jerusalem.” Internal evidences favor the traditional view that Solomon is meant by this phrase.² The following descriptions in the text coincide with what is known about Solomon from the historical record (e.g., 1 Kings).

1. the author’s unrivaled wisdom (1:16)

2. his wealth (2:8)

3. his extensive building projects (2:4-6)

4. his collection of proverbs (12:9)

Refer to [Chart 71](#) and observe when Ecclesiastes was written, if Solomon was the author. Note among other things that the preaching ministries of the Bible prophets did not begin until after Solomon's time.

### C. PLACE IN THE BIBLE

Ecclesiastes is the fourth of five poetical books in our English Bible: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.³ In the Hebrew Bible it is the fourth of five *Megilloth* writings ("Five Rolls"): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther.⁴ [Chart 75](#) shows comparisons of the poetical books, as to some of their major subjects. (Lamentations is included because it is written in poetical style also.)

		KEY THOUGHTS	KEY SUBJECTS
3 DIDACTIC BOOKS	<i>PROVERBS</i>	WISDOM	<i>DESCRIPTIONS AND FRUITS OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN</i>
	<i>ECCLESIASTES</i>	FUTILITY	<i>THE WAY TO GOD</i>
	<i>JOB</i>	TRIAL	<i>CRUCIBLE OF TESTING</i>

3 DEVOTIONAL BOOKS	<i>PSALMS</i>	WORSHIP	<i>MEDITATIONS AND WORSHIP OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN</i>
	<i>SONG OF SOLOMON</i>	LOVE	<i>THE WAY OF GOD</i>
	<i>LAMENTATIONS</i>	DESTRUCTION	<i>CRUCIBLE OF JUDGMENT</i>

## D. STYLE

As noted in earlier chapters, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and parts of other Old Testament books are classified as “Wisdom Literature.” The style of these books is that of the philosopher, who shares his observations, reflections, reasonings, and conclusions in terse and brief lines, often in poetical form. Here is one writer’s evaluation of Ecclesiastes’ composition:

“Whether prose or verse, I know nothing grander in its impassioned survey of mortal pain and pleasure, its estimate of failure and success.”⁵

### III. SURVEY

#### A. FIRST READINGS

Scan Ecclesiastes once or twice to catch its tone and large emphases. What are your impressions after this first reading? (Do not tarry over details in this scanning stage, or you might lose sight of the broad panorama.)

#### B. FURTHER READINGS

Your next readings should be in shorter portions at a slower pace. But keep in mind that you are in the *survey* stage of study. (The *analysis* stage carries over details.) Here are some suggestions for study:

1. Ecclesiastes may be divided into eleven

sections of varying lengths. These begin at the following verses: 1:1, 12; 2:24; 3:16; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1; 8:14; 10:1; 12:8, 9. Mark these divisions in your Bible.

2. What repeated words and phrases have you already observed in the text of Ecclesiastes? Keep looking for others during the remainder of your survey. Three key examples are: “vanity,” “under the sun,” and “God.” Read through the book and underline or circle these words every time they appear. Look for *groupings* of each of the phrases. (Such groupings or concentrations are clues to emphasis.) The importance of these phrases is indicated by their many appearances in the book:

“vanity”—thirty-nine times

“under the sun”—twenty-nine times

“God”—forty times⁶

3. Read 1:14 and note the close relation

between “under the sun” and “vanity.” The phrase “under the sun” refers to the earthbound, temporal outlook and experience of the natural man, and this is vanity, or futility. So, in Ecclesiastes the phrases “under the sun” and “vanity” refer to the same thought. The opposite outlook, the hopeful one, is that which looks toward God, who is *above* the sun. With this in mind, scan your marked Bible, with its markings of the key phrases noted above. Observe which sections are about *God* more than they are about *vanity*, and which are about vanity more than about God. Record your findings on paper. Do you observe any pattern?

4. Compare 1:2 and 12:8. Since these similar verses appear at the beginning and end of the book, what do they suggest as a prominent theme of the chapters in between?

5. Read 1:1-11. How does the section serve as an introduction to the book?

6. Read 12:9-14. How do these verses conclude the book?

### C. SURVEY CHART

**Chart 76** is a survey chart of Ecclesiastes, showing how the book is organized, thoughtwise.⁷ Refer to it as you follow each of these suggestions:

1. Note how the introduction (1:1-11) is identified. The premise, or proposition, that “all is futility” (1:2, margin) is restated in the conclusion, at 12:8.

2. The main body of the book is 1:12—12:7. Observe on the chart that this is divided into four sermons. These sermons of the Preacher could also be called discourses of the Teacher. Each sermon expounds on two subjects: (1) futility (vanity); and (2) hope. In other words, in each sermon

Solomon first shows the hopelessness of life where the outlook is earthbound (“under the sun”); and then he shows that real hope is founded only on God, whose dwelling place is beyond the heavens.

3. Observe what is recorded in the oblique spaces on [Chart 76](#). The first part of each sermon is mainly *observation*, where the preacher tells what he, as a natural man, saw. Hence, the repeated phrase in these sections, “I saw” (e.g., 4:7). The second part of each sermon also includes observation, but it is mainly *instruction* and *counsel* about things of God.

4. Note how the conclusion (12:8-14) is a condensed summary of the four sermons:

Part One: Observation; “All is vanity” (12:8).

Part Two: Instruction and Counsel: “Fear God” (12:9-14).

5. Groups of proverbs appear at a few

places in the book. chapter 10 is an example. Note how this is identified on [Chart 76](#).

## **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

### **A. TWO LIFE VIEWS**

Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes the author shows two opposite life views. First, he views things around him as the natural man would do, without the light of divine revelation. His conclusion is “All is vanity.” (Read 1 Cor 2:14.) (He went through this searching experience himself some time earlier in his career; read 1:13-14.) But then the author writes as one to whom God has revealed Himself, and now his observations and conclusions have the ring of surety and hope. For example: “Everything God does will remain forever” (3:14). This pattern of alternating perspectives continues throughout the book, as was observed in the survey study.

It should be noted that when the author of Ecclesiastes writes from the second perspective noted above, it is not as one who knows God from *full* revelation. He views life as a man does who knows and worships God *primarily* as Creator. This is confirmed by the fact that every time he names Him he uses the word *Elohim*, which is the name especially associated with the work of creation (cf. Gen 1:1). The name “LORD” (*Jehovah*), which is the Old Testament equivalent of *Redeemer-Saviour*, does not appear once in the book.⁸ Today when the reader of Ecclesiastes reaches the last command of the book, “Fear God and keep His commandments” (12:13), he is ready to be introduced to Christ the Redeemer. “As the law was designed to lead men to Christ, so this book was written to lead those ‘under the sun’ to the Son (cf. Heb 1:1).”⁹

The purposes of Ecclesiastes, then, are to

show the futility of pursuing materialistic, earthly goals as an end in themselves, and to point to God as the source of all that is truly good.¹⁰ The theme of the book is determined by these purposes, and may be stated in this twofold way:

1. Every pursuit of man is futile if God is excluded.
2. Only God's work endures, so that only He can impart true value to man's life and service.

## **B. VANITY**

Read the following selected verses as an introduction to the subject of vanity (futility) in this book.¹¹

### **THE TEN VANITIES**

Human wisdom—2:15-16

Human fame—4:16

Human labor—2:19-21

Human insatiation—5:10

Human purpose—2:26

Human coveting—6:9

Human rivalry—4:4

Human frivolity—7:4

Human avarice—4:8

Human awards—8:10, 14

## V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

Observe the key words listed on [Chart 76](#). Read in the Bible the two key verses, which are also cited. How are these reflected in the title assigned to the book?

## VI. APPLICATIONS

1. What are your thoughts about the statement, “There is nothing new under the sun” (1:9)? Read 2 Peter 3:3-7.

2. What is lacking in the heart of a person who is never satisfied (1:8)? Is human *desire* normal or abnormal?

3. “Thou hast made me for Thyself, and my heart will not rest until it rests in Thee.” Compare this statement by Augustine with Ecclesiastes 2:25b, “Who can have enjoyment without Him?”

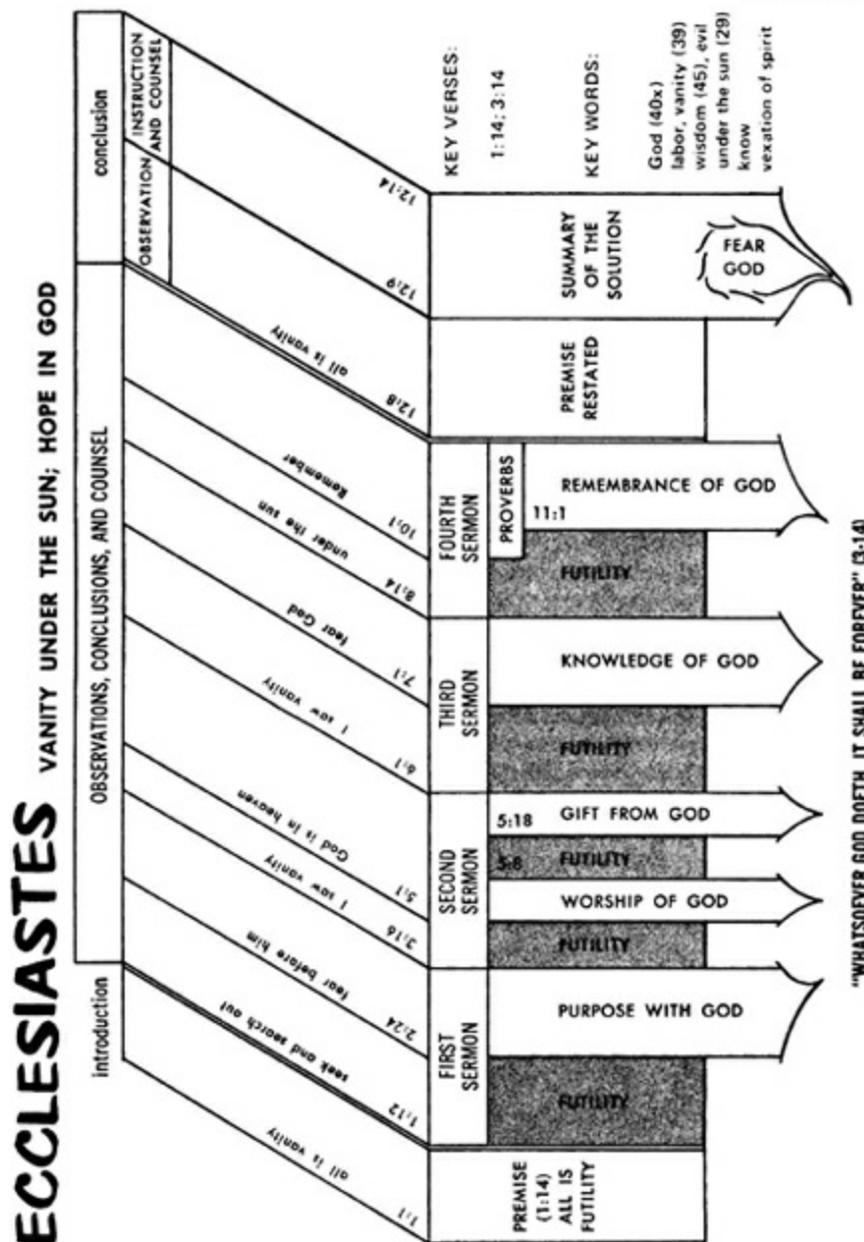
4. “Life is not worth living, apart from

redemption.” This is how Oswald Chambers identifies the theme of Ecclesiastes.¹² What does Ecclesiastes reveal about man’s salvation from the predicament of hopelessness? Compare Chamber’s statement with 1 Corinthians 15:19.

5. What are some conditions for genuine enjoyment in the experience of a Christian? Compare Ecclesiastes 11:8a and Philippians 4:4.

6. Do the scales of divine justice always settle and balance quickly? If not, why the delays?

7. “Fear God and keep His commandments” (12:13). Relate this command to the doctrine of salvation.



## VII. FURTHER STUDY

1. Make an extensive study of the subject “vanity” in Ecclesiastes.
  2. Study the Bible’s descriptions of the Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles.
- This was the Jews’ most joyous feast of the

year. Why do you suppose they chose to read Ecclesiastes, with its many pessimistic portions, at that feast?

## VIII. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 459-72.

Beecher, Willis J. "Ecclesiastes." In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* 2:894-97.

Delitzsch, Franz. *Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, pp. 179-217.

Hendry, G. S. "Ecclesiastes." In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 570-71.

McNeile, A. H. *An Introduction to Ecclesiastes*.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, pp. 56-70.

Oesterley, W. O. E. *The Wisdom of Egypt and*

*the Old Testament.*

Williams, A. Lukyn. *Ecclesiastes*, pp. v-lv.

Young, Edward J. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 339-44.

#### COMMENTARIES

Chambers, Oswald. *Shade of His Hand*.

Delitzsch, Franz. *Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*.

Laurin, Robert. "Ecclesiastes." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

Leupold, H. C. *Exposition of Ecclesiastes*.

Rankin, O. S. "The Book of Ecclesiastes." In *The Interpreter's Bible*.

1. In the Hebrew Old Testament, as well as the Greek New Testament, the first letter of a proper noun is not distinguished from the other letters, like the capitalizations in the English language (e.g., Preacher).

2. Many commentators feel that the author lived a few hundred years after Solomon's time. See Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 462-72, for a defense of Solomonic authorship. Some hold the view that the author was an impersonator of Solomon in the book, and that he lived a few hundred years after Solomon.

3. It is interesting to observe that the historical, poetical, and prophetic sections of the Old Testament are of approximately equal length, chapterwise: historical books, 249 chapters; poetical books, 243 chapters; prophetic books, 250 chapters.

4. Each of the five "rolls" was read at an annual Jewish feast. Ecclesiastes was read at the Feast of Tabernacles, which was the most joyous of the festivals.

5. E. C. Stedman, quoted by W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 1:144.

6. The familiar Old Testament name of "Lord" does not appear in Ecclesiastes.

7. Various outlines have been made of Ecclesiastes. Some expositors feel there is no organization of thought, that the book is “disjointed in construction” (G. S. Hendry, “Ecclesiastes,” in *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 538). The position of this book is that there is a discernible pattern of thought, developed in four “sermons,” shown on [Chart 76](#).

8. Read Exodus 5:22—6:9 for the significance of this covenant-name *Jehovah* (“LORD,” KJV). Solomon refers to Jehovah often in the book of Proverbs, so it isn’t that he himself did not know God as “LORD.” If Ecclesiastes was composed after Proverbs, Solomon is recalling his search for meaning in life before he came to know God as his Redeemer (cf. 1:13). Some maintain that he wrote from a backslidden spiritual condition.

9. Wick Broomall, “Ecclesiastes,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 232.

10. A marginal note of NASB suggests the word “futility” as a translation of “vanity” (1:2). The use of this word helps one’s understanding

of the message of Ecclesiastes.

11. The list is from J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, 3:163. (Used by permission.)

12. Oswald Chambers, Preface, *Shade of His Hand*.

## *Song of Solomon: Union and Communion*

A healthy balance in Bible study is maintained when the Song of Solomon is studied along with Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes focuses on the *intellect* of man—his mental outlook on life. The Song of Solomon is a book about the *emotions* of man—in particular, the emotion of love.

It is a recognized fact that man's total experience is directed by these three responses: intellect, emotions, and will. Actually, all three responses are involved in a full experience of genuine love, just as this is true of genuine faith. To say that the Song of Solomon is a book about the emotion of life is not to rule out intellect and will.¹ It is

just that the emotion aspect is prominent in the story.

But the Song of Solomon is more than a human love story. It is a picture of the love between the Lord God and His people. If your study of the Song of Solomon will arouse in you a more genuine love for your Lord, as well as a deeper gratitude for His love to you, then it will not surprise you that God chose to include such a love story in His Holy Scriptures.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

Read the New Testament book of Ephesians to learn of the intimate relation between Christ, the Bridegroom, and His Bride, the Church (e.g., Eph 5:25-32). What does the picture of the marriage relationship teach about the believer's salvation?

## **II. BACKGROUND**

## A. TITLE

The opening verse gives the title “The Song of Songs.” This is the Hebrew way of expressing the superlative. Of Solomon’s 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32), this one was his best or most important. The more common title assigned to the book is “Song of Solomon,” also based on 1:1. Sometimes the book is referred to as Canticles (“series of songs”).

## B. AUTHOR

The traditional view is that Solomon was the author. This is strongly supported by internal characteristics of the book. (Refer to outside sources for a discussion of this.) The name Solomon appears at these places in the book: 1:1,5; 3:7,9,11; 8:11,12. The reference at 1:1 may be translated either “of Solomon” or “about Solomon.”

## C. DATE WRITTEN

Solomon probably wrote this book while he was still young, before being drawn away from Jehovah by his seven hundred wives (1 Kings 11:3-4). A suggested date is 965 B.C.

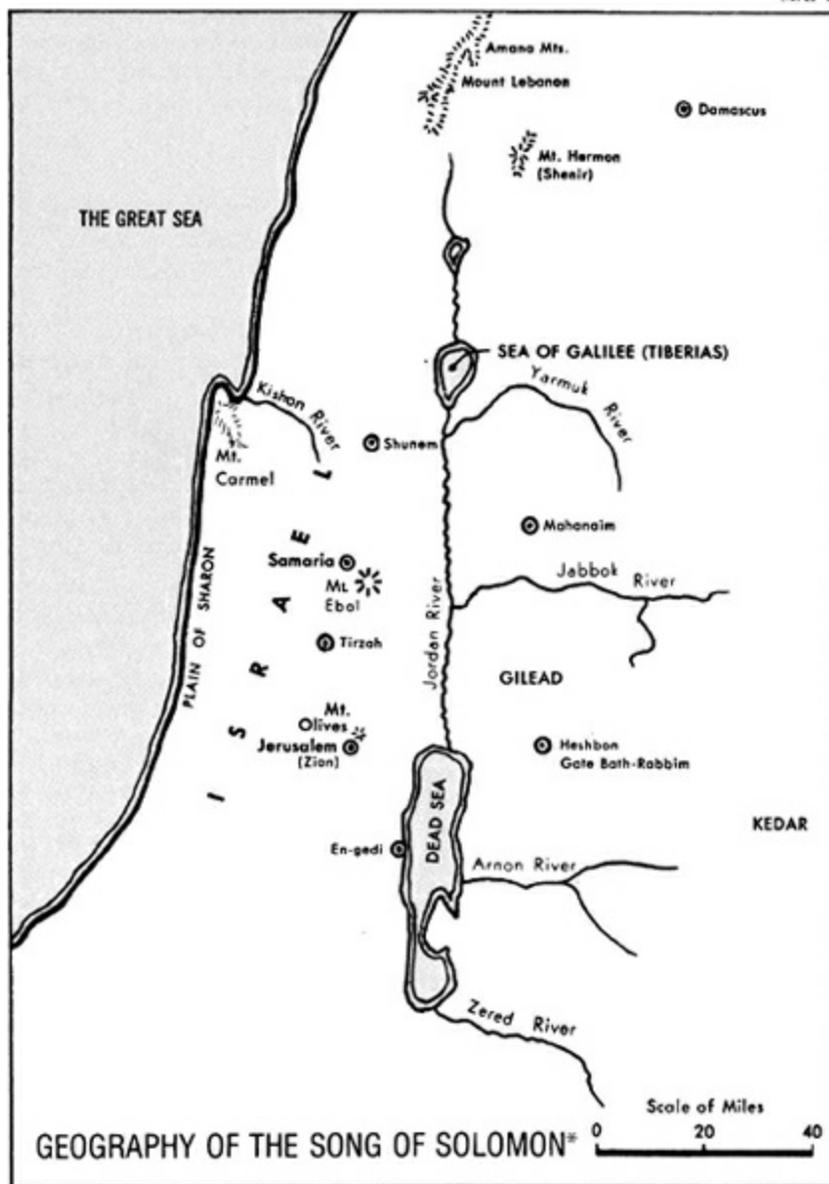
#### D. RELATION TO OTHER BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

In our English Bibles the Song of Solomon is the fifth of the poetical books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon. In the Hebrew Bible it is the first of the “Five Rolls” (*Megilloth*): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther. Portions of it were sung on the eighth day of the Passover feast, which was the Jews’ first and greatest of the annual feasts. In ancient times the Jews revered Canticles as uniquely sublime. They likened Proverbs to the outer court of the Temple; Ecclesiastes to the holy place; and Song of Solomon to the most holy place. The New Testament book that has the same type of

purpose as the Song of Solomon—reflection about a Bridegroom and His Bride—is the epistle to the Ephesians.

## E. FORM

The book is a unified lyrical poem. It is a series of stanzas or songs of varied lengths.² Our later survey study will reveal that there is a topical unity of the various songs, even though there is no defined dramatical progression, as in the book of Job. Because of its poetical form, we may expect to find the usual figures of speech found in poetry (e.g., simile: “Thy hair is as a flock of goats,” 4:1, KJV). Also, the phraseology of the poetry is strictly Oriental, and must be read in that light (e.g., chap. 4).



*The locations of *Baal-hamon* (8:11) and *Bether* (2:17) are unknown. *Bether* may not be a proper name (see Berkeley Version).

## F. SETTING OF STORY

The main characters of the Song of Solomon are Solomon, a Shulamite woman, and a group called “daughters of Jerusalem”:

1. *Solomon*. The king of Israel (1 Kings 1:32-37), Solomon was the son of David and

Bathsheba (2 Sam 12:24).

2. *A Shulamite woman.* The name “Shulamite” appears only at 6:13 (KJV). It is probably derived from the place called Shunem, located a short distance north of Jezreel near the plain of Megiddo (cf. Josh 19:18; 1 Sam 28:4; 1 Kings 1:3; 2 Kings 4:8). See [Map R](#).

3. *Daughters of Jerusalem.* The identity of these women is not disclosed. They may have been companions of the bride, attendants of the king’s palace, or interested onlookers. Some commentators assign a few verses of the text to other speakers (e.g., an officer of the king’s guard, 3:7-10).

H. A. Ironside’s description of the setting of this story, as summarized by Merrill Unger, is quoted here at length:

King Solomon had a vineyard in the hill country of Ephraim, about 50 miles

N of Jerusalem, 8:11. He let it out to keepers, 8:11, consisting of a mother, two sons, 1:6, and two daughters—the Shulamite, 6:13, and a little sister, 8:8. The Shulamite was “the Cinderella” of the family, 1:5, naturally beautiful but unnoticed. Her brothers were likely half brothers, 1:6. They made her work very hard tending the vineyards, so that she had little opportunity to care for her personal appearance, 1:6. She pruned the vines and set traps for the little foxes, 2:15. She also kept the flocks, 1:8. Being out in the open so much, she became sunburned, 1:5.

One day a handsome stranger came to the vineyard. It was Solomon disguised. He showed an interest in her, and she became embarrassed concerning her personal appearance, 1:6. She took him for a shepherd and asked about his flocks, 1:7. He answered evasively, 1:8, but also spoke

loving words to her, 1:8-10, and promised rich gifts for the future, 1:11. He won her heart and left with the promise that some day he would return. She dreamed of him at night and sometimes thought he was near, 3:1. Finally he did return in all his kingly splendor to make her his bride, 3:6-7.³

The above description will help you catch something of the tone of the book as you begin your survey study.

#### G. SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION

The Song of Solomon has been interpreted in three different ways:

1. *Naturalistic*. It is a human love story, of literary merit, with no typical or figurative meaning intended.

2. *Allegorical*. It is purely figurative, not based on historical fact.

3. *Typical*. It is teaching by (1) example, from historical facts; and (2) type, from viewing these historical facts as figurative representations. In the words of Scroggie, “As in Jonah, we have allegory emerging from history.”⁴ G. Campbell Morgan describes this methodology of interpretation.

The songs should be treated then, first as simple and yet sublime songs of human affection. When they are thus understood, reverently the thoughts may be lifted into the higher value of setting forth the joys of the communion between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God, and ultimately between the Church and Christ.⁵

This survey guide follows the typical view.

## H. TYPICAL TEACHING

As indicated earlier, the characters of the dialogue of Canticles are Solomon, the Shulamite woman, and the daughters of Jerusalem. In the story, Solomon is the bridegroom, and the Shulamite woman is the bride.⁶ Two applications of typical teaching may be intended.

1. Israel is the bride, and God the Bridegroom. Read these other Old Testament passages where this bride and groom relationship is clearly taught: Isaiah 54:5-6; Jeremiah 2:2; Ezekiel 16:8-14⁷; Hosea 2:16,⁸ 18-20. Jewish believers of Old Testament times clearly saw this typical intent of Canticles, which helped to impress them regarding the book's canonicity.

2. The Church is the Bride, and Christ the Bridegroom. Read Ephesians 5:23-25; 2 Corinthians 11:1-2; Revelation 19:7-9; 21:9.

A third application is derived from the

second, in the sense that an *individual* believer (of the whole believing Church) is the particular object of Christ's love. From a practical standpoint this is the most intimate application which a Christian can make of the book's typical teaching for his own Christian life.

Some Bible students see another character involved in the story of Canticles: a shepherd-lover (1:7), from whose affection Solomon tries to lure the Shulamite woman away:

Solomon uses all the dazzle and splendor of his court to woo the girl away from her true love, seeking to get her to become one of his wives instead. In like manner the world is ever seeking to attract away from Christ those who are "espoused" to Him. Solomon is unable to accomplish his goal, however, for the Shulamite resists

all his overtures and remains true to her beloved shepherd to whom, at last, she is reunited.⁹

The reason why there are different views as to the “plot” of Canticles is that the speakers are not identified by name in the Bible text. For example, the two-speaker view (Solomon, Shulamite woman) says that Solomon speaks all of 4:1-15; whereas the three-speaker view says that Solomon is the speaker of 4:1-6, while 4:7-15 are the words of the shepherd-lover. But, as John Phillips points out, “The abiding value of the Song of Solomon is clear whichever view is taken. As human life finds its highest fulfillment in the love of man and woman, so spiritual life finds its highest fulfillment in the love of Christ and His Church.”¹⁰

An interesting comparison has been made between Ecclesiastes and the Song of

# Solomon involving their pointing to Christ:

In Ecclesiastes we learn that without Christ we cannot be satisfied, even if we possess the whole world—the heart is too large for the object. In the Song of Solomon we learn that if we turn from the world and set our affections on Christ, we cannot fathom the infinite preciousness of His love—the Object is too large for the heart.¹¹

## I. PURPOSES

The purposes of the Song of Solomon are:

1. literal: to honor pure human love and marriage
2. figurative: to show the Lord's love for Israel, and Christ's love for His Church and for each individual Christian; how the Bride in each case should return that love

The literal purpose of the book has often been twisted by those not prepared to read frank and intimate expressions of love. Asceticism and lust—two perversions of the holiness of marriage—are slain by the message of this book. If the reader is licentiously excited when he reads the Song of Solomon, he is out of tune with its purpose. The book's literal message is perverted only by those who do not see the purity and true beauty of all of God's creative acts.

### **III. SURVEY**

Keep in mind that the purpose of survey study is to view the book in a general way, and thus discover its main theme and related subjects.

#### **A. A FIRST READING**

Because the parts of the dialogue of these

poems are not identified in the Bible text as to who is speaking, it is important to mark your Bible, showing who the speakers are, if your Bible does not already show this in its headings.¹² The speakers shown below *begin* each new part at the verses cited. Mark these in your Bible.¹³

The Shulamite woman: 1:2, 4a, 5, 12, 16;  
2:3; 4:16; 5:2, 10; 6:2; 7:96; 8:10, 14

Solomon: 1:8, 15; 2:2; 4:1; 5:1a; 6:4, 136;  
8:56, 13

Daughters of Jerusalem: 1:46, 11; 3:6; 5:9;  
6:1, 13a; 8:5a; 8

Read through the Song of Solomon in one sitting, aloud if possible. What are your first impressions? What one word clearly expresses the main subject of this book?

## B. SURVEY CHART

Read through the book a second time, and

observe other things which you did not see in the first reading.

The Song of Solomon is difficult to outline in detail because a progressing plot is not detectable, except in a general way. [Chart 77](#) will help you see the main parts of this book, on which you may base your later studies.

1. Note on the chart that Canticles has a title verse (1:1), but no formal conclusion, such as we are accustomed to find in a Bible book. Read 1:1; then read the last few verses of chapter 8.

2. Observe the six main segments shown on the chart, beginning at 1:2. Mark these major divisions in your Bible.

3. Study the outline shown directly under the main base line (beginning with “Bride muses”). The heading “The wedding” is based partly on 3:116: “the day of his

wedding.” Read 3:6-11. Scan the Bible text of the whole book again, segment by segment, and see if this outline represents the contents of each.

4. The top of the survey chart divides the Song of Solomon into three main parts. What are they?

5. What outline on the chart divides the book into two main parts?

6. Note the progression from *quest* to *conquest*, involving bride and groom. Read the verses in your Bible. (In fact, underline the verses in your Bible as strong verses.)

7. Try constructing outlines of your own to represent the contents of this book.

#### IV. UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

The Song of Solomon is unique among the books of the Bible in many ways. Some of these are described below.

1. It is one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible. Its Oriental expressions of intimate love partly account for this.

2. It is the only book of the Bible where love between humans is the main plot and theme. (Other similar passages of love are to be found in Psalm 45 and the book of Ruth.)

3. There is only one direct reference to God in the book (“the LORD,” 8:6). (In the King James Version there is no such reference. Instead, at 8:6 the Hebrew word *Yah* is translated “vehement.” The book of Esther records no name of God.)

4. There is no specific or direct reference to sin.

5. There is no specific or direct reference to the religious realm as such.

6. No other Old Testament book is alluded to here.

7. The book is not alluded to by Christ, nor is it quoted elsewhere in the New Testament.¹⁴

## V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

Read the key words which are listed on [Chart 77](#). Add others to the list. Do the same for the key verses.

## VI. APPLICATIONS

This book was written especially to stir up the *feelings* of God's people. Ecclesiastes stresses *thinking*; the Song of Solomon stresses *feeling*, of the meditative type. Andrew Miller wrote long ago, "There is nothing which the men of this world dread more than solitude and reflection. They would rather be overpressed with engagements than have leisure for thought."¹⁵ Has human nature changed

since then?

The Christological purpose of Canticles is to inspire Christians to take time to meditate on Jesus Christ. “The calm, reflective quiet of the soul in communion with the Person of the exalted Lord, is what characterises its sweetest moments while here on earth.”¹⁶

Canticles’ teachings about love should be applied in two ways: typical and literal.

#### A. TYPICAL

The key to the full meaning and purpose of the Song of Solomon is Jesus Christ. The book as a love story is unexcelled only if Christ is the Lover in its pages—for no one can surpass His love: “Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the *Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me*” (Gal 2:20, italics added). In the Song of Solomon it is the *person* of Christ, not His *work*, which is the

prominent characteristic (“He is wholly desirable,” 5:16). The Christian reader who involves himself in the book is overwhelmed by the beautiful and reassuring truth of his union and communion with such a Saviour.

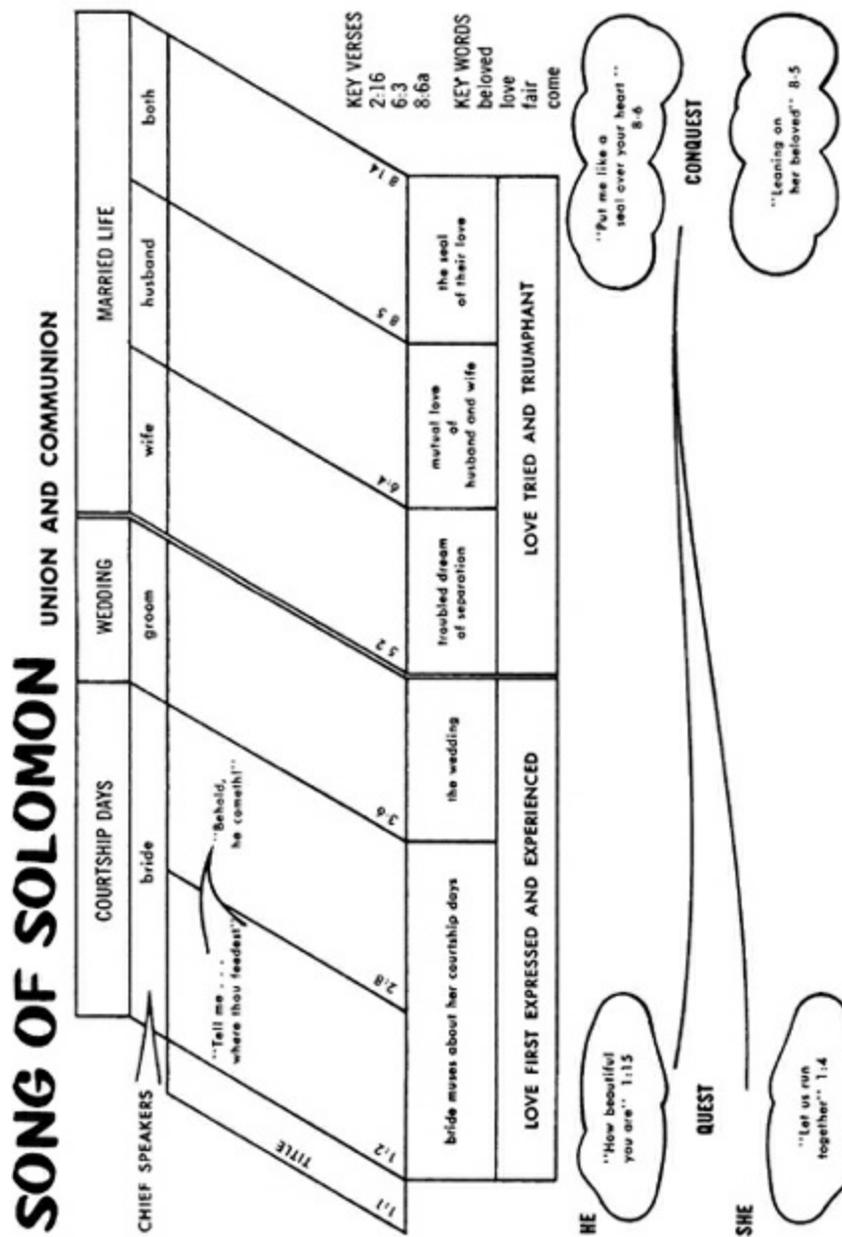
## B. LITERAL

No other book of the Bible gives such an extended description of the beauties of a love relationship between a man and a woman. The inclusion of this human love story in God’s Book demonstrates the sacred honor which He has given to the union of husband and wife. Study the Song of Solomon to learn its literal teachings about the kind of human love that honors God. Below is a partial list of aspects of *love* which are referred to in the book.

physical: beauty, purity, body, sexual instincts, desire, attraction, satisfaction, giving and receiving, presence and

separation, physical wedlock

non-physical (social, mental, and spiritual):  
attraction, companionship, union and  
communion, hope, pleasure, giving and  
receiving, presence and separation,  
tenderness, sacrifice, faithfulness, praise,  
beauty, love, purity, wholesomeness,  
humility



## VII. FURTHER STUDY

For a concluding study, read the following New Testament passages for their teaching about the physical body and marriage:

physical body: Romans 6:12-13, 19; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; 1 Thessalonians

5:23

marriage: Matthew 19:5-6; 1 Corinthians 7;  
Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Timothy 4:1-5;  
5:14; Hebrews 13:4

## VIII. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Baxter, J. Sidlow. *Explore the Book*, 3:169-95.

Delitzsch, Franz. *Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, pp. 1-15.

Harper, Andrew. *The Song of Solomon*, pp. ix-li.

Young, Edward J. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 323-28.

Zoeckler, Otto. "The Song of Solomon." In Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, pp. 1-47.

### COMMENTARIES

Adeney, Walter F. *The Song of Solomon*.

LaBotz, Paul. *The Romance of the Ages*.

Cameron, W. J. "Song of Solomon." In *The New Bible Commentary*.

Ironside, H. A. *Addresses on the Song of Solomon*.

Miller, Andrew. *Meditations on the Song of Solomon*.

Taylor, J. Hudson. *Union and Communion*.

Woudstra, Sierd. "Song of Solomon." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

1. For example, a person in love exercise his will in choosing whom to love.

2. Franz Delitzsch identifies six acts of the melodrama:

a. The mutual affection of the lovers 1:2—  
2:7

- b. The mutual seeking and finding of the lovers 2:8—3:5
- c. The home-bringing of the bride, and the marriage 3:6—5:1
- d. Love disdained, but won again 5:2—6:9
- e. Shulamith, the attractively fair but humble Princess 6:10—8:4
- f. The ratification of the covenant of love in Shulamith's native home 8:5-14 (Franz Delitzch, *Commentary on the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes*, pp. ix-x).

3. H. A. Ironside, *Addresses on the Song of Solomon*, pp. 17-21, summarized by Merrill Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, pp. 299-300.

4. W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 1:118.

5. G. Campbell Morgan, *The Analyzed Bible*, p. 197.

6. A figurative interpretation of the daughters of Jerusalem, if intended, might be that these

are not saved ones, though they are near the Kingdom of God.

7. Ezekiel 16:20-21, 32, 38 reveals the unfaithfulness of Israel to her Husband, God.

8. In the King James Version, “Ishi” means “my husband,” and “Baali” means “my master.”

9. See John Phillips, *Exploring the Scriptures*, p. 116. One commentary which follows this view is Arthur E. Cundall, *Proverbs to Isaiah 39*, pp. 50 if.

10. Phillips, p. 116.

11. Quoted by Robert Lee in *The Outlined Bible*, p. 21.

12. Versions which identify the speakers include: *New Scofield Reference Bible* (King James Version); *New American Standard Bible*; *Berkeley Version*; and *The Living Bible* (paraphrase).

13. For a few of the parts it is difficult to determine who the speaker is (e.g., 6:11). This accounts for differences shown in the headings

of commentaries and versions. The identifications shown here are for the most part those of the *New American Standard Bible*.

14. The historicity of the book's action is clear. One support of this is its geographical setting—there are over fifteen geographical references. (See [Map R](#).)

15. Andrew Miller, *Meditations on the Song of Solomon*, p. 1.

16. Ibid.

# **Part 4**

## ***Ministries of the Prophets***

Seventeen books of prophecy are in our English Bible. These were written by sixteen different prophets, if Jeremiah wrote Lamentations as well as the book bearing his name. The books are classified as either “major” or “minor,” the classification assigned primarily for their relative length. The prophecies were written over a period of more than four centuries, from about 840 B.C. (Obadiah) to 420 B.C. (Malachi). Below are the names of the writers, listed in the order of their books appearing in the Old Testament canon.

Writers of the Major Prophetical Books	Writers of the Minor Prophetical Books		
Isaiah	Hosea	Jonah	Zephaniah
Jeremiah	Joel	Micah	Haggai
Ezekiel	Amos	Nahum	Zechariah
Daniel	Obadiah	Habakkuk	Malachi

Why the seventeen prophetic books were placed at the end of the Old Testament Scriptures is not known. George Adam Smith

says that perhaps “it was held fitting that prophecy should occupy the last outposts of the Old Testament towards the New.”¹

1. George Adam Smith, *The book of the twelve*, 1:3.

## *Isaiah: The Glorious Throne of Jehovah the Holy One*

Of all the writing prophets, Isaiah is justly accounted the greatest. His prophecy is one of the longest, is quoted more frequently than any other in the New Testament, and he more often than any other prophet tells of the coming Messiah. Isaiah prophesied for about fifty years (see [Chart 80](#)) during very critical times of both kingdoms, Israel and Judah. He was greatly responsible for the sweeping reforms introduced by Hezekiah, who was one of Judah's righteous kings. Merrill Unger says this of Isaiah: "Isaiah ... is the great messianic prophet and prince of OT seers. For splendor of diction, brilliance of imagery, versatility and beauty of style,

profundity and breadth of prophetic vision, he is without peer.”²

## **I. THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS**

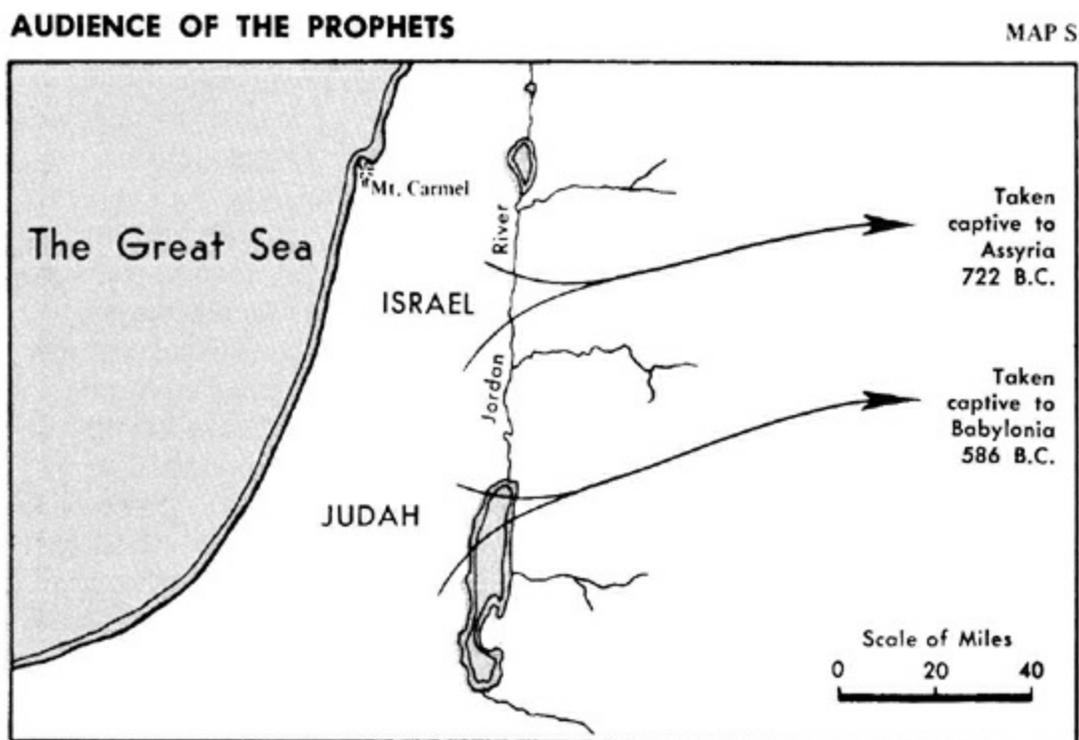
Without question the ministry of the prophet, along with that of priest, judge, and king, was crucial in the life of the Jews in Old Testament times. The word “prophet,” in its various forms, appears over six hundred sixty times in the Bible, two-thirds of which are in the Old Testament. One cannot spend too much time studying the prophetic books.

Since this is the opening chapter of the section on the prophets, attention should first be fixed on the general subject of Old Testament prophecy.

### **A. THE AUDIENCE OF THE PROPHETS**

Most messages of the Old Testament prophetic books were addressed to the

generations of God's people who lived approximately between the years 840 and 420 b.c. (see [Chart 45](#)). The ten tribes, known specifically as the kingdom of Israel,³ lived in north Canaan (New Testament areas of Samaria and Galilee) before they were deported by the Assyrians in 722 b.c. The other two tribes, known as the kingdom of Judah, lived in south Canaan before they were taken captive by the Babylonians in 586 b.c. This is shown on [Map S](#).



The people of God were not always divided into two camps. The split of the kingdom came at the end of Solomon's reign, Jeroboam I being the first king of the north, and Rehoboam the first king of the south. This story is recorded in 1 Kings 12-16. Recall your earlier studies of these tragic years of the people's history.

Recall from your studies of chapter 12 that the history of the Jews during Old Testament times generally falls into four periods, called Camp, Commonwealth, Crown, and Captivity (with restoration). (See [Chart 38](#).) The audience of the writing prophets was the people living during the last two periods.

## B. THE TERM "PROPHECY"

The primary task of the Old Testament prophets was not to *foretell* future events but to *forthtell* the will of God which He had

revealed to His prophets. Concerning the verb “prophecy,” Gleason Archer writes:

The Hebrew word is *nibba*’ ... a word whose etymology is much disputed. The best founded explanation, however, seems to relate this root to the Akkadian verb *nabu*, which means “to summon, announce, call ....” Thus the verb *nibba* would doubtless signify one who has been called or appointed to proclaim as a herald the message of God Himself. From this verb comes the characteristic word for prophet, *nabi*’, one who has been called. On this interpretation the prophet was ... one called by God to proclaim as a herald from the court of heaven the message to be transmitted from God to man.⁴

### C. OTHER TITLES APPLIED TO THE PROPHETS

The prophets of the Old Testament were sometimes designated by other titles. Of

these, the three most frequently used were:

1. “man of God”—suggesting an intimate spiritual relationship
2. “seer”—suggesting perception of the true, and insight into the invisible things of God (cf. 1 Sam 9:9)
3. “servant” of Jehovah

The prophets were also known as messengers of Jehovah, men of the Spirit (cf. Hos 9:7), interpreters and spokesmen for God.

#### D. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE PROPHET

Listed below are some of the qualifications of the high office of the prophet. Considering the nature of the prophet’s work, it is not surprising that the qualifications were so strict:

1. *Sovereign calling.* God’s sovereign will determined who were His prophets (cf. Isa

6; Jer 1).

2. *Special abilities.* These were given by God's Spirit, enabling the prophet to perceive the truth (as "seer"), and equipping him with the gift of communicating the revelation of God to people.

3. *Spiritual qualities.* These were not a few. Included were unselfishness, obedience to the voice of God, love, faith, courage, and long-suffering.

#### **E. THE ORAL AND WRITING PROPHETS**

All of God's prophets shared the same purpose for which they were divinely called. Their primary ministry was to deliver a message from God to an unbelieving and apostate Israel (cf. Deut 18:18-19). Some of these, now referred to as the writing (or literary) prophets, were chosen of God not only to a public-speaking ministry, but also to be the authors of the inspired canonical

books of prophecy. The others, now referred to as the oral prophets, ministered mostly by the spoken word.

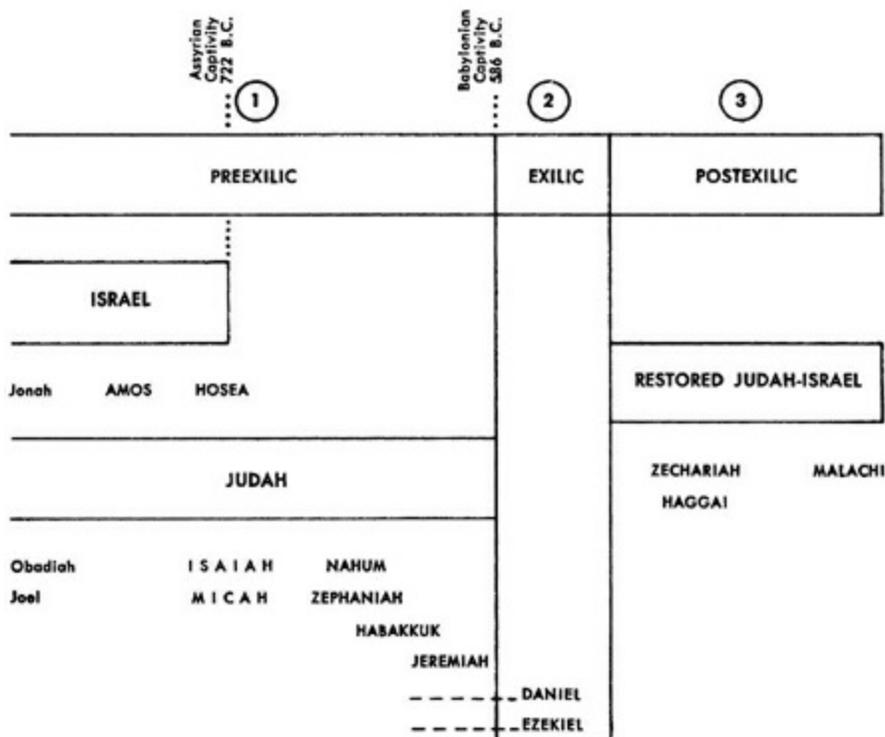
1. *Oral prophets.* The Bible records the names of only a few of the oral prophets. And most of these names are not commonly known. Refer to [Chart 45](#) and locate the following oral prophets: Ahijah, Iddo, Jehu, Elijah, Elisha, Oded, Shemaiah, Azariah, Hanani, Jahaziel, and Huldah. To this list might be added Nathan of Gad, of David's generation; Micaiah; and Eliezer. Which of these names do you recognize? You may want to look up the unfamiliar names in a Bible dictionary for a brief description of their part in Bible history. Note from [Chart 45](#) that most of these prophets ministered before the appearance of the writing prophets.

The office of prophet probably originated

around the time of Samuel, who founded and presided over various schools of young prophets (“company of the prophets,” 1 Sam 19:20). These prophets are also classified as oral prophets. Concerning these schools, Fred E. Young writes:

THREE PERIODS OF THE PROPHETS

CHART 78



The origin and history of these schools are obscure. According to [1 Sam] 3:1, before the call of Samuel as a prophet, the prophetic word was rare in Israel, and prophecy was not widespread. There is little doubt that these unions

of prophets arose in the time of Samuel, and were called into existence by him .... These unions may have grown until the time of Elijah and Elisha. They arose only in Israel, not in Judah.⁵

2. *Writing prophets.* As noted earlier, sixteen writing prophets authored the seventeen books of prophecy in our English Bible. Study [Chart 78](#), which shows the three main periods during which the prophets ministered.

a) Preexilic. Eleven prophets ministered during the years leading up to the Assyrian Captivity (722 B.C.) and the Babylonian Captivity (586 B.C.). Notice the two big clusters of four prophets each:

TO ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY: *Amos* and *Hosea*, prophets mainly to Israel; *Isaiah*

and *Micah*, prophets mainly to Judah  
TO BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY: *Nahum*,  
*Zephaniah*, *Jeremiah*, and *Habakkuk*  
(Judah)

THREE EARLIER PROPHETS: *Jonah*  
(Israel), *Obadiah*, and *Joel* (Judah)

- b) Exilic. Two of the four major prophets were prophets of the Exile. They were *Ezekiel* and *Daniel*.
- c) Postexilic. The three postexilic prophets were *Zechariah*, *Haggai*, and *Malachi*. The first two ministered in the early years of Israel's return to their land, and *Malachi* ministered at the close of this restoration period.

The writing prophets, in addition to composing their prophecies in written form, also had a wide ministry of speaking at public gatherings in the Temple or on the streets. For future generations of God's

people, however, their major work was in their writing.

## F. MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET

Whether the prophet was called to preach or to write or to do both, his message was the same. All the prophetic words of the Old Testament could probably be compiled under the following four large areas of truth about which the prophet engaged himself:

*1. Instruction of the great truths about God and man.* The prophets devoted much time telling the people about God—His character, His domain, His purposes, and His Law. They also gave a true diagnosis of the spiritual health of the nation as a whole and of individual souls.

*2. Warning and appeal to those living in sin.* It cannot be said that God brings judgment upon men without forewarning. Over and over again the prophets warned of judgment

to come for sin, and exhorted the people to Repent and turn to God.

3. *Comfort and exhortation to those trusting and obeying God.* These are the warm and bright portions of the prophets' messages. The last part of Isaiah abounds in such notes of hope and consolation.

4. *Prediction of events to come.* Prophetic predictions were of two major subjects: (1) national and international events, of both near and far-distant future; and (2) the comings of Jesus the Messiah—His first and second comings.

When you read a book of prophecy, various things should be kept in mind. Some of these are briefly described below.

a) The immediate setting. Be acquainted with the political and religious conditions which prevailed at the time any given prophet was speaking. For most of the

prophetic books this can be ascertained by reading in the books of Kings and Chronicles the history of the kings who were ruling at any particular period. For example, the first verse of Isaiah gives the names of the four kings who were reigning while Isaiah was prophesying. By turning back to the historical books and reading the accounts of these reigns, one can realize the evils which existed and against which Isaiah was thundering.

The setting of foreign powers also throws light on the prophetic books. For each book you will want to know something of the surrounding nations, especially those vying for world suzerainty. The three reigning world powers during the years of the prophets were:

Assyrian—up to 612 B.C. (fall of Nineveh)

Neo-Babylonian—up to 539 B.C. (fall of

Babylon)

Persian—up to Malachi (and beyond)

b) The God of history. You will appreciate and understand more of the historical movements of the prophets' days if you always keep in mind that human history is in the sovereign hands of an omniscient, omnipotent God. Everything transpires either by His permissive or directive will. He foreknows every event before it becomes history, and on many occasions He gave such prophetic revelation to His prophets to share with the nations.

c) The chosen nation. Israel was God's elect nation, called into being by His sovereign decree, and preserved through the ages (sometimes in a very small remnant) in fulfillment of His covenant originally made with Abraham.

d) The four prophetic points. The utterances

of the prophets, for the most part, centered around four points in history: (1) their own time;

(2) the threatening captivities (Assyrian and Babylonian), and subsequent restoration; (3) the coming of their Messiah; and (4) the Millennium. This is illustrated by [Chart 79](#).

It was as though the prophet were on some high eminence (see A on [Chart 79](#)) looking off into the distance and speaking of what he saw. Most often he saw the sins which prevailed in his own day, and spoke of them (see one on the chart). Then he would look off to the day when the nation would be taken out of their land into captivity. He also saw an eventual regathering of the Jews from the captivities (see two). At times the Spirit enabled him to look further into the future and foretell of the coming Messiah (see three).

Occasionally he saw still further into the future, and spoke of a glorious time of restoration and peace coming to God's people in the Millennium (see four).

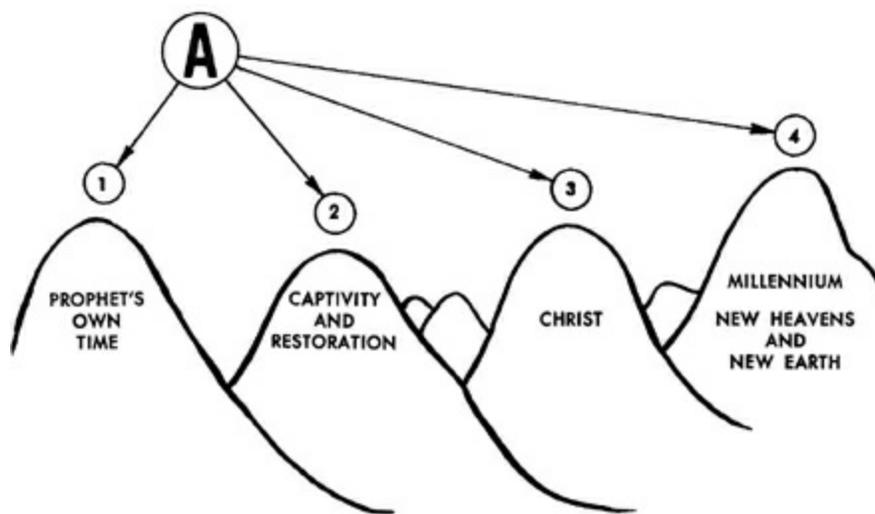
In order to get the true meaning of the words of a prophet, one must determine in each individual utterance which of these four events is his subject.⁶ The very language of the prophet and the context in which he speaks the words usually indicate this. For example, read Isaiah 53 and determine to which of these four points in history (as indicated on [Chart 79](#)) the prophet is referring.

e). Two Messianic themes. When a prophet speaks of Christ, he refers to Him in either of His two comings—either in the first coming, as the suffering Messiah (e.g., Isa 53), or in the second coming, as the reigning Messiah (e.g., Isa 11). The prophets were

apparently not aware that a long interval of time would transpire between Christ's manifestation in suffering (first advent) and Christ's revelation in glory (second advent). His suffering and His reigning appeared to them to be very close in time. The student of prophecy must keep this in mind when he studies the predictive sections of the prophetic books.

FOUR PROPHETIC POINTS

CHART 79



## II. THE MAN ISAIAH

Isaiah is the first of four prophets known as the major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel). See [Chart 94](#), which

compares the lives and ministries of these men of God.

#### A. HIS NAME

The name Isaiah translates a short form of the prophet's Hebrew name, *Yeshaiiah*. The long form, which is how his name appears in his book and in all other Old Testament references, is *Yeshayahu*. This is a compound name having such meanings as "Jehovah saves," "Jehovah is salvation," and "salvation of Jehovah."

Surely the prophet was given this name by divine design. Whenever people mentioned his name, they were audibly reiterating the great theme of his message. In the book which he wrote, two of his favorite words are those translated "he shall save" and "salvation."

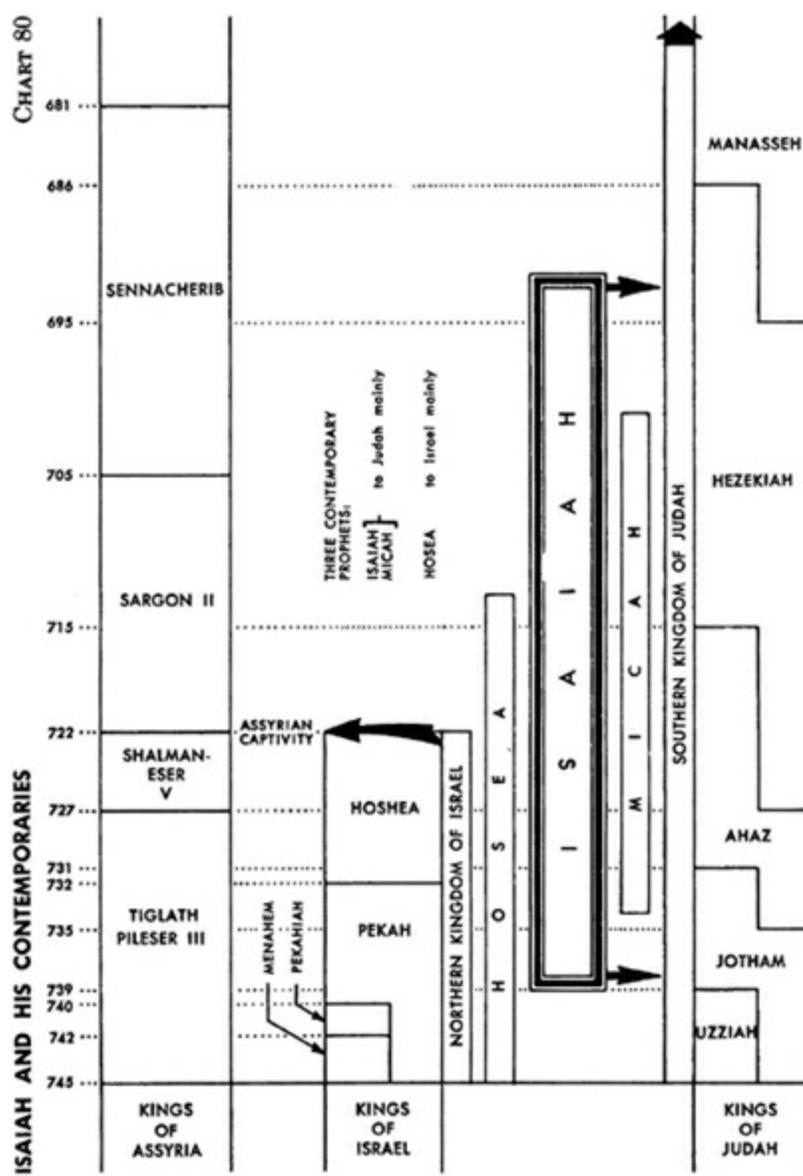
#### B. THE TIMES IN WHICH HE LIVED

Dates of Isaiah's birth and death are

unknown. If the date of Isaiah 7:3 is around 734 B.C., and if Isaiah's son at that time was not a mere child, Isaiah may have been born around 760 B.C. "His early years were therefore spent in the prosperous, luxurious and careless days of king Uzziah, the conditions of which are reflected in chapters iL, iii."⁷

From Isaiah 1:1 we learn that most of the prophet's public ministry took place during the reigns of these kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. It is possible that he did no public preaching after Manasseh succeeded Hezekiah on the throne. Consult a Bible dictionary for a review of the careers of each of the above-named kings.

Study carefully [Chart 80](#), and compare it with the larger [Chart 45](#).



Observe from the chart that Hosea and Micah were contemporary prophets with Isaiah (cf. Hos 1:1 and Mie 1:1). Isaiah prophesied during the last seventeen years of the Northern Kingdom. His message, however, was primarily to the Southern Kingdom. When Israel's throne was tottering

because of sin, Judah also was following her sister kingdom in the downward path, though with slower steps. For the historical setting of Isaiah, read 2 Kings 14-21.

### C. HIS CHARACTER

Isaiah was bold, fearless, and absolutely sincere. He talked to his fellow countrymen in plain language, showing them how they looked in God's sight. No class of society escaped his scathing denunciations.

Isaiah was stern and uncompromising when the occasion demanded, but he also had a tender heart. He warned of judgment because he loved his people, and like a loving mother he tenderly wooed them to heed his counsel so they could claim the prospects of a glorious future.

Isaiah was also a man of great spirituality and strong faith. Associating so intimately and constantly with God, he had no place

for worldliness and doubt. He saw men and things from God's point of view, in the light of eternity.

Isaiah was a many-sided genius. His ministry of prophecy was enhanced by his being gifted as a poet, a statesman, and an orator.

#### **D. HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY**

Very little is known of Isaiah's personal history. Emphasis in the Bible is given to the message rather than to the man. All we know of his parentage is that he was the son of Amoz (Isa 1:1; not the prophet Amos). His father may have been a person of prominence, for thirteen times in the Old Testament, Isaiah is referred to as the "son of Amoz."

There is a Jewish tradition that Isaiah was of royal descent, a brother of King Amaziah, and so a cousin of King Uzziah. His writings

show that he was blessed with a fine intellect and a good education. He was very familiar with the Scriptures and well posted on the political affairs of his day.

Isaiah was married, and his wife was a prophetess (Isa 8:3). He had two sons whose names were Maher-shalal-hash-baz (“speedy is the prey,” 8:3) and Shear-jashub (“a remnant shall return,” 7:3). These peculiar names illustrated the two great points in Isaiah’s message to the nation. First, if the nation refused to turn from their idolatry and sin, God would punish them by allowing a nation to conquer them and carry them out of their land to remain captives in another country for many years. The picture is that of a ferocious wolf pouncing upon a lamb and taking it away to his den. The second name symbolically prophesied that after God had punished the nation by this captivity He would allow them to return to

their own land, but that only a remnant would avail themselves of this opportunity.

The time and circumstances of Isaiah's death are not known. According to tradition (Talmud), he was sawed in half by the wicked King Manasseh (cf. 2 Kings 21:16; Heb 11:37).

### III. THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

#### A. STYLE

The book of Isaiah is basically a series of discourses by the prophet delivered at different times and on different occasions. The arrangement of these discourses is generally chronological whenever history is involved.⁸ The topical arrangement will be studied later when a survey is made of the book.

Isaiah's style is lofty and strongly rhetorical. He excelled as an orator, and designed his discourses to attract and stir his audiences. Though his writing is not poetry, he uses many of the devices of the poet, especially figures of speech. He excels in variety of vocabulary, and in the use of words to convey powerful truths. Perhaps the most biting and stinging method he employs is that of satire. (Satire is the use of

sarcasm or irony to expose or rebuke actions and attitudes. E.g., 40:19-20; 41:6-7; 44:13-20.)

## **B. SIMILARITY OF OUTLINE**

In character and broad outline, many of Isaiah's discourses are very similar. The following four points can usually be seen in such discourses: (1) indictment or accusation; (2) threat; (3) exhortation or entreaty; (4) promise of purification or blessing.

The first discourse, chapter 1, is an illustration of this:

1. The Indictment or Accusation (vv. 1-9)
2. The Threat (vv. 10-15)
3. The Exhortation or Entreaty (vv. 16-20)
4. The Promise of Purification and Blessing (vv. 21-31)

## **C. SONGS IN ISAIAH**

Although Isaiah is not a book of poetry, various songs and refrains appear throughout the book. Some of the more prominent ones are:

1. Song of the Vineyard (chap. 5)
2. Song of the Redeemed (chap. 12)
3. Song of the Blossoming Desert (chap. 35)
4. Song of the Restored Wife (chap. 54)

#### **IV. SURVEY**

Follow the procedures of survey study established in the earlier chapters of this book. This includes scanning the entire book of Isaiah and assigning a chapter title to each of the sixty-six chapters. Compare the opening and closing chapters. Look for groupings of subject matter. Be alert to key repeated words and phrases. Determine a theme and title of the book.

Study carefully the survey [Chart 81](#). Observe that there are two main parts in the book of Isaiah, the division coming between chapters 39 and 40. Does this observation agree with the overall patterns of your chapter titles? On the survey chart the two main divisions are identified as (1) Judgment of God and (2) Comfort of God. Think more about these two subjects as they are discussed below.

#### **A. JUDGMENT OF GOD (chaps. 1-39)**

*Judgment* is the prominent thought of the first division of Isaiah—judgment on Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, and judgment on the nations which are hostile to the chosen people. But although judgment is the keynote of this first division, scattered here and there are promises for Judah, and hopes for both Jew and Gentile, in the predictions of the Messiah. Amid the darkness there are

frequent flashes of the “great light” mentioned in 9:2; glimpses of the “bright morning star” (see Rev 22:16), and the coming Redeemer, of whom Isaiah speaks so fully in the later chapters.

Looking more closely at the chapters, it is convenient for study to subdivide this first division. For example, the chart shows that the first twelve chapters are discourses addressed chiefly to Judah and Jerusalem; chapters 13-27 are discourses regarding the nations which were hostile to Judah; chapters 28-35, various warnings and promises; and the last four chapters of the section are purely historical, being a review of Hezekiah’s reign, given in 2 Kings 18-20. (Recall from [Chart 80](#) when Hezekiah reigned as king.) Read in the Bible text each of the sections just cited, and try to justify the outlines shown on the chart.

## B. COMFORT OF GOD (chaps. 40-66)

In this second division of the book, *comfort* is the predominant note, although there are repeated warnings to the wicked.

The discourses in this division are chiefly predictive. They fall into three groups of nine chapters each. Read 48:22 and observe the common utterance, ““no peace for the wicked,’ says the LORD” which concludes each of the first two groups (cf. 57:21).

The first of the three groups (chaps. 40-48) compares Jehovah, the true God, with idols, the false gods. The second group (chaps. 49-57) speaks almost entirely concerning the Messiah. The third group (chaps. 58-66) describes the final restoration of God’s people, with God on the throne (66:1) acknowledged as Lord over all (66:23).

Note also the following outline on the

chart:

Redemption Promised

Redemption Provided

Redemption Realized

In your survey reading of Isaiah, try to observe how the above outlines represent the various sections. Study the other parts of [Chart 81](#) for what they contribute to an understanding of the overall message of Isaiah.

An easy way to remember the broad organization of Isaiah by chapters is to note these coincidental likenesses to the entire Bible:

- a) Isaiah has sixty-six chapters. The Bible has sixty-six books.
- b) Isaiah has two main divisions: the first, of thirty-nine chapters; and the second, of twenty-seven chapters. The Bible has

two main parts: the Old Testament, of thirty-nine books; and the New Testament, of twenty-seven books.

- c) The prevailing note in the first division of Isaiah is *judgment*; in the second division, *comfort*. The prevailing note of the Old Testament is *Law*; of the New Testament, *grace*.
- d) In the first section of Isaiah, there are frequent allusions to and predictions of the Messiah; but He is described with great fullness in the second. In the Old Testament there are frequent allusions to Christ in types and prophecies; but in the New Testament He is presented in all His fullness.⁹

## V. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

### A. ISAIAH'S CALL TO THE PROPHETIC OFFICE

Isaiah must have received his call to the

prophetic office at an early age. He describes the circumstances vividly in chapter 6. Recall the similar experiences of Moses (Exod 3) and Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9). When God showed Himself in a vision to these men, they recognized themselves as vile, worthless creatures, with no power or wisdom of their own. They surrendered to God, and wholly committed themselves to do His bidding, whatever it might be. Isaiah's words of consecration have been an inspiration and challenge to multitudes of God's servants: "Here am I. Send me!" (6:8).

## **B. WARNING AND COMFORT**

Isaiah, like most of the prophets, preached a twofold message, as discussed earlier in this chapter: warning of judgment for sin, and comfort of salvation for righteousness. In his book the two themes stand out in bright contrast. John Phillips writes, "One

moment his book is black with the thunder and the darkness of the storm. The next, the rainbow shines through, and he sweeps his readers on to the Golden Age that still lies ahead for the world.”¹⁰ Isaiah spoke mainly to the chosen people of God, but his message was also directed to foreign nations, prophesying judgment but also proclaiming the evangel to them (read 11:10; 42:6; 45:22).

### C. MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

Isaiah is known mostly for his Messianic prophecies. Some of these, such as chapter 53, are classic examples of literature at its finest. There are more Messianic prophecies in Isaiah than in any other prophetic book. Unger says, “Every glory of our Lord and every aspect of His life on the earth are set forth in this great evangelical prophecy.”¹¹ Read the following passages and note what

each prophecy of Christ contributes to the topics listed:

salvation: 12:1-2; 40:10; 52:7; 61:1

pardon: 6:7; 40:2; 53:5; 55:7

cleansing: 1:18, 25; 27:9; 52:15

peace: 9:6; 26:12; 32:17; 53:5

Continue this exercise by reading the following passages, noting what each says about Christ: 7:14-15; 8:8; 9:1-2, 7; 11:1-2; 35:5-6; 40:12-18; 42:1-3; 50:5-6; 51:13; 52:13-14; 53:1-12; 59:20; 61:2; 63:1-6; 66:15-19.

One can easily see why Isaiah is called the evangelical prophet. He speaks of Christ and of His redemption with almost the same clearness and fullness as any of the New Testament writers. The way of salvation is plainly and simply set forth. In the passages you have just studied you have seen

prophecies concerning such things as His virgin birth, human and divine names, twofold nature, humiliation, sacrifice, and exaltation.

#### D. PROPHETIC PROSPECTIVE

Isaiah, like many of the prophets, was given divine revelation concerning four prophetic points: (1) the prophet's own time, (2) coming captivity, (3) coming of Christ, (4) new heavens and new earth. (See [Chart 79](#).) How these are distributed throughout the book is summarized below.

1. *The prophet's own time.* Messages concerning this appear throughout the book. Forthtelling was Isaiah's major role.

2. *Captivity.* Isaiah foresaw Judah taken captive by the Babylonians. God alone knew when the captivity would come (586 B.C.). The first mention of Babylon (Shinar) as the captor is in 11:11. In the days of King

Hezekiah the prophecy was made very clear (cf. 39:6).

3. *Coming of Christ.* These prophecies abound in the “Book of Consolation” (chaps. 40-66). They concern both the first and second comings of Christ.

4. *New heavens and new earth.* Isaiah prophesies of end times, especially with reference to the Millennium, with Christ as the Prince of peace (9:6), and the elect nation of Israel gathered together after their worldwide dispersion (27:12-13; 43:5-7; 65:8-10). On the most distant horizon he sees the new heavens and new earth (65:17).

## VI. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

One of the key phrases of Isaiah is “Holy One of Israel.” It is the prophet’s favorite reference to God, appearing more than twenty-five times in the book (first

appearance at 1:4).

Isaiah is a book about “The Glorious Throne of Jehovah, the Holy One.” An appropriate key verse is “Holy, Holy Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory” (6:3).

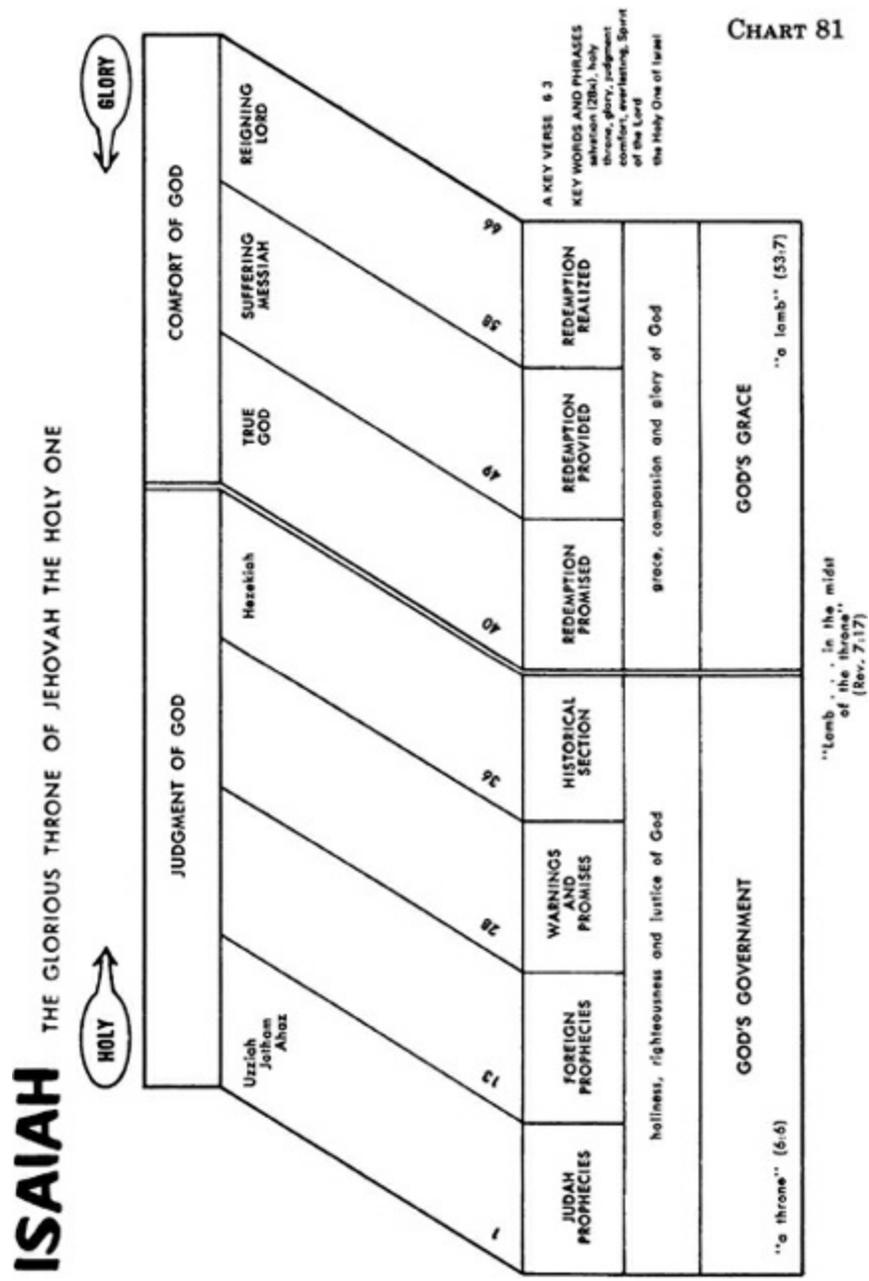
## **VII. APPLICATIONS**

The spiritual applications of the book of Isaiah are legion. They involve such areas of life as the divine call to Christian service; living in light of who God is; confession of sin; hardened hearts; judgment for sin; and the redemptive ministry of Christ for man.

## **VIII. FURTHER STUDY**

1. Study the New Testament passages where Isaiah is quoted or referred to. Some are listed below. (Note: In the King James Version the prophet’s name is Esaias, after

the Greek spelling of the name.)



Cited by	Passages	Isaiah Passages Quoted
Matthew	Matthew 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17-21	9:1-2; 53:4; 42:1-4
John the Baptist	John 1:23	40:3
Jesus	Luke 4:16-21	61:1-2
Apostle John	John 12:38-41	53:1; 6:9-10
Ethiopian treasurer	Acts 8:28-33	53:7-8
Paul	Acts 28:25-27	6:9-10; 10:22-23
	Romans 9:27,29; 10:16,20; 15:12	1:9; 53:1; 65:1; 11:10

2. The authorship of Isaiah has been the subject of much controversy. Many feel that more than one author wrote the book. Read the various arguments advanced for and against the one-author view.¹²

## IX. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Allis, Oswald T. *The Unity of Isaiah*.

Culver, Robert D. *The Suffering and the Glory of the Lord's Righteous Servant*.

Fitch, W. "Isaiah." In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 556-62.

Freeman, Hobart E. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, pp. 11-132; 191-214.

Payne, J. Barton. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, pp. 278-320.

Robinson, George L. "Isaiah." In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*,

3: 1495-1508.

Schultz, Samuel J. *The Old Testament Speaks*, pp. 299-321.

Young, Edward J. *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 197-222.

_____. *Isaiah Fifty-Three*.

_____. *Studies in Isaiah*.

_____. *Who Wrote Isaiah?*

#### COMMENTARIES

Alexander, J. A. *Commentary on Isaiah*.

Archer, Gleason L. "Isaiah." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

Delitzsch, Franz. *Commentary on Isaiah*.

Jennings, F. C. *Studies in Isaiah*.

Kissane, E. J. *The Book of Isaiah*.

Skinner, J. *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*.

Young, Edward J. *The Book of Isaiah*.

2. Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 306.

3. The name Israele in the Old Testament sometimes refers to the entire nation; otherwise it refers to just the northern tribes. In this book the name is used in the former sense (general) unless otherwise stated.

4. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 284.

5. Fred E. Young, "First and Second Samuel," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, pp. 287-88.

6. Sometimes a prophecy may have a multiple intention of fulfillment. E.g., a prophecy of restoration of the Jews may concern (1) return from Babylonian captivity, and (2) regathering of Israel from all parts of the world in the end times.

7. G. T. Manley, *The New Bible Handbook*, p. 214.

8. The datelines (specific references to dates) of Isaiah are 1:1; 6:1; 7:1; 14:28; 20:1; 36:1.

9. The likenesses between Isaiah and the Bible which are cited here are the reasons for the book being called “The Miniature Bible.”

10. John Phillips, *Exploring the Scriptures*, p. 131.

11. Unger, p. 307

12. For example, consult Edward J. Young, *Who Wrote Isaiah?*



# *Jeremiah: Book of Judgment*

About sixty years after Isaiah's death, God called Jeremiah, a young man of about twenty-one, to the difficult but urgent task of proclaiming His word to Judah on the eve of national disaster.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

1. Review your studies of chapter 20 concerning Old Testament prophecy in general. Refer to [Chart 78](#) and observe when Jeremiah prophesied as compared with Isaiah and other prophets.

2. Read 2 Kings 24:1—25:30. This passage reports the fall of Jerusalem, which is the tragic event of Jeremiah's prophecy.

## **II. THE MAN JEREMIAH**

## A. HIS NAME

The name Jeremiah translates the Hebrew word *yirmeyahu*, to which has been assigned the literal meaning “Jehovah throws.” On the basis of this, various translations have been made, such as “Jehovah establishes,” “Jehovah exalts,” “Jehovah is high,” and “whom Jehovah appoints.” Any of these names would have been appropriate for the prophet called to such a ministry as his.

## B. HIS RANK AMONG THE PROPHETS

Someone has said of Jeremiah, “Amid all the bright stars of Old Testament history there is not a name that shines brighter than that of Jeremiah.” By divine design it was Jeremiah who was called to prophesy in the darkest hours of Judah, when Judah as a nation died. He is known as the “weeping prophet” and “the prophet of the broken heart.” But he wept not for his own trials,

grievous as they were. It was the sins of his nation and the fearful destruction these sins were bringing upon them that broke Jeremiah's heart. Jeremiah lived in a day when tragic events were unfolding, and he, as perhaps no one else at the time, comprehended their full significance. He knew that within a short time the proud, beautiful city of Jerusalem with its magnificent Temple would be in ruins, and that his beloved people would be in captivity. He also knew that the nation which had been God's own peculiar treasure would be set aside for a time because of incorrigibility, and that supremacy would be given to the Gentiles. No wonder Jeremiah wept.

Of all the writing prophets, Jeremiah and Isaiah stand out preeminently. To place one above the other is perhaps arbitrary, for in many ways their ministries were different,

and therefore difficult to compare. Their personalities differed, Isaiah being the bold and fearless type, Jeremiah the gentle and compassionate type. Isaiah lived more than one hundred years before the captivity of Judah; Jeremiah ministered just before and during the final catastrophe. (See [Chart 45](#).) Isaiah had *foretold* the judgments which were coming unless the nation turned to God; Jeremiah's particular mission to Judah, toward the end of his career, was to notify the nation that their judgment *was at hand*, that God had rejected them (at least for the present), and that nothing now could save them from the punishment they so fairly deserved.

Chart 82 shows other prophets who ministered during Jeremiah's time. You may want to refer to a Bible dictionary for a brief description of each of these as background to your study of Jeremiah. The prophets are:

Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Daniel, and Ezekiel. They were all faithful spokesmen for God; Jeremiah was prince among them.

### C. TIMES IN WHICH HE LIVED

When one reads the history of the times in which Jeremiah lived (2 Kings 22-25), he does not wonder that God would no longer bear with His people. Through Isaiah, God had said all He could say to keep them back from ruin, but they would not hearken. So when Isaiah's voice was still, there was virtual silence on God's part for about sixty years. Look at [Chart 45](#) and observe the absence of a prophet during the reign of King Manasseh.

Scarcely had Isaiah and good King Hezekiah died when idolatry and numberless heathen abominations began to flourish in the land under the reign of Manasseh, one of the worst of Judah's kings.



of Jeremiah is pun-gently described by the prophet in 5:31: “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so!” For fifty years blasphemous insults to God were heaped up by king, priest, and people, until the climax was reached, and Judah’s doom was irrevocably sealed. Although the judgment was postponed for a while because of the tender heart and righteous life of King Josiah, twenty-five years after his death the kingdom of Judah was a thing of the past.

Into this political and moral turmoil, God sent Jeremiah to be His spokesman. Much of Jeremiah’s ministry concerned the international situation in which Judah was intimately and precariously involved. Look at [Map T](#) and observe that Canaan was the geographical link between Egypt in the southwest and Syria, Assyria, Babylon, and other nations in the north. Each nation

sought to be *the* world power. Control of Canaan was a must for such a claim.

#### D. HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Study [Chart 82](#) for orientation to the historical setting of Jeremiah. Observe the three groups of contemporaries:

1. *Contemporary prophets.* These have been referred to above.

2. *Contemporary kings.* These are the kings who were reigning over Judah while Jeremiah prophesied. Only Josiah was a good king. Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin reigned for only a brief time. Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah are the kings who played a major role in Jeremiah's career. Sections of the book of Jeremiah referring to these reigns are:

Josiah: 2:1—12:17

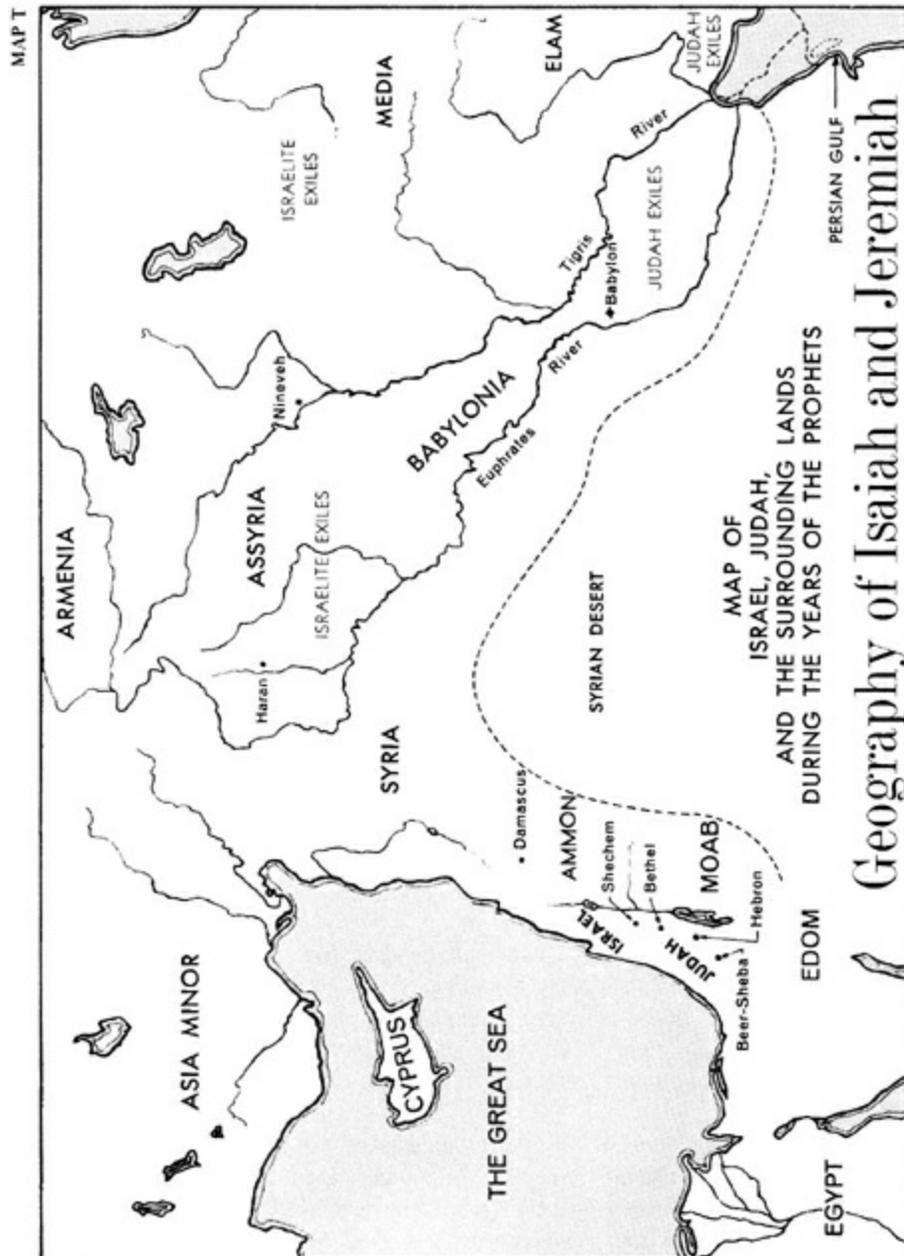
Jehoiakim: 13:1—20:1g; 25:1—27:11

Zedekiah: 21:1—24:10; 27:12—39:18

3. *Contemporary foreign powers.* Observe that in the early part of Jeremiah's ministry, Judah was threatened mainly by Egypt and Assyria. Judah was continually tempted to make alliance with one power so as to be protected from the other. Jeremiah's consistent message was to get right with God and trust *Him* for protection from any nation.

In the latter part of Jeremiah's career, the threats were from Babylon. Two events had brought about the change of threat: (1) the Assyrians were defeated by the Babylonians in 612 B.C. with the fall of Nineveh; (2) the Egyptians were defeated by the Babylonians in 605 B.C. at the Battle of Carchemish. Judah resisted Babylon; but Jeremiah, by direction from God, urged Judah to give in to Babylon so as to avoid *utter destruction*,

since the divine judgment of captivity was inevitable.



The various prophecies of Jeremiah, spoken at different times in his ministry, are more understandable when this international setting is kept in mind.

## E. HIS CHARACTER

Jeremiah's personality did not seem to match the severe task for which he was commissioned. Jeremiah, in the words of one writer, was

afraid of people's "faces," one whom we should consider singularly unfitted for the work placed upon him. That he tenaciously clung to his assigned task through the succeeding years of rejection and persecution is a tribute both to the mettle of the man and to the grace of God, without which his personality surely would have gone to pieces.¹

Though Jeremiah was timid by nature, he was given a bold message to proclaim—and he proclaimed it. Though he was very sensitive, his task was to pronounce drastic and extreme judgment. He was sympathetic

and loyal to his fellowmen, but these qualities did not surpass his loyalty to God and his love for God's righteousness.

Jeremiah had a keen awareness that God was real; his faith was dauntless; he believed in prayer; he was willing to suffer for God's sake. The prophet was by nature gentle and meek, patient and brave, candid and passionate. His honesty would not let him be bribed; his deep emotions would not give place to a stony resignation to judgment. He was utterly devoted to one task, that of preaching the message of God. As someone has put it, he was the "bravest, grandest man of Old Testament history."

#### F. HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY

Jeremiah was born when the very wicked King Manasseh was still ruling Judah. He was raised in a small town called Anathoth, located just a few miles north of Jerusalem.

His father was a priest, Hilkiah by name. Following in the footsteps of his father, Jeremiah entered the priesthood at an early age. When he was still a young man, probably around twenty-one, God made known to him that he had been divinely ordained to be a prophet, and that his duties as priest were terminated (Jer 1).

Jeremiah immediately embarked on his new course and for about fifty years stood as the representative and spokesman for God. Kings, rulers, priests, and politicians, as well as the false prophets, vehemently opposed the policy which he recommended to the nation.

Jeremiah has recorded some of the trying experiences he endured when he was ridiculed, ignored, beaten, misrepresented, starved, mocked, threatened, and cursed by all classes of people, even by those whom he

had considered to be his friends. (Read 11:18-23; 12:6; 18:11-18; 26:1-15; 32:1-3; 38:6-13, 28.)

Jeremiah's life as a prophet was one long, sad, stormy day. Often he grew discouraged and was almost ready to give up the battle, but the fire of the Spirit in his bones kept him true to God (read 20:9). James Gray describes the fiery trials:

God placed him between two "cannots" or, if you please, between two fires. There was the fire of persecution without, and that of the Holy Spirit within, the latter being the hotter of the two. To avoid being consumed by the one, he was more than willing to walk through the other. "I cannot speak any more in God's name," he says at one time, and follows it by adding, "I cannot refrain from speaking."²

Jeremiah's personal life was very lonely. As noted above, even his friends and relatives plotted to kill him. He was instructed of God not to marry and raise a family (16:1-4). But he had one companion at his side throughout most of his career: Baruch. Baruch served as Jeremiah's secretary, playing an important part in the story of the scrolls of the prophet's messages (36:4-8). Chapter 45 is devoted wholly to a message from God to him. Baruch remained close to Jeremiah throughout all the stormy years, and the two went into exile together.

Part of Jeremiah's task was to convince the people and rulers of Judah that Babylon, the nation from the "north" (4:6), was the divinely destined master of Judah for the near future, and that Judah's flirting relations with other nations would add to the horror of the doom to come. But his appeals were rejected. In 588 B.C., the

Babylonian conqueror, Nebuchadnezzar, did come, the siege of Jerusalem began, and about thirty months later (586 B.C.) the city and its Temple were utterly destroyed.

The Bible gives no details of Jeremiah's death. One tradition says that he was stoned to death in Egypt by the very Jews he tried so hard to save.

### III. THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

Jeremiah did not write this book overnight, nor even over a short period of time. Many years and many experiences were the setting of its composition.

Though the theme of divine judgment for sin runs throughout the book of Jeremiah, the organization of the book's materials is not always clear. From the record itself we learn that Jeremiah wrote the different parts, including biography, history, doctrine, and prediction, at various times and under diverse circumstances. When all the parts were brought together on one scroll as one book, a general pattern of composition was followed, placing the discourses in the first half of the book and reserving the latter half mainly for narrative. Jeremiah appropriately used the story of his call and commission as the introduction of the book, and

supplements were added at the end of the book. Here is the general pattern of the entire book:

1	2	21	34	45	52
<u>INTRO.</u> CALL	DISCOURSES	SPECIAL PROPHECIES	NARRATIVE	SUPPLEMENTS	

By its very nature, such a pattern does not call for a strict chronological sequence. It is very clear that Jeremiah's approach was primarily topical, not chronological.³ At the same time, it may also be said that there is a *general* chronological progression in the order of Jeremiah's discourses. Refer to [Chart 84](#) and note the order of kings: Josiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah.

There is an underlying topical progression in the book of Jeremiah. The climax is the fall of Jerusalem, which is recorded at two places toward the end of the book. All that goes before, which includes mainly Jeremiah's discourses and personal

experiences, points to that hour of tragedy.

The prophecy of Jeremiah is basically composed of discourses (or oracles), with narrative portions interspersed throughout. They appear in the pattern of the following sequence: chapters 1 through 20, mainly prophetic oracles; 21 through 33, an interweaving of discourse and narrative; 34 through 45, mainly narrative; 46 through 52, mainly oracles. The oracles spoken to men or nations are usually introduced with the authoritative “Thus saith the LORD” or its equivalent, and are composed in a style that reflects Hebrew poetry.⁴

#### IV. SURVEY

1. The first thing to do for this “skyscraper view” is to make a brief scanning of the entire book, chapter by chapter, observing what the general contents of each chapter

are. Record a list of chapter titles on paper.

2. Do you see any *groupings* of chapters with similar content? Compare your findings with these groups:

<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Content</i>
2-20:	Series of prophecies of doom
21-29:	Nebuchadnezzar appears throughout this section
30-33:	The bright prophecies concerning the new covenant
34-39:	Account of the siege and fall of Jerusalem
40-44:	After the fall of Jerusalem
46-51:	Prophecies concerning the foreign nations

Note that most of the book of Jeremiah is represented by the above groups. You will want to go back to some of the chapters and look at them more closely.

3. Study the survey [Chart 84](#). Refer to it as you continue the studies suggested below.

4. The main body of the prophecy is made up of chapters 1-44. Chapters 45-52 comprise three supplements.

5. The main body is divided into two

parts: Book 1 and Book 2. The division is made at chapter 21, because (1) at this point historical narrative begins to play an important part in the prophecy; and (2) these chapters refer mostly to the time of King Zedekiah, whereas the previous chapters referred to the reigns of Josiah and Jehoiakim.

6. There are three groupings of discourses in which Jeremiah denounced sin, urged repentance, and warned of judgment to come:

Public Sermons (chaps. 2-10)

Personal Experiences (chaps. 11-20)

Certainty of Captivity (chaps. 21-29)

Read these chapters again to justify the outline.

7. The brightest section of the book is that of chapters 30-33, known as the “Book of

Consolation.” (Read the chapters.) Here Jeremiah looks beyond the years of captivity and sees a restoration; and he looks beyond the age of the old covenant and sees the new (cf. 31:31). It is noteworthy that this bright prophecy appears in the text just before Jeremiah narrates the siege and fall of Jerusalem. Compare this with the location of *songs* throughout the book of Revelation just before the descriptions of judgments.

8. Chapters 34-44 are mainly narrative, recording the key event of the book—the fall of Jerusalem—and the events preceding and following it. (Read the chapters.) In chapters 40-44, two interesting observations may be made: (1) Jeremiah was just as faithful to God and to the Jews after the judgment fell as he was before; and (2) the Jews remained just as stubborn and impenitent as ever.

9. Observe the contents of each of the three supplements. Why would each of these be placed at the end of the book? Concerning the oracles against the foreign nations, it should be observed that God judges all nations alike on the issue of sin. For example, though God used Babylon as His agent of punishment against the Jews, Babylon was not spared judgment for its own sin (read 50:14).

## **V. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

### **A. JEREMIAH'S CALL (1:4-19)**

Jeremiah must have received his call to the prophetic office when he was a mere youth. His call was much more commonplace than that of Isaiah (cf. Isa 6). Jeremiah saw no dazzling vision, no throne or seraphim. Quietly the Lord spoke to his heart, setting before him his difficult task,

and promising to be with him through every experience.

Read Jeremiah 1:4-10, and notice the following points regarding his call:

1. It was prenatal (vv. 4-5).
2. He shrank from the work because of his youth and inexperience (v.6).
3. He was not excused from service (v.7).
4. God assured him of divine guardianship (v.8).
5. He received the personal touch of God and His divine message (v.9).

Jeremiah's call clearly teaches that the main task of a prophet was to *speak for God*. It was God who would bring down judgment upon the people of Judah for their sin; and it was God who would spare a remnant. But God wanted a man to warn Judah of those judgments, and to console the faithful few

for their faith.

God did not search in vain for such a man. He was on hand, by predetermined design, serving among the priests of Anathoth. Now the hour for his call had arrived, and God sent the word that moved him to the office of prophet. When Jeremiah accepted the commission, he was thrust forth with an indelible impression of sovereign appointment, sovereign message, and sovereign protection.

## B. TWOFOLD MESSAGE

Jeremiah's message was twofold: destruction and construction. (Note the words "destroy" and "build" in 1:10.) When identified more specifically, there are four parts to his message, as shown on [Chart 83](#).

	Four Themes	Emphasis	Time element
DESTRUCTION	1. Rebuke	People's sin	Present condition (cf. 2:1-37)
	2. Warning	God's righteousness	Future predicted (cf. 20:4; chaps. 23—26, 31)
CONSTRUCTION	3. Invitation	God's grace	Present offer (cf. 3:1—4:4)
	4. Consolation	People's hope	Future predicted (cf. 23:1-40; 30:4-11; 32:37-41; 33:14-26)

Jeremiah's ministry concentrated on the first two themes noted on the chart. However, the prophet did not only preach judgment. Often he voiced God's invitation to return to Him: "Return, faithless Israel," declares the LORD; "I will not look upon you in anger" (3:12). That was his message of conditional, immediate restoration. He also spoke of the more distant future, prophesying preservation of a remnant, the initiating of a new covenant, and the coming of a Saviour. Though he did not prophesy as much as Isaiah did on this subject, his prophecies were just as strong and clear. (Read such passages as 23:5-6; 31:31-34;

32:37-41.)

### C. CONFESSIONS

The book of Jeremiah contains much that is autobiographical and confessional. This is unlike the book of Isaiah, which contains comparatively little of the life of its author. Read Jeremiah's confession of sin in 10:23-24; 11:18—12:6; 15:10-18; 17:9-11, 14-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18.

### D. SYMBOLS

Many symbols appear in the book of Jeremiah. The main ones involve actual experiences of Jeremiah, where God was teaching him, and thus Judah, some vital spiritual truths. Here are some of the prominent ones. (Read the passages.)

1. the linen girdle (waistband) (13:1-11)
2. the potter and the clay (18:1-8)
3. the shattered vessel (19:1-13)

4. celibacy of Jeremiah (16:1-9)

5. field of Anathoth (32:6-44)

#### E. END TIMES

Jeremiah, like his predecessor Isaiah, foretold the sure restoration of God's people to their land. But passages like Jeremiah 30:3; 31:8-30, 31-37; 32:36-44; 33:6-18 indicate that the return from Babylon at the end of the seventy years was not considered as a complete fulfillment of these prophecies. (Read the passages cited.) The prophet had a greater restoration in view, a fuller and more complete fulfillment of the prophecies. In the above passages, both Israel and Judah are mentioned as returning. The gathering is spoken of as being not only from Babylon, but from all nations of the earth. Also, references to the new covenant, great prosperity and blessing, and deep penitence and obedience of the people,

Speak of a still future time.

What is the basis for such a bright hope for God's people in the end times? The question is answered in various Scriptures, one of them being the words of God Himself recorded in the book of Jeremiah:

I have loved you with an everlasting love;

Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.

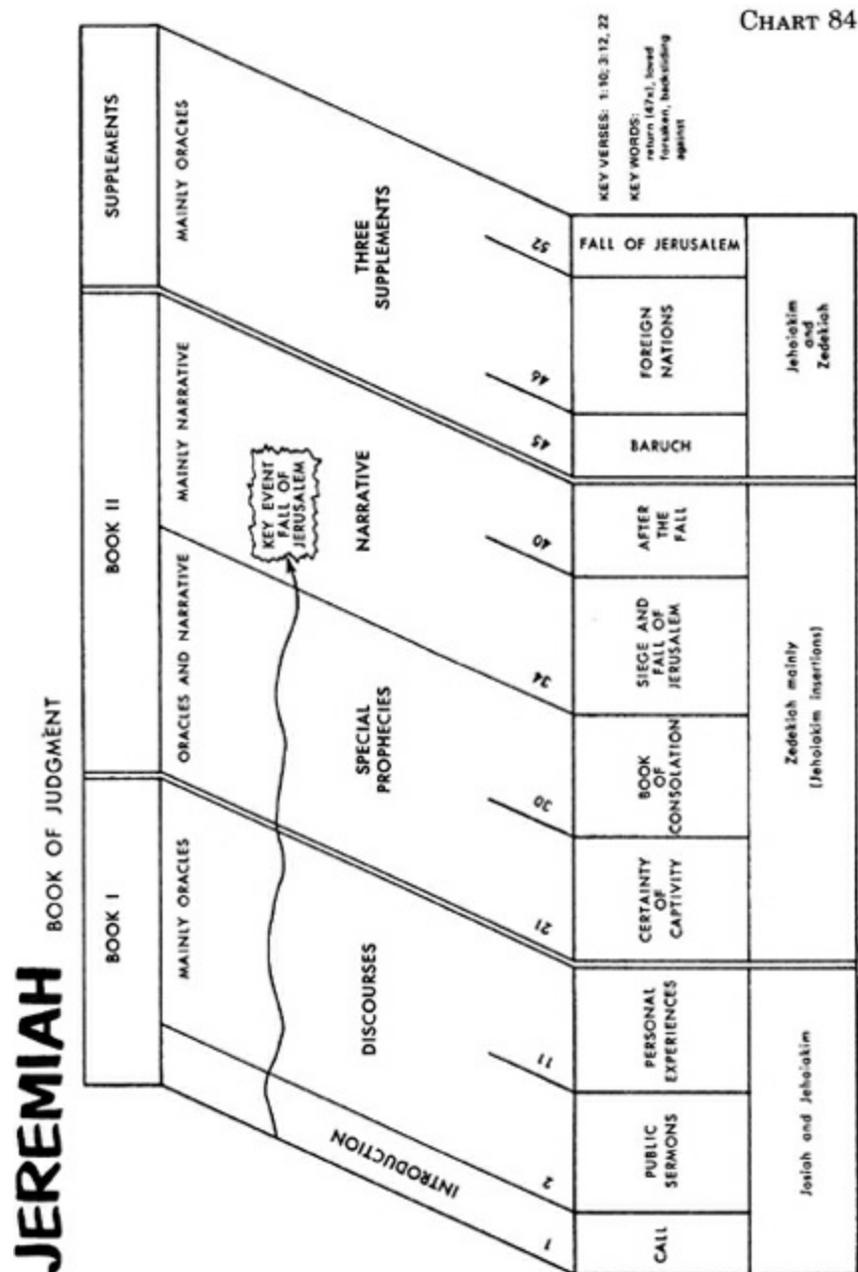
Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt,

O virgin of Israel! (31:3-4)

Israel has a future, spoken of by Paul in Romans 11, only because of the unchangeable, unfathomable, eternal love of God.

## **VI. KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

A very prominent key word of Jeremiah is “return,” appearing forty-seven times in the book. See [Chart 84](#) for other key words and suggested key verses.



## VII. APPLICATIONS

The sixth-century B.C. book of Jeremiah is important for the twentieth-century world because the similarities between Jeremiah's day and today could hardly be stronger. As in Jeremiah's day, this is a time of deep sin; apostasy and hypocrisy abound; the balance of power among nations totters precariously, and alliances change with apparent recklessness from decade to decade; God's heralds are in a lonely minority; and the rumblings of doomsday, like an approaching avalanche, get louder by the minute. Very evident in Jeremiah's message is the fact that the destinies of peoples and nations are not fulfilled outside the hand of God. During these last days of the Church on earth, the Christian will find in this ancient book a timely message and many answers to questions about God's ways in the world today and tomorrow. After you have finished your survey of the book, write a list

of present-day applications.

## VIII. FURTHER STUDY

Use outside sources for help in these two suggested projects:

1. Make biographical studies of these kings whose reigns involved the ministry of Jeremiah: Josiah, Jehoahaz (Shallum), Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin (Jeconiah or Coniah), and Zedekiah.⁵ (Read 2 'Kings 22-25; 2 Chron 34-36.)

2. Study the chronological structure of the book of Jeremiah.⁶

## IX. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Cawley, F. "Jeremiah." In *The New Bible Commentary*.

Freeman, Hobart E. *An Introduction to the Old*

*Testament Prophets*, pp. 237-50.

Jensen, Irving L. *Jeremiah and Lamentations*.  
Everyman's Bible Commentary, pp. 5-15;  
117-25.

Payne, J. Barton. *Encyclopedia of Biblical  
Prophecy*, pp. 320-47.

Schultz, Samuel J. *The Old Testament Speaks*,  
pp. 322-43.

Young, Edward J. *Introduction to the Old  
Testament*, pp. 223-33.

#### COMMENTARIES

Ball, C. J., and Bennett, W. H. *The Book of  
Jeremiah*.

Graybill, John F. "Jeremiah." In *The Wycliffe  
Bible Commentary*.

Hyatt, J. Philip. *Jeremiah, Prophet of Courage  
and Hope*.

Jensen, Irving L. *Jeremiah and Lamentations*.  
Everyman's Bible Commentary.

Latsch, Theodore. *Jeremiah*.

Leslie, Elmer A. *Jeremiah*.

Morgan, G. Campbell, *Studies in the Prophecy of Jeremiah*.

Peake, A. S. *Jeremiah and Lamentations*.

Smith, George Adam. *Jeremiah*.

1. 1. John Graybill, "Jeremiah," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 656.

2. James M. Gray, *Synthetic Bible Studies*, p. 148.

3. That historical chronology is not observed in the book can be seen by the references to the kings. The order of the kings of this period is, as we know, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and zedekiah. (See 1:1-3 Also refer to [chart 82](#).) For example, observe that 21:1 sets the time of that discourse when Zedekiah was reigning; 25:1 goes back to the fourth year of Jehoiakim; 26:1 and 27:1 to the beginning of

the reign of this king; 28:1 refers again to the time of Zedekiah. One must keep this in mind when reading this book.

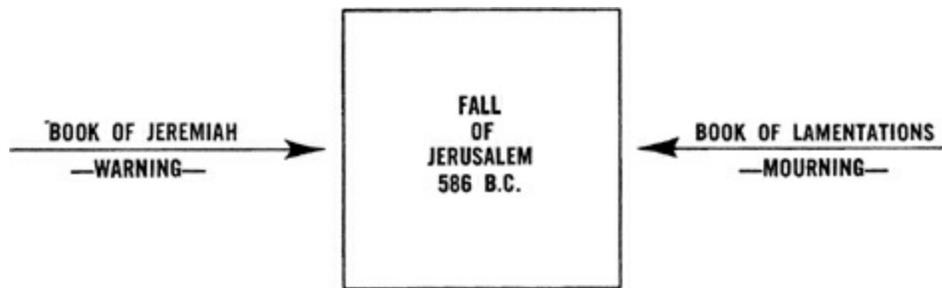
4. E.g., see the poetic format in *The Westminster Study Edition of the Holy Bible*; in Harold Lindseil, ed., *Harper Study Bible*; and in Edward Naegelsbach, “Jeremiah,” in Lange’s *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*.

5. See Irving L. Jensen, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, in *Everyman’s Bible Commentary*, p. 122.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-19.

## *Lamentations: Mourning over Affliction*

The fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. is the historical event common to the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations. Jeremiah prophesies and anticipates the fall, and Lamentations looks back at the holocaust in utter distress.



Knowing from his prophecies how Jeremiah wept over his people before judgment fell, it is not difficult for us to imagine the depths to which his soul sank in

utter grief as he watched the holy city burning and his people being ravished. Lamentations reveals something of the pathos of that experience.

## I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

Read the two passages of Jeremiah concerning the fall of Jerusalem: chapters 34-39 and 52. Recall your survey of those chapters in their context.

## II. BACKGROUND

### A. TITLE

Two of the most common titles assigned to this book in Hebrew Bibles are:

1. *Ekhah*. Translated “Ah, how,” or “Alas,” this is the opening word of chapters 1, 2, and 4. Note how the word is translated in your English Bible at these places.

2. *Qinoth*. Translated “Lamentations,” or

“Elegies,” this is a title representing the content of the book and the melancholy meter of its five poems. The *Qinoth* title was retained in the Greek Bibles, with the Greek translation *Threnoi* (“lamentations,” from *threomai*, “to cry aloud”). This was carried over into the Latin Bibles as *Liber Threnorum* (“Book of Lamentations”), and thence into the English Bibles as *Lamentations*.

## B. PLACE IN THE BIBLE

In the threefold Hebrew Bible (Law, Prophets, Writings), Lamentations appears in the last part, in a section called *Megittoth*. Recall that the *Megilloth* is a group of five Old Testament books which the Jews read publicly on national holidays. Lamentations is read on the ninth day of Ab (about mid-July), the anniversary of the destructions of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and A.D. 70.

In some ancient versions of the Bible,

Lamentations appeared as an appendix to Jeremiah, and often was not included in the listing of the Old Testament books.

In our English Bible, Lamentations very appropriately follows the book of Jeremiah. The translators of the Greek Septuagint (100 B.C.), recognizing its Jeremianic authorship, also placed it here.

### C. AUTHOR AND DATE

Lamentations was very likely written soon after 586 B.C., while memories of the appalling siege of Jerusalem were still fresh. Some think that the author wrote chapter 5 a little later than the first four chapters, “when the intense anguish of the catastrophe had given way to the prolonged ache of captivity.”¹

As to authorship, the evidence points strongly, though not conclusively, to Jeremiah.² Such evidence includes the

following:

1. The Septuagint introduction to the book:  
“Jeremiah sat weeping and lamented with this lamentation over Jerusalem, and said.”
2. Hebrew and Gentile tradition.
3. Similarities between Lamentations and poetical portions of Jeremiah (cf. also 2 Chron 35:25).³
4. The writer was an eyewitness of Jerusalem’s destruction, with a sensitivity of soul (cf. Jer 9:1; 14:17-22), and ability to write.

#### **D. COMPOSITION AND STYLE**

Lamentations is a set of five elegies (melancholy poems), the first four of which follow an acrostic pattern (first letter of lines, or groups of lines, representing each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew

alphabet).

The poetic meter is described as a limping meter, with three beats in the first line trailing away in a mourning two-beat line. When publicly read, the chanting of the Hebrew text gave support to the mood of the words.

Many poetic styles and devices appear in these poems. Vivid imagery is perhaps the most prominent one.

One of the distinctive features of the book is the acrostic format of chapters 1-4.⁴ In chapters 1, 2, and 4, each verse begins with a word whose first letter is successively one of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. chapter 3 has sixty-six verses, each successive letter of the alphabet having three verses allotted to it instead of one.

Various views are held as to why the author used this acrostic device. Among

them are: (1) as an aid to memorization; (2) as a symbol of the *fullness* of the people's grief (i.e., from A to Z); (3) to confine the expression of boundless grief by the limiting device of acrostic.

#### E. MESSAGE

The message of Lamentations is threefold:

1. *Mourning over Jerusalem's judgment for sin.* Most of the book presents this. Compare Jesus' mourning over Jerusalem in Luke 13:34-35 and 19:41-44.

2. *Confession of sin (e.g., 1:8; 3:59; 5:16).*

3. *Ray of hope (e.g., 3:21-32; 5:21).* Only one who saw into the far-distant future could speak of hope. Babylon was the conqueror now, and Jerusalem the vanquished; in that future day, it would be glory for Jerusalem and desolation for Babylon. With such a hope, the author could exclaim, "Great is Thy faithfulness" (3:23b).

### III. SURVEY

Scan the book of Lamentations, chapter by chapter. Check your own observations with the following:

1. The book has five chapters, each of which is a separate poem.

2. Sometimes Jeremiah speaks for himself (“I”); sometimes the Jewish captives (including Jeremiah) speak (“We”); and sometimes Jeremiah writes about his brethren (“They”).

3. The prevailing tone is utter grief and resignation. At a few places a ray of hope shines through. Such hope is brightest in the middle of chapter 3.

4. There is much imagery in the book. (E.g., “From on high He sent fire into my bones,” 1:13.)

5. Short prayers to God appear from time

to time. The entire last chapter is a prayer.

6. Jeremiah continually acknowledges God's holiness, justice, and sovereignty in the judgments which He has sent upon Judah.

7. References to the people's sins appear from time to time in the book.

8. The book ends on a note of hope (5:19-22).⁵

9. Study carefully the survey [Chart 85](#). Relate it to the survey you have already made of the book. Note the following on the chart, rereading the Bible text to justify any outlines which do not seem clear:

a) The first four chapters are dirges, written in acrostic style. chapter 5 is basically a prayer; and it is nonacrostic.

b) The middle [chapter \(3\)](#) is the brightest. Various references to the Lord's mercies are

made here.

c) There is a natural progression of thought throughout the chapters. In chapter 1, the prophet and people are weeping over Jerusalem's destruction; in chapter 2, God's judgments, as the cause of the grief, are described; chapter 3 shows where hope is to be found; in chapter 4, sin is acknowledged as the cause of divine judgment; and in chapter 5, the prophet prays in behalf of his brethren as he pleads for God's deliverance.

d) Each of chapters 1-3 ends with a prayer. Although this is not so of chapter 4, all of the succeeding [chapter \(5\)](#) is a prayer.

#### **IV. KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

Note the key words on [Chart 85](#). Also read the Bible text of the key verses cited.

#### **V. APPLICATIONS**

Ross Price comments on how contemporary the book of Lamentations is:

In these days of personal, national, and international crises (and disaster) the message of this book is a challenge to repent of sins personal, national, and international, and to commit ourselves afresh to God's steadfast love. Though this love is everpresent and outgoing, a holy and just God must surely judge unrepentant sinners.⁶

When Christ is seen in the book of Lamentations, the Christian can apply its truths in different ways. The many references to the Lord ("Jehovah") in the book of Lamentations may be applied today to the ministry of Jesus Christ. This is because the works of God the Father are one with the works of His Son. For example, when we read, "It is of the LORD'S mercies

[loving-kindnesses] that we are not consumed” (3:22, KJV), we may rightly say, “It is of Christ’s mercies that we are not consumed” (cf. Jude 21).

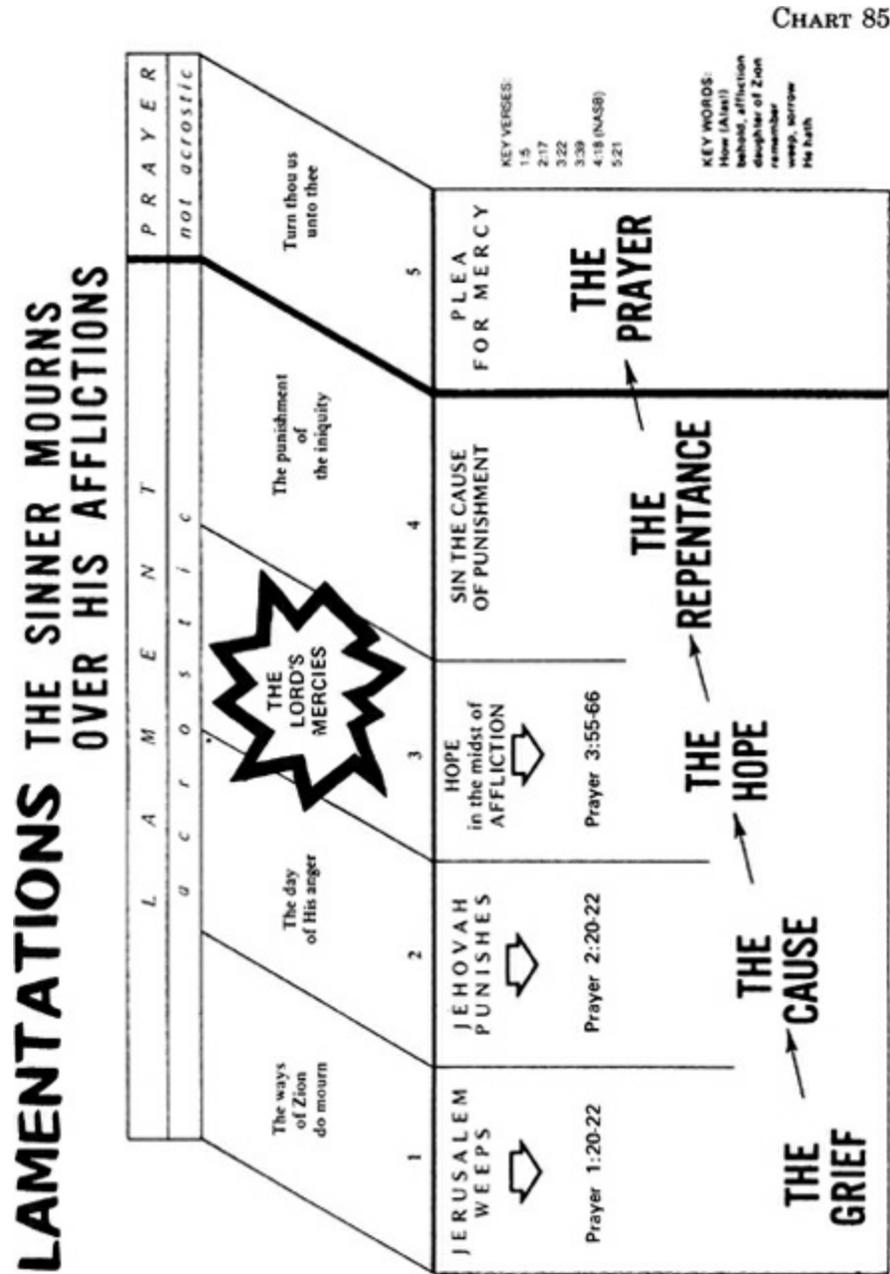
There are some descriptions of Israel in Lamentations which, while not intended to be predictive of Christ’s ministry, do represent, picturewise, different aspects of that ministry.⁷ Among these are Christ as

1. the afflicted of the Lord (1:12)
2. despised of His enemies (2:15-16)
3. derision to all the people (3:14)
4. the smitten and insulted One (3:30)
5. the weeping Prophet (cf. Matt 23:37-38).

The applications of such illustrations are clear.

## **VI. SELECTED READING**

Baxter, J. Sidlow. *Explore the Book*, 3:277-87.



Harrison, Roland K. "Lamentations." In *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, pp. 474-75.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Analyzed Bible*,

pp. 234-41.

Unger, Merrill F. *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 386-89.

#### COMMENTARIES

Hillers, Delbert R. *Lamentations*.

Naegelsbach, C. W. Edward. "Lamentations." In Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*.

Price, Ross. "Lamentations." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

Stephens-Hodge, L. E. H. "Lamentations." In *The New Bible Commentary*.

1. D. A. Hubbard, "Book of Lamentations," in *The New Bible Dictionary*, p. 707. If Jeremiah was the author, it would be better to describe his experience as "exile" (in Egypt), rather than "captivity." (Cf. Jer 43.)

2. Such people as Baruch are suggested as the

author. Arguments for and against Jeremianic authorship are extensively developed in Lange's commentary on Lamentations, pp. 6-16 and 19-35.

3. See Edward J. Young, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 333-36.

4. Psalm 119 is a classic example of acrostic writing.

5. Though the last verse reads despairingly, an alternate reading supports the optimism of verse 21. The *Revised Standard Version*, along with other translations, prefers to read the text as a question: "Or hast thou utterly rejected us? Art thou exceedingly angry with us?" (5:22). It is interesting to note that today, when Jews read publicly the text of Lamentations, they read verse 22 before verse 21, so that the concluding note is not despairing. They do the same for the last verse of Malachi.

6. Ross Price, "Lamentations," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 696. The religious calendars of the Jewish and Catholic faiths

assign the reading of the book once a year. For the latter, it is read on the last three days of Holy Week.

7. Care should be exercised in this area of application. In the words of Norman Geisler, “Any Old Testament passage may be appropriately applied to Christ, even though the New Testament writers did not apply it, providing that it exemplifies something from the life of the Messianic people which finds an actual correspondence with the truth about Christ presented somewhere in the Bible” (*Christ: The Theme of the Bible*, p. 65).

## *Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord*

When God sent His people into exile as punishment for their sin, He still continued to speak to them. For if He was to purge the nation of their corrupt idolatry, they needed to hear more of the very word which they had so stubbornly resisted. Among the Jews taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in his second invasion of Judah in 597 B.C. was a man named Ezekiel. This was the one whom God chose to be His prophet to the exiles, while Daniel served as God's ambassador to the court of the captor king.

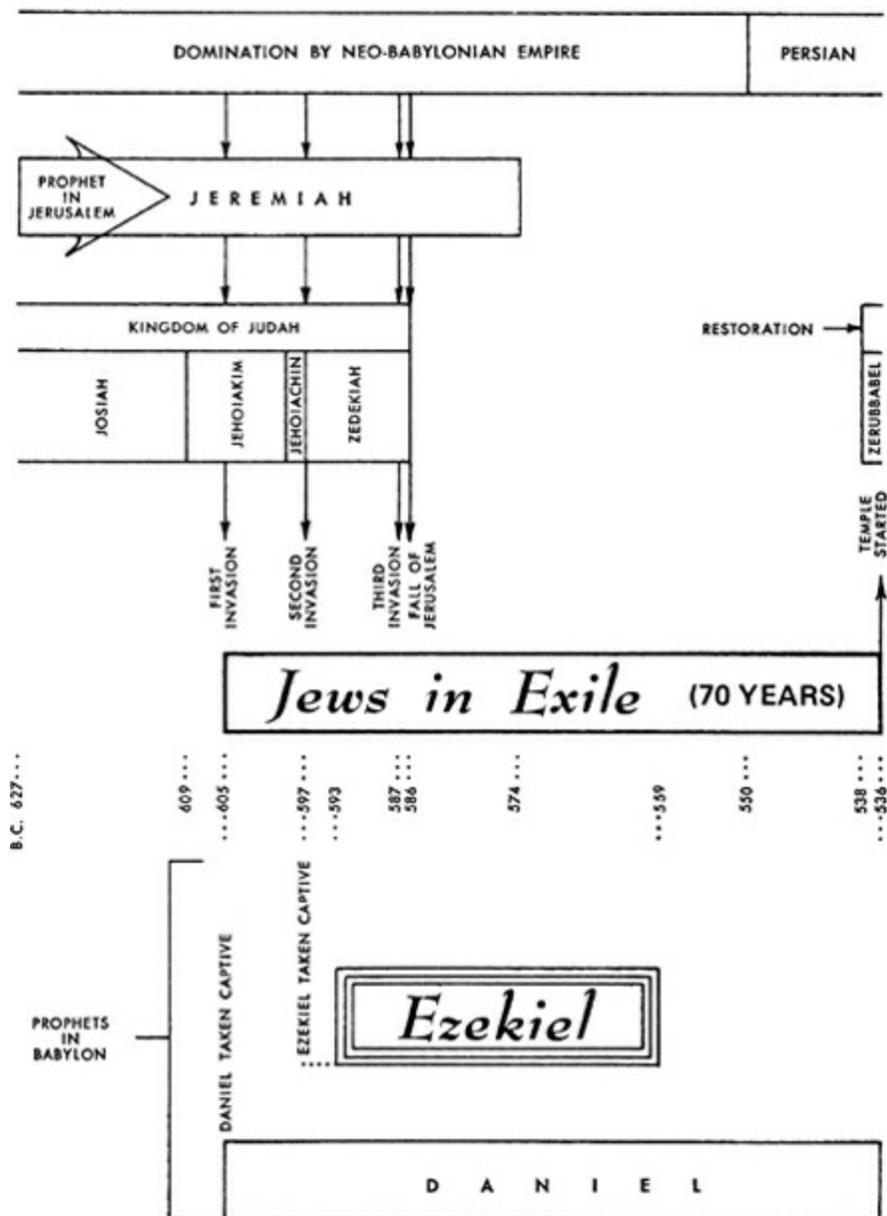
It was during the captivity years that some of the Jews returned to God. This was the beginning of the religion of Judaism, and because Ezekiel was the prominent

prophet at this time, he has been called “the father of Judaism.”

## I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

1. Keep in the back of your mind the highlights of the message and ministry of Jeremiah. Much of what Ezekiel preached was very similar to Jeremiah’s preaching, which the former prophet must have listened to often in Jerusalem, up until his exile at age twenty-five.¹ But the differences were many and marked, as your survey of Ezekiel will show.

2. Study [Chart 86](#) to familiarize yourself with the contemporaries of Ezekiel and the times in which he lived.



Observe on the chart that neither Daniel nor Ezekiel began their prophetic ministries until they were deported to Babylonia. Daniel was taken captive in 605 B.C., in Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Jerusalem, and he began his prophetic ministry in that same year (read Dan 1:1-7).

Ezekiel was deported to Babylon in 597 B.C., along with King Jehoiachin and hosts of citizens, when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem the second time (read 2 Kings 24:10-16). Ezekiel was not called to prophesy until after he had been in Babylonia for about five years. Thus, Jeremiah was the lone prophet in the land of Judah for the last twenty years before Jerusalem's fall; Daniel and Ezekiel served as prophets only in captivity.

The different ministries of the three contemporary prophets may be identified thus:

1. Jeremiah: prophet mainly to the Jews in Jerusalem, before the city fell.
2. Daniel: prophet mainly to the court of King Nebuchadnezzar, in Babylonia.
3. Ezekiel: prophet mainly to the exiles in Babylonia, before and after the fall of

Jerusalem. Ezekiel was *the* prophet of the captivity.

It is interesting that in Ezekiel's book there is no mention of Jeremiah, whereas Daniel is mentioned three times (Ezek 14:14, 20; 28:3). Daniel, because of his favor at the king's court, was well known throughout Babylonia by the time Ezekiel arrived in the country. Daniel's prophecy refers to Jeremiah once (Dan 9:2), and the name Ezekiel does not appear in either of the other two books.

The idolatry which Ezekiel saw as Judah's blight before he left Jerusalem was the same condition he faced in the settlements of Jewish exiles in Babylonia. The judgment of captivity did not stir the first contingents of exiles to repentance. In fact, they found it very hard to believe, as Ezekiel was prophesying, that Jerusalem would actually

be destroyed by the Babylonians. They were loath to believe that Jehovah had given world dominion to Babylon, and that His will was for Judah to submit to this enemy. Hence, it was necessary for Ezekiel in Babylon—and Jeremiah in Jerusalem—to show the people how unfounded were any expectations of immediate deliverance.

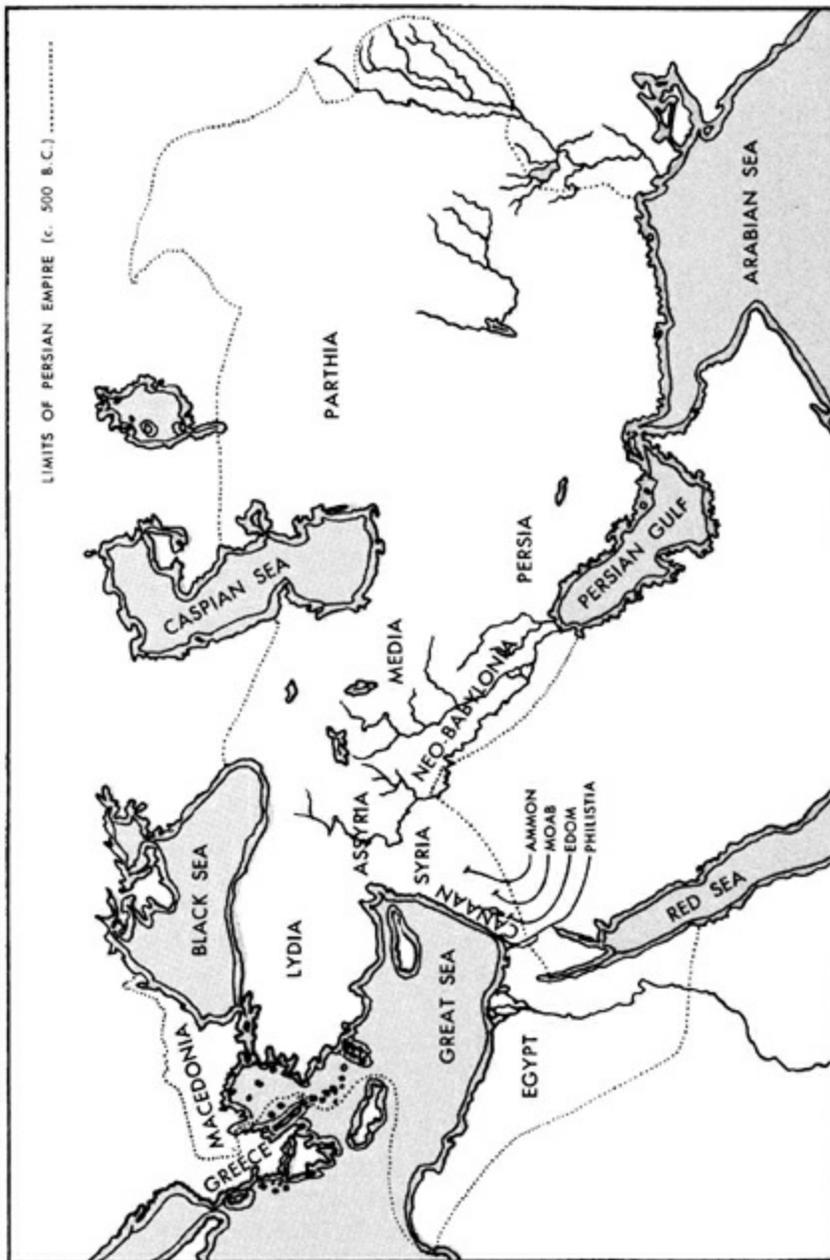
3. Acquaint yourself with [Map U](#), which shows the geography of Ezekiel and Daniel.

## II. THE MAN EZEKIEL

Very little is known of the personal history of Ezekiel. But enough information may be garnered from various Bible references to project a biographical profile of this fascinating prophet.

GEOGRAPHY OF EZEKIEL AND DANIEL

MAP U



## A. NAME

The name Ezekiel is written in Hebrew as *Yehezqel*, meaning “God strengthens.” The prophet was truly a tower of strength in the midst of a defeated people. Also, God made him strong to resist the opposition of hardhearted and rebellious Israelites (read

3:8-9).

## **B. BIRTH**

If the phrase “thirtieth year” of 1:1 refers to Ezekiel’s age at that time (593 B.C.), then he was born in 623 B.C., during the reign of the good King Josiah. Ezekiel was a child when the book of the Law was recovered in the course of renovating the Temple in 621 B.C. The years of his boyhood and youth were thus spent in the bright reformation period that followed that recovery.

## **C. FAMILY**

Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, was born of a priestly heritage. His father’s name was Buzi, a priest possibly of the Zadok line (1:3; 40:46; 44:15). Ezekiel was married, but it is not known if he had any children. The darkest day of his life may have been when the Lord announced to him two tragic events: the siege of Jerusalem (24:2), and

the death of his beloved wife (24:15-18).

#### D. IN EXILE

When Ezekiel was about eighteen years old (605 B.C.), the Babylonians (also known as Chaldeans) made their first invasion into Judea, carrying away some captives, among whom was Daniel (see [Map U](#)). Eight years later (597 B.C.) they came again, and this time Ezekiel was among the captives, which comprised the upper classes of Judah. Read 2 Kings 24:10-17 for the historical record of this (cf. Ezek 1:2; 33:21). Some of the exiles were incarcerated; others were made slaves; many were allowed to settle down in their own homes in various settlements of the exiles (cf. Jer 29:1-7; Ezra 2:59; Neh 7:61). It was of divine providence that Ezekiel was among those granted such liberties. His home was in Tel-abib (Ezek 3:15), a principal colony of exiles near the fabulous

city of Babylon. Tel-abib was located by the canal Chebar (“Grand Canal”) which flowed from the Euphrates fork above Babylon through Nippur, winding back into the Euphrates near Erech.² (Cf. 1:1, 3; Psalm 137:1.)

Ezekiel’s home was a meeting place where the Jewish elders often came to consult with him (8:1; 14:1; 20:1). It may be that his home was open to any of the exiles who wanted spiritual help.

#### E. CALL AND COMMISSION

Five years after his arrival in the strange land of Babylon, Ezekiel received his call to the prophetic office, to minister to the exiles in Babylonia.³ What he experienced and heard in this call is recorded in the first three chapters of his book.

Twenty-two years later (see 29:17), when Ezekiel was around fifty-two years old, he

was still prophesying to the exiles. It is not known how much longer his ministry continued.

#### F. CHARACTER

Ezekiel the prophet was strong and fearless. This is what God made him (3:8-9), and this was his dominant characteristic. He had boundless energy, and a love for the simple, clear and direct. Though his disposition was firm, he had a shepherd's heart for his countrymen. "Ezekiel is the one who, in the first place, breaking in pieces the hard hearts with the hammer of the law, represents the strict inexorable judge, but therefore, pouring soothing balm into the open wounds, approves himself as the healing physician."⁴

Ezekiel's book reveals that he was methodical, artistic, and mystic. With a deeply introspective nature, he must have

studied the message of God a great deal as it applied to himself and his brethren. He was truly a practical theologian, and for this he has been called “the first dogmatist of the Old Testament” and “the prophet of personal responsibility.”

#### G. MESSAGE

Ezekiel stressed three points in his preaching.

*1. It was sin which brought the people's judgment of exile. The people must repent and return to God.*

*2. The exile would last for seventy years, even though false prophets were preaching an early return. The people had a letter from Jeremiah (Jer 29) which concurred with Ezekiel's preaching. The seventy-year captivity began in 605 B.C., with the first deportation of Jews (Jer 25:11-12; Zech 7:5). Before the Jews could return to*

Jerusalem, they must return to the Lord.

3. *There would be a future restoration of Israel, for a believing remnant.* The general impression of these consolatory messages was that this restoration was in the far-distant future. Most of the adults of Ezekiel's audience had no other hope than this, for seventy years of captivity precluded their returning to Jerusalem in their lifetime.

The tone of Ezekiel's preaching was austere and impressive, for the prophet constantly stressed the Lord's sovereignty and glory. The phrase "glory of the LORD" or its equivalent appears eleven times in the first eleven chapters of his book. The statement of God, "They shall know that I am the LORD," or its equivalent, appears about seventy times in the book.

A comparison of the main themes of the four "greater prophets" is shown here:

Isaiah: salvation of the Lord

Jeremiah: judgment of the Lord

Daniel: kingdom of the Lord

Ezekiel: sovereignty and glory of the Lord

### III. THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

#### A. STYLE

While it is true that most of the book of Ezekiel consists of the direct addresses of the Lord,⁵ the form and style in which those words were recorded is attributable to the writer Ezekiel. Ezekiel's style is very lofty. He has brought prose and poetry together in one masterpiece. The book abounds with visions, parables, allegories, apocalyptic imagery, and various symbolic acts. Jerome called the book "an ocean and labyrinth of the mysteries of God." Although the interpretations of some of its symbols are difficult, it is a singularly fascinating and interesting book.

Ezekiel apparently had very methodical habits of recording events and dates. This is seen especially in connection with the messages he received from God. There are

twelve such dated messages in his book.⁶ Read each one, and note particularly the year of captivity cited: 1:1-2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1; 32:17; 40:1. The methodical style of Ezekiel is also seen in the orderly organization of his book, which will be evident in the survey stage of study.

## B. VISIONS

Ezekiel is known as “The Prophet of Visions.” The very first verse of his book reads, “The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.” A vision in Bible days was a miraculous experience of a man of God on a special occasion, whereby God revealed truth to him in some pictorial and audible form. Visions were of all kinds, differing in such things as length, intensity, number of symbols, and whether the vision was perceived in the spirit (as in a dream) or by

the conscious physical senses.

These are the visions recorded in Ezekiel:

1. Vision of the Cherubim (vision of God):  
Ezekiel's inaugural vision 1:4-28
2. Vision of the Roll or Scroll 2:9—3:3
3. Vision of the Plain 3:22-23
4. Visions of Jerusalem
  - a) Four abominations in the Temple 8:1-18
  - b) Inhabitants slain 9:1-11
  - c) City destroyed by fire 10:1-22
  - d) The Lord departs from the city 11:1-25
5. Vision of Dry Bones 37:1-10
6. Visions of the New Temple and Associated Scenes 40:1—48:35

### C. SYMBOLIC ACTIONS

Ezekiel, perhaps more than any other prophet, taught by symbolic *actions*—those

strange things which God asked His prophets to do in order that His messages might impress the people vividly and intensely. God told Ezekiel, “I have set you as a sign to the house of Israel” (12:6). So his symbolic actions were revelatory signs. Some of the things he was commanded to do must have been extremely hard and trying. He was continually exposing himself to the jeers and scorn of the skeptical.

But the symbolic acts produced the desired effect, at least upon the hearts of the serious-minded, causing them to ask what these things meant (see 12:9; 24:19; 37:18). This was the prophet’s opportunity to explain their significance and drive home the application.

Following is a list of the main symbolic actions of Ezekiel:

SIGN	TEACHING	PASSAGE
1. Sign of the Brick	Jerusalem’s siege and fall	4:1-3

2. Sign of the Prophet's Posture	Discomforts of captivity	4:4-8
3. Sign of Famine	Deprivations of captivity	4:9-17
4. Sign of the Knife and Razor	Utter destruction of the city	5:1-17
5. Sign of House Moving	Removal to another land	12:1-7,17-20
6. Sign of the Sharpened Sword	Judgment imminent	21:1-17
7. Sign of Nebuchadnezzar's Sword	Babylon the captor	21:18-23
8. Sign of the Smelting Furnace	Judgment and purging	22:17-31
9. Sign of Ezekiel's Wife's Death	Blessings forfeited	24:15-27
10. Sign of the Two Sticks	Reunion of Israel and Judah	37:15-17

## D. ALLEGORIES

Allegories in the Bible are stories intended to teach spiritual lessons. John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a classic example of an allegory. In Ezekiel the allegories have the same purpose as the symbolic actions. They differ in that the allegories teach by words; the symbolic actions teach by actual events. Below are listed the main allegories of Ezekiel. Read each allegory, and try to determine the spiritual lesson it teaches.

1. The Vine	15:1-8
2. The Faithless Wife	16:1-63
3. The Two Eagles ⁷	17:1-21
4. The Cedar	17:22-24

5. The Two Women 23:1-49

6. The Boiling Caldron 24:1-14

## E. APOCALYPTIC IMAGERY

Apocalyptic writing prophesies of things to come by means of much symbol and imagery. Daniel and Revelation are the two books of the Bible usually classified as apocalyptic. Ezekiel contains many apocalyptic passages. Identify the contents of each of the following:

6:1-14

28:25-26

38:1-23

7:5-12

34:25-31

39:1-29

20:33-44

36:8-15,33-36

47:1-12

There are many resemblances between Ezekiel and Revelation. This is clearly seen when passages like the following are compared:

Ezekiel	Revelation	Ezekiel	Revelation
1:1	19:11	14:21	6:8
1:5	4:6	26:13	18:22
1:10	4:7	27:28-30	18:17-19
1:22	4:6	37:10	11:11
1:24	1:15	37:27	21:3
1:28	4:3	38:2-3	20:8
2:9	5:1	40:2	21:10
3:1, 3	10:10	40:3	11:1
7:2	7:1	43:2	1:15
9:4	7:3	43:16	21:16
9:11	1:13	47:1, 12	22:1-2
10:2	8:5	48:31	21:12

## F. POEMS

The poems of Ezekiel are lamentations, or elegies. They are found at 19:1-14 and 27:1-36.

## IV. SURVEY

1. Scan the entire book in one sitting. This should only be a cursory reading, for main impressions and observations of atmosphere. What things stand out to you?

2. Secure a chapter title for each of Ezekiel's forty-eight chapters. Record these on paper.

3. Now begin to look for groupings of chapters, according to similar content.

4. Is there any turning point in the book?

5. Be on the lookout for words and phrases which are repeated throughout the book. Such words and phrases, if they are strong, are clues to the theme of the book.

6. From this introductory study of the text, what does the book teach about God? About the prophet Ezekiel? About the people?

7. Study carefully survey [Chart 87](#), comparing the outlines with the survey you have made thus far. The observations and suggestions which follow concern this survey chart.

8. Observe that basically the book of Ezekiel is made up of three main parts:

Fate of Judah (desolation)

Foes of Judah (destruction)

Future of Judah and Israel (restoration)

Actually, the first three chapters could be considered a separate introductory division in the book, recording the call and commission of Ezekiel. But since the commission of Ezekiel involved pronouncing the judgment of captivity, these three chapters may rightly be placed in the large division called “Fate of Judah.”

9. There is a turning point in the book, made up of two parts. (See bottom of the chart.) At 24:2, Ezekiel is informed by God that the king of Babylon has begun the siege against Jerusalem. At 33:21, the actual turning point, Ezekiel learns from a messenger that the city has fallen. Up to 24:2, Ezekiel’s message is mainly “The city shall be destroyed.” After 33:21, Ezekiel looks to the next prophetic peak, and prophesies, “The city shall be restored.” It is at chapter 24 that the prophet learns that when Jerusalem falls, his tongue will be

loosed to speak a new message of hope; and people, sobered by the reality of Jerusalem's destruction, will begin to give him a hearing. (Read 24:25-27.)

10. The middle section (chaps. 25-32) concerns the foreign nations. At first glance this may appear to be out of place in the outline of the book. Considering the broad context noted above, show how this section is very appropriately located here. Is restoration promised any of these Gentile nations?

11. If the book of Ezekiel were divided into two main parts, the division would then be at chapter 33. Note the outline "Jehovah Not There"; "Jehovah There." In the first division, God is represented as leaving the city (chaps. 10-11); in the last division, He is shown as returning (43:1-5), and remaining (48:35). Note how chapters 10 and 11

depict God as withdrawing *gradually* and *reluctantly*. At 10:4, He is standing over the threshold of His house. At 10:18, He moves and stands over the cherubim; at 10:19, He is at the door of the east gate. Finally, at 11:22-23, He pauses again upon the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem, as though bidding a last farewell to the city where He had set His name.

12. Study the outline which breaks down the large divisions into smaller sections (Call and Commission; Judgment Foretold; and so. forth). Compare these groupings with those which you observed in your earlier study. Make a note of these sections in your Bible.

13. A few comments may be made here concerning the last division of the book "Restoration to Come" (chaps. 33-48). This division has two distinct sections: the first

consists of seven chapters, dealing principally with prophecies anticipating the final restoration of Israel; the second consists of nine chapters, dealing with Israel in the land, especially with reference to the Temple.

14. Notice especially the shepherd chapter (chap. 34), and compare it with the shepherd psalm (Psalm 23) and the shepherd chapter in John (chap. 10). Read carefully 36:16-23 and observe that Ezekiel agrees with all the prophets, from Moses onward, that Israel's restoration is not to be because of anything in themselves but for the glory of God's great name, and to convince all mankind of the same thing, that His judgments shall make manifest that "I am the LORD."

15. The last vision which Ezekiel sees is of the restored Temple (chaps. 40-48). The

chief point of this vision is that the glory of the Lord, which Ezekiel had seen departing from the first Temple, is now seen to return and abide in this Temple.

16. For a concluding survey exercise, read the book of Ezekiel more slowly than before, referring to [Chart 87](#) as you read. This will help bring together the various items of the book as you make one final overview of the Bible text.

## **V. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

Some prominent subjects have already been identified in this chapter. Here are others.

### **A. EZEKIEL'S CALL AND COMMISSION (2:1—3:27)**

Like the other prophets, Ezekiel received a vision of God which put him on his face in the dust before his Maker (1:26-28). Compare Isaiah's vision (Isa 6) and John's

vision (Rev 1:10-18). Observe that in each instance it was the Lord who was seen, and that each vision produced the same humbling effect upon the beholder. Compare the three visions and observe the different ways in which the Lord manifested Himself. To Isaiah, His *holiness* was emphasized; to Ezekiel, His *power, majesty, and government*; and to John, His *love*.

## **B. THE GLORY AND MAJESTY OF THE LORD**

The book of Ezekiel underscores the truths about the Lord's glory and majesty. Key verses which reflect these are: 1:16, 286; 2:3; and 3:23.

## **C. MESSIANIC PROPHECIES**

The chief Messianic passages of Ezekiel, as listed by Anton T. Pearson in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, are:⁸

1. The Lord, the sanctuary 11:16-20
2. The wonderful cedar sprig 17:22-24

3. The rightful King	21:26-27
4. The faithful Shepherd	34:11-31
5. The great purification	36:25-35
6. The great resurrection	37:1-14
7. The great reunion	37:21-28
8. The overthrow of Gog	38:1-39:29
9. The life-giving stream	47:1-12

## **D. FUTURE RESURRECTION OF ISRAEL (37:1 48:35)**

At the commencement of his prophetic ministry, Ezekiel was given a vision of the glorious Lord reigning in heaven. The people of Israel had once known the blessings of such a glory shining in their midst, but now the glory had departed because of Israel's sin. It was Ezekiel's task to announce to his fellow exiles the coming judgment of desolation of the holy city and captivity of its inhabitants. When the city fell in 586 B.C., God loosed the prophet's tongue to speak the new message of restoration to come, for those who would turn to the Lord. For fifteen years it was his happy privilege to

quote the Lord as saying,

Now I shall restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God... I ... gathered them again to their own land.... And I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel (39:25, 28-29).

This bright message did not contradict Ezekiel's earlier minatory oracles. The seventy-year captivity must first be fulfilled, and then there would be a return to the land on the part of a believing remnant of a new generation. The Temple would be rebuilt, and the glory of the Lord would come down to Israel again. But Ezekiel's prophecy, like most of the Old Testament consolatory prophecies, referred mainly to a latter-day

Messianic fulfillment, when Israel would be reestablished in the millennial Kingdom, and Christ would sit on David's throne. All the bright promises given to the nation could be fulfilled only in Christ, Israel's Messiah.

#### **E. OTHER SUBJECTS**

The following list identifies more of the prominent subjects of Ezekiel:

Attributes of God: His glory, sovereignty, name, holiness, justice, mercy

Man: individual responsibility, corrupt heart

Israel: idolatry, judgment, elect nation, hope

Gentile nations: accountability, judgment

Last days: restored kingdom

#### **VI. KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

Here are some of the outstanding phrases of Ezekiel:

“Son of man” appears over ninety times in

Ezekiel. The prophet is the one so designated. The title was symbolic of Ezekiel's identity with the people to whom he was sent, even as Jesus, the Son of man, was so identified. This title was Jesus' favorite title of Himself. (It appears almost ninety times in the gospels.) Ezekiel has been called "The other Son of man."

"The word of the LORD came unto me" appears forty-nine times.

"Glory of the God of Israel" or "glory of the LORD" appears eleven times in the first eleven chapters.

"LORD God" appears over two hundred times.

"I shall be sanctified through you" (or equivalent phrases) appears six times. Read 20:41; 28:22, 25; 36:23; 38:16; 39:27.

"The hand of the LORD was upon me" (or

similar phrases) appears seven times:  
1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1.

## VII. APPLICATIONS

1. What does the book of Ezekiel teach about God, glory, righteousness, sin, judgment, mercy, restoration?

2. What spiritual lessons can be learned from the life and ministry of the prophet Ezekiel?

3. What should prophecies of Israel's future restoration do for Christians today? Will Israel's restoration take place before or after the rapture of the Church?

4. Underlying the prophecies of Israel's restoration are the general grand truths about God and His ways with all His children. Anton T. Pearson suggests how these general principles apply to the Church. Evaluate his words:

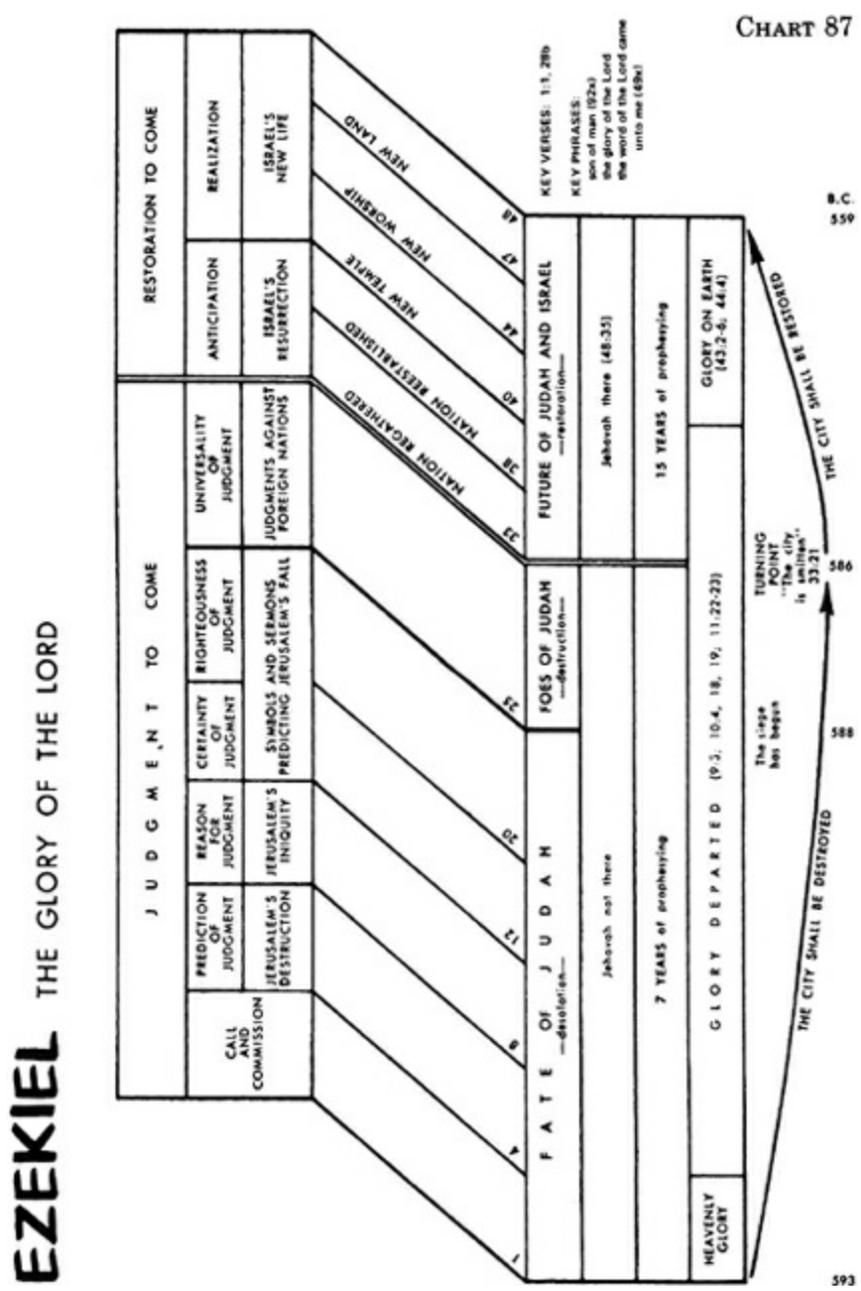
The Christian Church, all through her history, draws from these chapters, not minute allegorical or typological details of her life, but the broad general principle of God's presence with his people and the fructifying power of his Holy Spirit. They point the Church, especially in their adaptation in Rev 21:22, to the consummation awaiting God's people at the *parousia* (second coming) of his Son, who has prepared abiding places for his own in the Father's house. They remind the Church of her pilgrim character in this world, that she looks for "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet 3:13).⁹

## VIII. FURTHER STUDY

1. Other men of God saw visions of God (theophanies), but Ezekiel's vision of 1:4-28

is the most detailed one. For comparative study, read the theophanies of Moses (Exod 24:9-12); Isaiah (Isa 6); Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-10); Daniel (Dan 7:9-14); John (Rev 4:2-11).

2. Consult outside sources for extended discussions of the following subjects:



- a) types and symbols in the Bible¹⁰
- b) Israel's title deed to Palestine¹¹
- c) literal Israel and spiritual Israel¹²

## IX. SELECTED READING

### PROPHETIC THEMES

Hengstenberg, E. W. *Christology of the Old Testament*.

Payne, J. Barton. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, pp. 349-69.

Pentecost, J. Dwight. *Israel in Prophecy*.

_____. *Prophecy for Today*, pp. 51-60; 102-13.

Sauer, Erich. *From Eternity to Eternity*, pp. 157-61; 179-84.

Tan, Paul Lee. *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, pp. 64-67; 82-85; 152-74; 293-98; 318-22.

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 356-64.

Baxter, J. Sidlow. *Explore the Book*, 4:8-46.

Freeman, Hobart E. *Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, pp. 295-325.

Moller, Wilhelm, "Ezekiel." In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2:1071-81.

Scroggie, W. Graham. *Know Your Bible*, 1:202-6.

#### COMMENTARIES

Beasley-Murray, G. R. "Ezekiel." In *The New Bible Commentary*.

Ellison, H. L. *Ezekiel: The Man and His Message*.

Feinberg, Charles L. *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*.

Pearson, Anton T. "Ezekiel." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

Schroder, F. W. J. "Ezekiel." In Lange's  
*Commentary on the Holy Scriptures.*

1. Jeremiah may have been as much as twenty years older than Ezekiel. Ezekiel and Daniel were about the same age. Concerning Ezekiel's familiarity with Jeremiah's message, it has been said that Ezekiel was "the prolongation of the voice of Jeremiah." The two prophets were brought into juxtaposition, especially in connection with Jeremiah's letter to the exiles, to whom Ezekiel was ministering. (Read Jer 29.)

2. See Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 364.

3. Ezekiel's activities during this five-year period are not chronicled for us, but we may assume that he ministered to his people's spiritual needs, and did much studying of the Law and other Scriptures. God was preparing the priest to be the prophet during these years.

4. The quote is from *Calwer Handbuch*, as cited

by F. W. J. Schroder, "Ezekiel" in Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, p.2.

5. Scan through the book and note the frequency of the phrase, "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying."

6. There are other datelines besides these dated messages in the book (cf. 33:21).

7. Jeremiah may have been as much as twenty years older than Ezekiel. Ezekiel and Daniel were about the same age. Concerning Ezekiel's familiarity with Jeremiah's message, it has been said that Ezekiel was "the prolongation of the voice of Jeremiah." The two prophets were brought into juxtaposition, especially in connection with Jeremiah's letter to the exiles, to whom Ezekiel was ministering. (Read Jer 29.)

8. Anton T. Pearson, "Ezekiel," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 705.

9. Ibid., p. 759.

10. E.g., see Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, pp. 152-74.

11. E.g., see J. Dwight Pentecost, *Prophecy for Today*, pp. 61-68.

12. Some Bible students do not see the literal nation of Israel in end-time prophecies. See Erich Sauer, *From Eternity to Eternity*, pp. 157-61, for a defense of the view that literal Israel is intended by such prophecies. Also see Tan, pp. 318-22, for a discussion of the millennial temple, prophesied in Ezekiel 40-49.

## *Daniel: God Rules the World*

The book of Daniel has been described as “the greatest book in the Bible on godless kingdoms and the kingdom of God.”¹ The godless kingdoms referred to here are the Gentile nations, and the Kingdom of God is the millennial reign centered about Israel. The grand truth which applies to all kingdoms is summed up in four words: God rules the world.

Daniel is a relatively short book, but compacted into its pages are multitudes of fascinating prophecies and basic doctrines which challenge the Bible student to tarry long in its study.

The importance of the book of Daniel is underscored in this comprehensive

evaluation by John Walvoord:

Among the great prophetic books of Scripture, none provides a more comprehensive and chronological prophetic view of the broad movement of history than the book of Daniel. Of the three prophetic programs revealed in Scripture, outlining the course of the nations, Israel, and the church, Daniel alone reveals the details of God's plan for both the nations and Israel. Although other prophets like Jeremiah had much to say to the nations and Israel, Daniel brings together and interrelates these great themes of prophecy as does no other portion of Scripture. For this reason, the book of Daniel is essential to the structure of prophecy and is the key to the entire Old Testament prophetic revelation. A study of this book is, therefore, not only important *from* the standpoint of

determining the revelation of one of the great books of the Old Testament but is an indispensable preliminary investigation to any complete eschatological system.²

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

Read Luke 21:20-28. Note especially the phrase “the times of the Gentiles” (21:24). Daniel lived and prophesied at the beginning of this notable epoch in the world’s history. Concerning the epoch, note these two things:

1. Its distinctive character: During this time, by divine design Gentiles, not Jews, have political power and supremacy in the world.

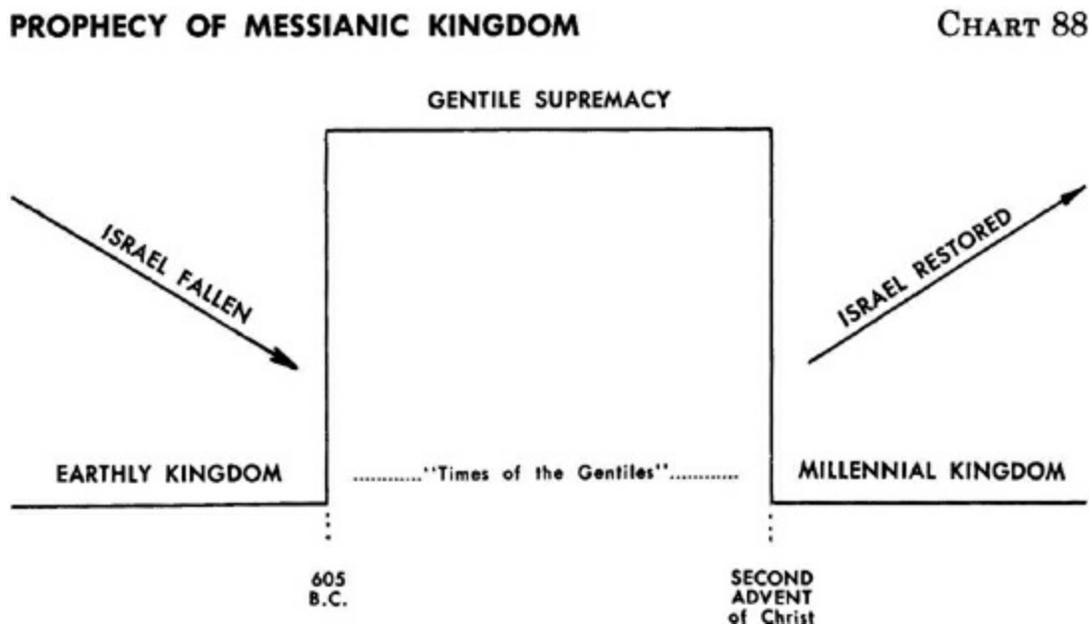
2. Its duration: The “times of the Gentiles” began with the Babylonian Captivity of Judah under Nebuchadnezzar, and it will end with the second coming of Christ in

glory (Luke 21:20-28).

God had offered world supremacy to the Jews (Deut 28) on the condition of obedience to Him, but the Jews would not comply with that condition. So, beginning in 605 B.C., God withdrew the offer and gave the supremacy to the Gentiles, at that time represented by the nation of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, as absolute monarch of Babylon, was thus made “master” of the world.

In Babylonian captivity, Daniel was prophet to both Gentile and Jew. He prophesied to the Gentiles concerning the events which would take place among the Gentile nations during the times of the Gentiles (when political dominion of the earth would be vested in Gentile nations). His mission to Israel mainly concerned the unborn generations of Jews. He prophesied

of an eventual Messianic Kingdom, which God would set up when the times of the Gentiles had been fulfilled. (See [Chart 88](#).)



## II. DANIEL AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Study carefully [Chart 89](#). Observe the following:

1. Daniel's ministry in Babylon lasted for at least seventy years (605-536 B.C.). He was among the Jewish captives of the first deportation (605 B.C.; Dan 1:1-6), and he lived in Babylon throughout the entire seventy-year captivity period (536 B.C. is the

date referred to in 10:1).

2. Babylon, the land of Jewish exile, came under three powers during Daniel's career: Neo-Babylonian, Median, and Persian. The rulers that played an important part in the book of Daniel are:

Nebuchadnezzar;	(Neo-
Belshazzar	Babylonian)
Darius the Mede ³	(Median)
Cyrus	(Persian)

3. In 539 B.C., when Belshazzar was coregent with Nabonidus, Babylon fell to the Persian King Cyrus. This began the Persian period of supremacy.

4. The return of Jewish exiles to Jerusalem and the beginning of construction on the new Temple began at the end of Daniel's career.

5. What prophets and kings of Judah were contemporaries of Daniel? Recall your earlier studies of these men.

### III. THE MAN DANIEL

#### A. NAME

The name Daniel translates the Hebrew word *Daniyye'l*, meaning “God is Judge [Prince]” or “God is my Judge [Prince].” The name given Daniel by Nebuchadnezzar’s officer (1:7) was Belteshazzar, meaning “Bel’s prince.” It was a name honoring one of the pagan gods of Babylon (cf. 4:8; also Isa 46:1; Jer 50:2; 51:44).

#### B. CHARACTER

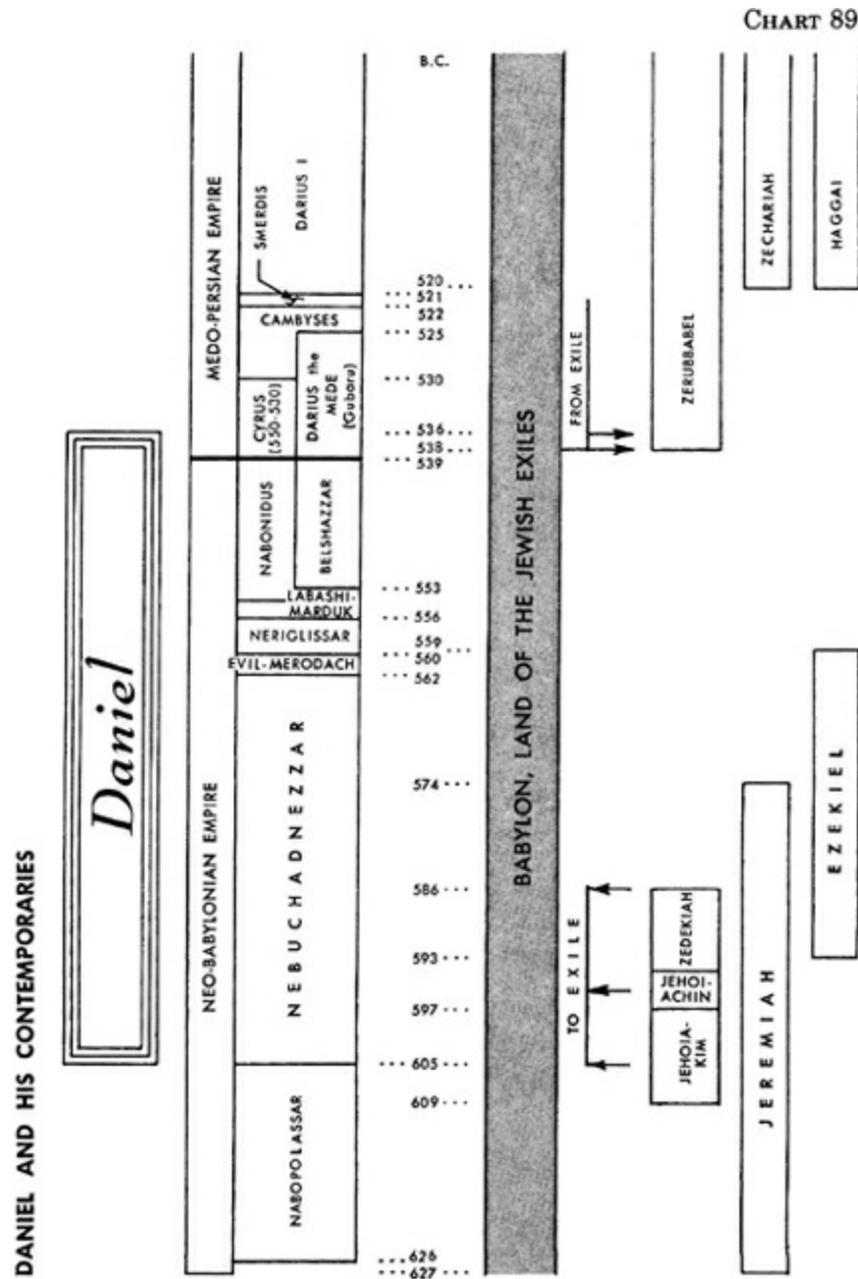
Daniel is usually remembered for his courage and faith, displayed in the experience in the lions’ den. He had many other outstanding traits as well. He was strong of purpose, wise, tactful, courteous, brave, modest, humble, and a man of faith and prayer. It is not without significance that three times heavenly messengers refer to him in visions as a man of “high esteem”

(9:23; 10:11, 19).

### C. BIOGRAPHY

Daniel was born into a Judean family of nobility, around the time of the reformation under King Josiah (621 B.C.). Some identify Daniel as one of King Hezekiah's descendants, who was prophesied about in 2 Kings 20:17-18 and Isaiah 39:7 (cf. Dan 1:3). He was in his late teens when taken captive in the first deportation of 605 B.C. In the same group were three other young men no less noble than himself in character. These were four handsome, intelligent, and well-educated youths (1:4), whom King Nebuchadnezzar selected to be trained for his service. The king gave them names associated with the gods of Babylon, but they had no intention of worshiping those gods. They remained true to Jehovah. The book of Daniel tells the story of the years

that followed.



Daniel served as God's prophet at least until 536 B.C. (10:1).⁴ Soon after this he wrote his book, which no doubt was brought back to Jerusalem when the exiles returned to their homeland. The date and

circumstances of his death are unknown.

#### D. MISSION

The prominent aspects of Daniel's mission already have been discussed earlier in the chapter. There it was shown that Daniel's mission was:

1. to Gentiles of Babylon, and to Jews in exile
2. concerning Gentile nations and Israel
3. with respect to the succeeding centuries, leading up to the end times

Daniel was a unique prophet among the prophets for various reasons, some of which are listed here:

1. He may not have had a special call to the prophetic ministry, as did Isaiah and Jeremiah.
2. He was given the prophetic gift, but not the prophetic office as such.

3. He served in the courts of kings.
4. He prophesied much about Gentile nations.
5. He was the only Old Testament prophet whose book is classified as apocalyptic.
6. His book is the key to the interpretation of all other biblical prophecies of the last days.

## IV. THE BOOK OF DANIEL

### A. AUTHENTICITY

The Daniel referred to by Ezekiel (Ezek 14:14, 20; 28:3) and by Jesus (Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14) is the author of this book. From 7:2 onward, the book uses the autobiographical first person; and, considering the unity of the book, God's words to Daniel in 12:4 imply authorship of the entire book by Daniel. Liberal critics have denied its genuineness, mainly because of (1) its fantastic miracles (e.g., Daniel's deliverance from the lions); (2) its explicit prophecies (many of which were fulfilled in the centuries before Christ); and (3) *alleged* historical inaccuracies. Despite such objections, the book's authenticity has endured through the centuries.

### B. PLACE IN THE CANON

In our English Bibles, Daniel appears as

the last of the five major prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel). In the Hebrew Bibles, Daniel is not grouped with the prophetic books, but appears as a historical book in the Hebrew section called Writings. That it was not included among the prophetic books is explained by the fact that while Daniel had the gift and function of prophet (cf. Matt 24:15), his position was that of a government official. That his book was placed in the Writings as a historical book can be explained by its content, with its apocalyptic visions of world history.

### C. DATE WRITTEN

Daniel probably wrote his book soon after the last dated event occurred (10:1; 536 B.C.). An approximate date would be 530 B.C., or when the prophet was around ninety years of age.

## D. TYPE OF LITERATURE

Daniel is an apocalyptic book, the only Old Testament book so classified.⁵ Revelation is the one New Testament Apocalypse.⁶ The word *apocalypse* in its Greek form is translated as “revelation” in Revelation 1:1. Apocalypse is a revelation, an unveiling of secret purposes of God not known before that unveiling. Those purposes concern particularly world events leading up to the Messianic Kingdom and the consummation of things in the end of the world. The manner in which these events are unveiled is mainly by visions, where imagery and symbolism appear throughout. In Daniel the word “vision” appears twenty-two times; and “visions,” ten times.

Usually apocalyptic literature is written as prose, but because so much picture language is involved, the prose at places looks very much like poetry. In the *Westminster Study*

*Edition of the Bible* 7 the following portions are printed in poetic verse form: 2:20-23; 4:3,10-12, 14-17, 340-35; 6:266-27; 7:9-10, 13-14.

One unique feature of Daniel is that the book is written in two languages, Hebrew and Aramaic. The reasons for this language structure appear later in the survey study.

## V. SURVEY

1. First scan the book in one sitting, aloud if possible. Record at least five of your impressions of this book, coming from this reading. Did any words or phrases stand out?

2. Now read through the book a second time, chapter by chapter, seeking a title for each chapter. Record these titles on paper.

3. Look at the first verses of each chapter, noting the references to the kings. These

date the events and visions of Daniel. (Review the reigns of the kings as shown on [Chart 89](#).)

4. What chapters mainly record narrative? What chapters mainly record visions?

5. How is chapter 1 an introductory chapter to the whole book? Does the last chapter seem to be a unit by itself, or does it continue the vision of chapter 11? How is the last verse of Daniel a concluding verse to the entire book?

6. Who is the interpreter of the dreams in chapters 1-6? Who is the interpreter of the dreams in chapters 7-12?

7. Compare Nebuchadnezzar's dream of chapter 2 with Daniel's vision of chapter 7.

8. Observe how most of the visions of the book of Daniel concern Gentile nations. Read chapter 9 again and observe whether this vision is about Gentiles or about Israel.

9. Continue this survey study, noting such things as relations, emphases, progression, and turning point. Does there seem to be a unity about the book? Compose a title for the book that represents its main theme. Compare your studies up to this point with the overview of [Chart 95](#). The following observations relate to that chart. Study the chart carefully.

10. The top of [Chart 95](#) shows how the book may be divided into two equal parts. Also shown here is the chronological progression of kings, in two sequences:

Nebuchadnezzar-----Belshazzar----Darius  
Belshazzar----Darius----Cyrus

This “backtracking” on the part of the book’s writer is for topical purposes. Note how it fits in with the two-division outline shown above.

11. The bottom of the chart shows an

outline suggested by the two languages used in the original text. Such an outline is not apparent to the reader of the English Bible.⁸ (The one reference at 2:4a to “in [Syriac] Aramaic” is not enough information for the English reader concerning this outline.)

Here is what is involved in this structure:

- a) From 1:1 to 2:4a, Daniel wrote in Hebrew, the language of the Jews.⁹
- b) From 2:4b to 7:28, Daniel wrote in Aramaic, the official language of diplomatic discourse of that day.
- c) From 8:1 to the end of the book, Daniel wrote in Hebrew again. The vital question is Why did Daniel compose his book this way? The best explanation is that in the two Hebrew sections the Jews are prominent, and so the message is in their language; in the Aramaic section the Gentile nations are

prominent, and so the prophetic decrees are delivered to them, as it were, in the official diplomatic language of the world. The survey chart shows the two main sections thus: [10](#)

chapters 2-7: Gentile Nations

chapters 8-12: Hebrew Nation

The introductory chapter 1 involves the Gentile setting, but the spotlight is on the four Jewish boys in that setting. Gentile nations appear much in chapters 8-12, but only as the setting for the experiences of Israel up to the end times.

12. On the basis of your study thus far, what appears to be the book's main theme? Can you think of any supporting themes as well?

13. What do the prophecies reveal concerning the relations between Gentile nations and Israel?

14. How is God shown in this book to be the God of all history?

15. Your survey of Daniel has not answered all questions that arise out of such a difficult book. The purpose of the survey, as with all survey study, is to see the highlights and main themes, which in turn open doors to ever increasing understanding of the book.

## **VI. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

Each of the subjects discussed below is not expounded in detail. Helpful suggestions are given for any later studies made on the subjects.

### **A. PROPHECY OF END-TIME WORLD HISTORY**

Daniel's unique contribution to the canon of Scripture is that it gives detailed descriptions of the destinies of Gentile nations under the directive sovereign hand

of God. Other prophets of Israel spoke of this, but more sparingly, for their main message concerned their own people. The Holy Spirit inspired Daniel to write more about “world” history.

Some Bible scholars see all of Daniel’s Gentile and Israel prophecies fulfilled by the second century B.C. or, at the latest, during Christ’s earthly ministry. The opposite view, which is reflected in this book, is that the fulfillments of the prophecies culminate in the end times.¹¹ This long-range scope of interpretation is concisely summarized by John Walvoord.

In many respects, the book of Daniel is the most comprehensive prophetic revelation of the Old Testament, giving the only total view of world history from Babylon to the second advent of Christ and interrelating Gentile history

and prophecy with that which concerns Israel. Daniel provides the key to the overall interpretation of prophecy, is a major element in premillennialism, and is essential to the interpretation of the book of Revelation. Its revelation of the sovereignty and power of God has brought assurance to Jew and Gentile alike that God will fulfill His sovereign purposes in time and eternity.¹²

## **B. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM AND DANIEL'S VISION (chaps. 2 and 7)**

Nebuchadnezzar, who had so recently been raised to the position of “world” ruler, was anxiously thinking about his newly acquired possessions when God revealed to him in a dream a prophetic outline of the future history of the world powers (2:1-30). About fifty years later Daniel had a vision (also called a dream, 7:1) concerning the

same world powers (chap. 7). [Chart 90](#) shows some of the major similarities of the two dreams.

The Fulfillment column is a widely accepted conservative system of interpretation of these chapters. Note how much of the prophecies were fulfilled before Christ's first coming. The identification of Antichrist as the little horn is based on New Testament passages referring to these last times. (Read 2 Thess 2:3-10; Rev 11:2; 13:2, 5-10, 15-17; 19:20.)¹³ [Chart 91](#) shows the premillennial, pretribulational view of end times, which is the setting for such an interpretation of the two dreams. (The most intense activity of Antichrist is during the Great Tribulation.)

DREAMS OF THE IMAGE AND FOUR BEASTS  
Daniel 2 and 7

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM OF THE IMAGE		DANIEL'S VISION OF THE FOUR BEASTS	
PROPHECY		PROPHECY	
DREAM	INTERPRETATION	INTERPRETATION	DREAM
2:31-35	2:36-45	7:13-28	7:1-14
① HEAD			LION ①
② BREASTS AND ARMS			BEAR ②
③ BELLY AND THIGHS			LEOPARD ③
④ LEGS FEET			DIVERSE BEAST ④
FULFILLMENT WORLD POWERS NEO-BABYLONIAN 612-539 B.C. MEDO-PERSIAN 539-331 B.C. GREEK 331-63 B.C. ROMAN → 3 PERIODS ① Supremacy of Ancient Rome 63 B.C.—A. D. 476 ② Rome-derived governments ③ Antichrist		10 HORNS LITTLE HORN	
		C O N S U M M A T I O N ANCIENT OF DAYS (God) on the throne SON OF MAN (Christ) given dominion	
GOD'S INDESTRUCTIBLE KINGDOM 7:44 MESSIANIC KINGDOM		STONE CHRIST	

### C. VISION OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS (9:1-27)

Among Evangelicals there are two main schools of interpretation of this vision. Both are agreed that the “weeks” of the vision are heptads (“sevens”) of years, one week being seven years. One view, referred to by Edward J. Young as the “traditional

messianic interpretation,”¹⁴ sees the seventieth week as fulfilled in the first century A.D., without a hiatus of a Church age. According to this view, the prince of 9:26 is Titus, destroyer of the Temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70; and the “he” of 9:27 is Christ, whose death removed the need for further sacrifices under the old covenant.

The other view, recognizing a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks, sees the vision as an outline of Israel’s history up to the Great Tribulation of the end times. This is diagramed on [Chart 92](#).

Study [Chart 92](#) in connection with the text of Daniel 9:24-27. Robert D. Culver gives the following reasons for holding to a time gap in this vision:

1. Jesus placed the culminating week with its “abomination” in the times of

the final Antichrist, just before His second advent (Mt 24:15).

2. Daniel 7:25, parallel to 9:27, is a prophecy of the times of the final Antichrist.

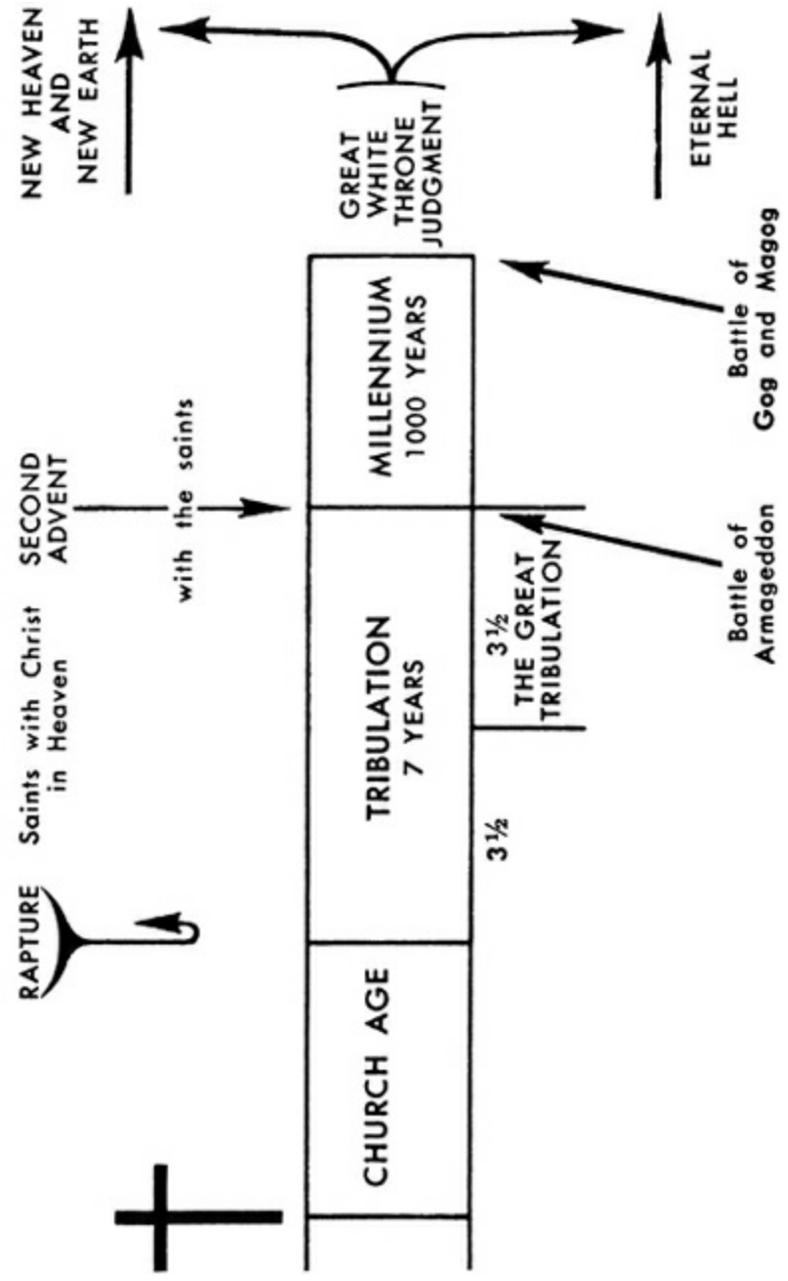
3. The period of three and one-half times or years is always mentioned in Scripture in an eschatological (end times) setting (Rev 11:2-3; 12:6, 14).

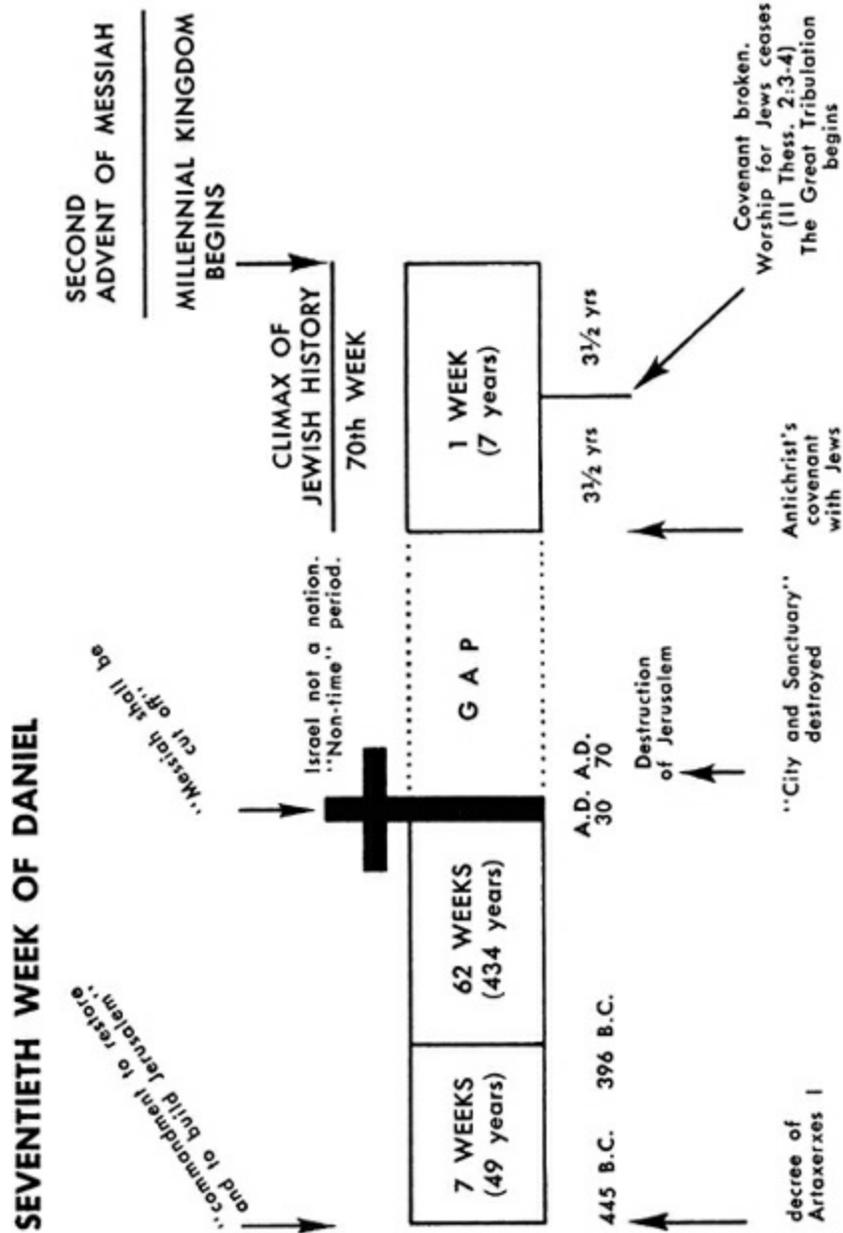
4. The six things to be accomplished in the seventy weeks (Dan 9:24) require the second advent of Christ, and the restoration and conversion of Israel.¹⁵

You will want to come to your own conclusions as to whether a time gap is intended by the vision. Refer to the commentaries already cited for further help on the two main views outlined here.

# PREMILLENNIAL SCHEME OF WORLD EVENTS

CHART 91





### D. COMPARISONS OF DANIEL'S VISIONS

A survey of the book of Daniel cannot get into all the details of the visions. In order to help the reader see the large elements of the visions (without dwelling on the details), [Chart 93](#) compares the visions in summary form.

## VII. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

Two key words of Daniel are “dream” and “vision.” What others are key words? Read 4:17 as a key verse of the book.

## VIII. APPLICATIONS

1. What lessons can be learned from the stories of Daniel and his friends? What light is thrown on what it means to be “in the world” but not “of the world” (John 17:11, 16)?

2. What does the book teach about effective prayer?

3. God is the sovereign Lord of all history. In what different ways is this taught by the book of Daniel?

## IX. FURTHER STUDY

1. Now that you have finished your survey

of Daniel, compare all four major prophets as to such things as experiences and messages. [Chart 94](#) brings some of these observations together.

2. The many differences of interpretation of Daniel's prophecies indicate something of the difficulty of studying this book. Refer to various commentaries for their help in this stage of Bible study. Highly recommended for the premillennial viewpoint is John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*.

## X. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 365-88.

Culver, Robert D. *Daniel and the Latter Days*.

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#### COMMENTARIES

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DeHaan, M. R. *Daniel the Prophet*.

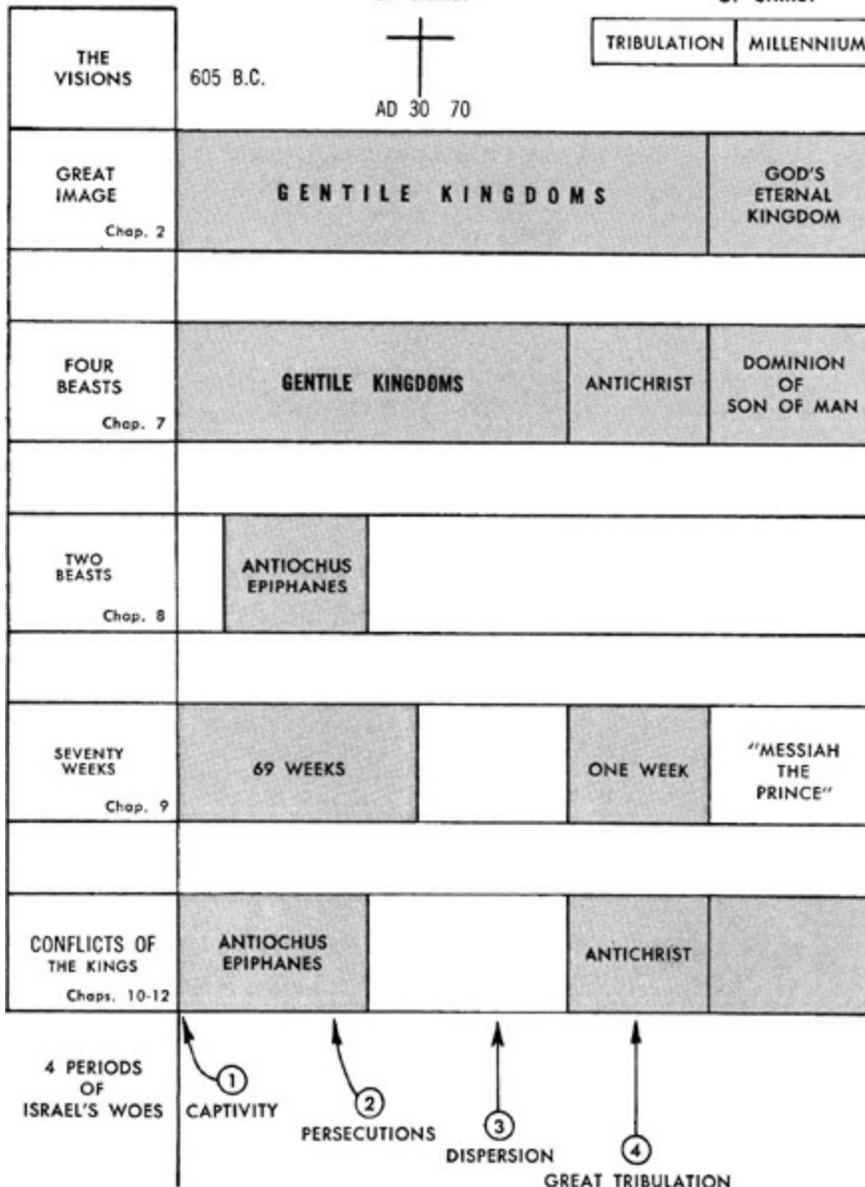
Ironside, H. A. *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*.

**COMPARISONS OF DANIEL'S VISIONS**

**CHART 93**

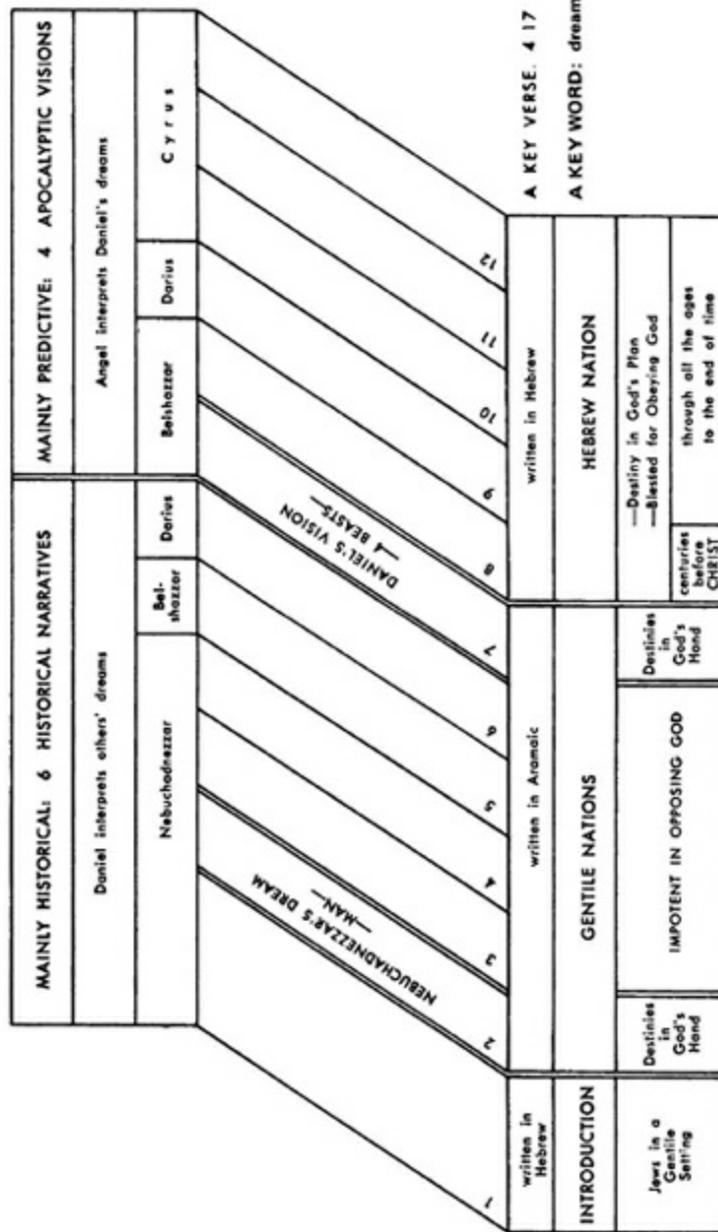
FIRST ADVENT  
OF CHRIST

SECOND ADVENT  
OF CHRIST



	ISAIAH	JEREMIAH	EZEKIEL	DANIEL
KNOWN AS:	The Royal Prophet Evangelical Prophet Messianic Prophet	The Weeping Prophet The Prophet of Judgment	The Prophet of Visions The Prophet of the Exile The Other Son of Man	The Prophet of Gentile Times
PROPHESIED TO	Jews in Judea	Jews in Judea and in Captivity	Captive Jews in Babylon	Gentile Kings and Captive Jews
CONCERNING	Judah and Jerusalem, Isa 1-1; 2-1	Judah and Nations, Jer. 1-5, 9-10; 2-1-2	The Whole House of Israel, Ezek 2-3-6, 3-4-10, 17	Gentile Nations, Dan. 2-36 ff., and Israel, Dan. 9
DURING REIGNS OF-	Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah, Isa 1:1	Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, Kings of Judah, Jer. 1-2-3	Zedekiah, King of Judah and Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon	Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah (Kings of Judah), Nebuchadnezzar, Darius and Cyrus (Gentile Kings)
DATES B.C.-	From 739 to 692	From 627 to 574	From 593 to 559	From 605 to 536
NUMBER OF YEARS HE PROPHESIED	47	53	34	69
PROPHET'S CALL:	Isa 6	Jer. 1-4-19	Ezek. 1-3	-----
POLITICAL CONDITION:	Judah Menaced by Syria and Israel Alliance with Assyria Assyria Repulsed	Hostilities with Egypt and Babylon Deportation of Captives	Some Jews Captive in Babylon Other Jews Still in Judea Threatened with Captivity	Jews in Babylonian Captivity
RELIGIOUS CONDITION:	Backslidden Hypocritical	Revival Under Josiah Much Sin and Idolatry After Josiah's Death	National Unbelief, Disobedience and Rebellion	As a Nation out of Communion with God A Small Believing Remnant
HISTORICAL SETTING:	II Kings 15-20 II Chron 26-30	II Kings 24-25	Dan. 1-6	Dan. 1-6

# DANIEL GOD RULES THE WORLD



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(Amillennial viewpoint)

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1. W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 1:199.
2. John F. Walvoord, *Daniel The key to Prophetic Revelation*, p,7.
3. This Darius has been identified as Gubaru, general under Cyrus, king of Persia, whom Cyrus made governor, or sub-king, over the region of Chaldea (Babylonia). (Cf. 5:31; 6:1; 9:1.)
4. This dateline in 10:1 probably refers to the third year of Cyrus's rule over Babylon, or 536 B.C. The phrase "the first year of Cyrus the king"

(1:21) probably has reference to the first year of the Jews' permission to return to Jerusalem. See Robert D. Culver, "Daniel," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 776.

5. Parts of other books (e.g., Ezekiel and Zechariah) are apocalyptic.

6. Revelation and Daniel are very closely related to each other, treating the same great subjects, and using many of the same symbols. Studying one helps in studying the other. One author has written, "The writer of the Apocalypse [Revelation] and Daniel have all things in common, as though they have been let together into the very arena of God."

7. *Westminster Study Edition of the Bible*.

8. This linguistic structure of Daniel is fully described by Culver in "Daniel," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* and in his book *Daniel and the Latter Days*.

9. It may be observed here that Hebrew as the Jews' vernacular began to disappear during the exile years, though it has always remained as

the language of the Jews' religion. (Now, since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Hebrew is once again the official native tongue of the people.)

10. The Gentile section here is made to begin at 2:1. Actually, Daniel began writing in Aramaic at 2:46, to emphasize the change at the natural point. The spirit of 2:1-4a brings those verses into this Gentile section.

11. See Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days*, pp. 14-15.

12. Walvoord, p. 27.

13. Read Culver, "Daniel," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, pp. 790-91, for further light on this subject.

14. This is the view held by Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*.

15. Culver, "Daniel," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 795.

## *The Twelve Minor Prophets*

The last twelve books of our Old Testament are commonly referred to as the minor prophets. These books will receive our attention for the remainder of this study guide.

### **I. TITLES**

The common title for these books is “minor prophets.” This title originated in Augustine’s time (late fourth-century A.D.). The books are “minor” only in the sense of being much shorter than such prophecies as Isaiah and Jeremiah (called “major prophets”). Their message is surely not less important today, nor was it when first delivered in Old Testament times. They were

minor prophets preaching a major message.

The Hebrew Bible regards these writings as one book, and calls them simply “The Twelve.” It was because of the books’ brevity that the Jews in Old Testament times joined the twelve writings together into one scroll, so that the combined length was about the same as that of Isaiah or Jeremiah. Hence, it was very natural to consider them as one book, *The Twelve*.¹ At least the title is not misleading, as “minor prophets” can be.

## II. CANON

The twelve minor prophets have never been strongly challenged as being part of the inspired canon of Scripture. Their messages are just as lofty and unique as those of the major prophets, and have been recognized as such.

As noted earlier, in the Hebrew Bible

(Law, Prophets, Writings) *The Twelve* is listed as just one book of the Prophets section. This partly explains why the Hebrew Bible has a total of only twenty-four books, although those twenty-four are the exact equivalent of our thirty-nine. In the English Bible, the minor prophets comprise twelve of the seventeen prophetic books.

### **III. ORDER OF THE MINOR PROPHETS IN THE ENGLISH BIBLE**

This is the order of the list of minor prophets in our English Bible:

1. Hosea
2. Joel
3. Amos
4. Obadiah
5. Jonah
6. Micah

7. Nahum
8. Habakkuk
9. Zephaniah
10. Haggai
11. Zechariah
12. Malachi

It is not fully known what originally determined the order of this list. There is a general chronological pattern if, as suggested by this study guide, the first six books were written before the last six.² (See Chart 96.)

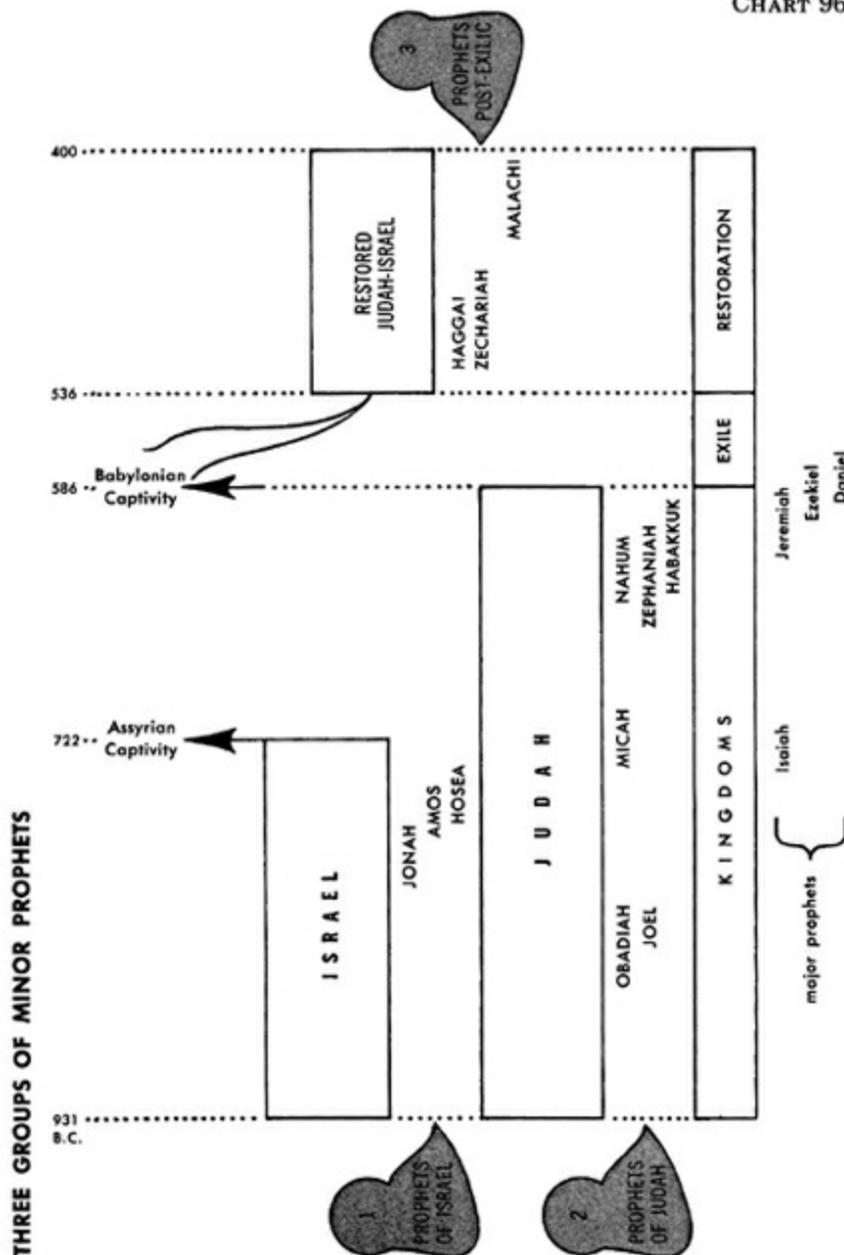
As far as ministry is concerned, the twelve minor prophets may be identified as three groups: prophets of Israel; prophets of Judah; and postexilic prophets (see [Chart 96](#)).

When the books of the minor prophets are

listed within each group in the chronological order of their writing, this is the order:

THREE GROUPS OF THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

GROUP	BOOK	NUMBER OF CHAPTERS	TOTAL
1—PROPHETS OF ISRAEL	Jonah	4	27
	Amos	9	
	Hosea	14	
2—PROPHETS OF JUDAH	Obadiah	1	20
	Joel	3	
	Micah	7	
	Nahum	3	
	Habakkuk	3	
	Zephaniah	3	
3—POSTEXILIC PROPHETS	Haggai	2	20
	Zechariah	14	
	Malachi	4	

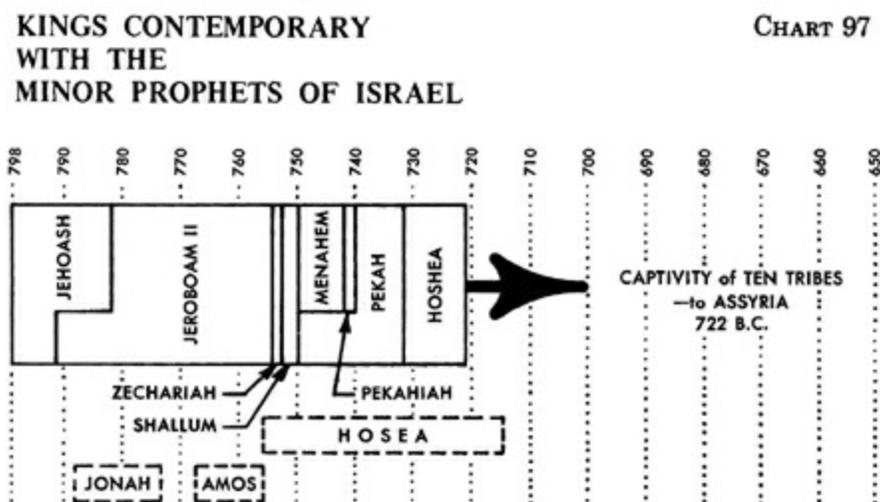


The order listed above is the order in which the books are surveyed in this book.

#### IV. CONTEMPORARIES OF JONAH, AMOS, AND HOSEA

[Chart 97](#) shows which kings were reigning in Israel during the public ministries of each of the three prophets. In a few instances

there were coregencies (e.g., both Jehoash and Jeroboam II ruled between 793 and 782 B.C.) HOW many kings reigned during Hosea's ministry? Note that the Assyrians took Israel captive toward the close of Hosea's ministry. Since the captivity was God's judgment for sin, what does this reveal about the spiritual burden on Hosea's shoulders? Consult the Appendixes for a listing of the kings of Israel and related data and descriptions.



Below are listed the approximate dates of the reigns of Israel's kings and ministries of its prophets, between 798 and 713 B.C.

REIGNS OF THE KINGS		MINISTRIES OF THE PROPHETS	
Jehoash	798-782	Jonah	784-772
Jeroboam II	793-753	Amos	765-755
Zechariah	753-752	Hosea	755-713
Shallum	752		
Menahem	752-742		
Pekahiah	742-740		
Pekah	752-732		
Hoshea	732-722		

## V. MAIN SUBJECTS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS

The messages of the minor prophets are generally the same as that of the major prophets, since their ministries were similar as to time, place, and people.

### A. INSTRUCTION AND EXHORTATION (FORTHTELLING)

Many chapters deal with sin, warning, and judgment, but they do so because that is the very setting of God's Good News of redemption. There is a positive, bright evangel in every book of "*The Twelve*:"

the irrepressible love of God to sinful men; the perseverance and pursuits of His grace; His mercies that follow the exiled and the outcast; His truth that goes forth richly upon the heathen; the

hope of the Saviour of mankind; the outpouring of the Spirit; counsels of patience; impulses of tenderness and of healing.³

## **B. PREDICTION AND EXHORTATION (FORETELLING)**

The utterances of the prophets, for the most part, centered around four points in history: (1) their own times; (2) the threatening captivities (Assyrian and Babylonian) and eventual restoration; (3) the coming of their Messiah;⁴ and (4) the reign of the Messiah as King.

## **VI. SOME REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Name the twelve minor prophets in the order given in our English Bible.
2. Name the minor prophets according to the three groupings identified in this chapter.

3. What does the title “minor prophets” signify?

4. What group name does the Hebrew Bible assign to these books?

5. Who was the reigning world power during the ministries of Jonah, Amos, and Hosea? (See [Chart 4.](#))

6. Distinguish between forthtelling and foretelling, as far as the prophets were concerned.

1. The following second-century B.C. nonbiblical reference shows that the books were so designated before the time of Christ: “And of the Twelve Prophets may be the bones flourish again from their place, for they comforted Jacob and redeemed them by assurance of hope” (Ecclesiasticus 49:10).

2. The dates assigned to the prophets by this study guide are essentially those of John C.

Whotcomb's chart, Old Testament Kings and Prophets. George Adam Smith lists the prophets in this chronological order: Amos, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Haggai, Zecariah, Malachi, Joel, Jonah. (The Book of the Twelve Prophets, 2 vols.)

3. Smith, 1:9.

4. The name "Messiah" (literally, "anointed one") appears only twice in the Old Testament: Daniel 9:25-26. The idea of an anointed person or thing, however, is common in the Old Testament. In 2 Samuel 7 the concept of a Davidic Messiah originates, without using either the word "Messiah" or "anointed." In the prophets, Christ is referred to by various names (e.g., "ruler," Mic 5:2).

## *The Minor Prophets of Israel*

(Jonah, Amos, Hosea)

Jonah, Amos, and Hosea are the three minor prophets who ministered to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The messages of their books are extremely contemporary. In fact, someone has said concerning Amos that “he proclaimed a message so far ahead of his time that most of the human race, and a large part of all Christendom have not yet caught up with it.”

The three prophets of Israel have been compared this way:

Jonah: prophet of a broken ministry

Amos: prophet of the broken Law

Hosea: prophet of a broken heart

These comparisons suggest in a limited way something of the paths which you will follow as you move from book to book in the survey studies of this chapter.

## **JONAH: GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD**

The story of Jonah is one of the clearest demonstrations of God's love and mercy for *all* mankind. This universal love is a foundational truth of the whole Bible, taught by the most quoted verse, John 3:16. By studying Jonah before studying the other minor prophets, we will see the full view first—God's love for Gentile *and* Jew—and this will put the later studies about Israel and Judah in proper perspective.

### **I. BACKGROUND**

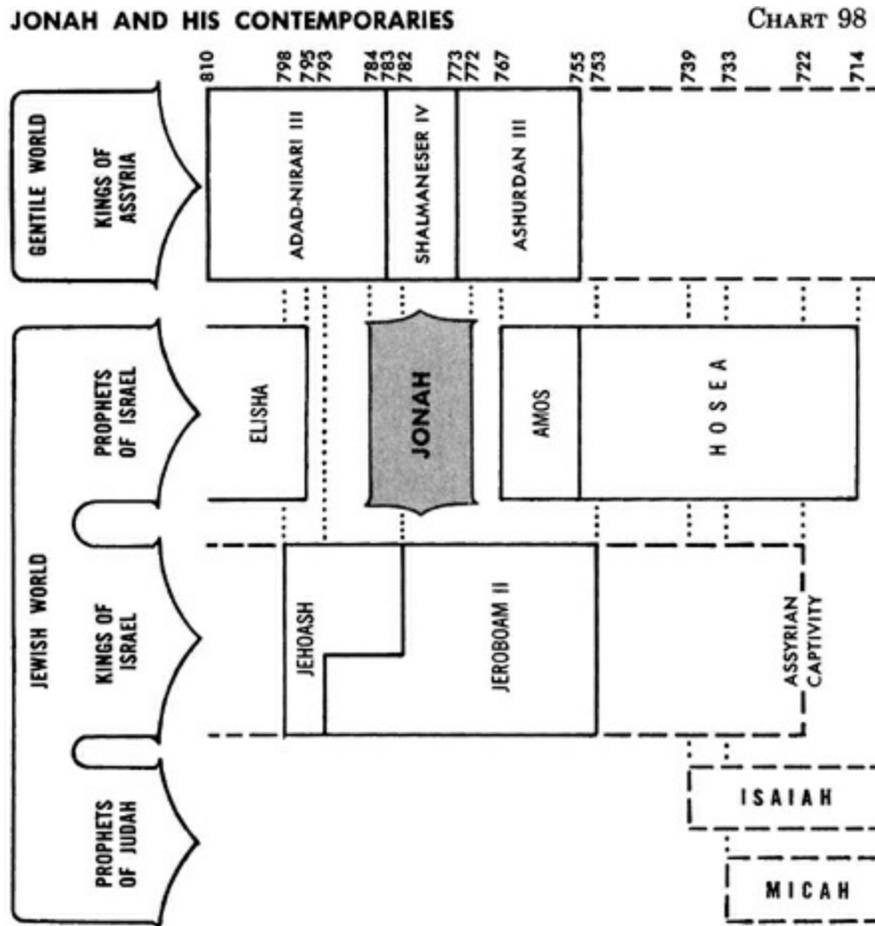
#### **A. THE MAN JONAH**

1. *Name and family.* The name Jonah (Heb., *Yonah*) means “dove.” According to 2 Kings 14:25, he was the son of Amittai,¹ and his hometown was Gath-hepher. This tillage was located about three miles northeast of Nazareth, Jesus’ hometown.² Recall that the great prophet Jeremiah was also from a small, little-known town, Anathoth (Jer 1:1).

2. *Ministry as a prophet.* Jonah probably had the same general qualifications for the office of prophet as the other prophets had. Most of his character traits, revealed in the narrative of his book, are not commendable (e.g., disobedience and pouting). The story of Jonah’s service to God underscores God’s patience and willingness to work through men despite their frailties.

The main purpose of the book of Jonah is to show God’s gracious dealings with the heathen Gentile city of Nineveh. God chose

Jonah to be His channel of communication to them.



3. *Jonah's contemporaries.* [Chart 98](#) shows Jonah and some of his contemporaries. Note the following on the chart:

a) Elisha was Jonah's predecessor. In fact, Jonah may have been one of Elisha's disciples, learning much from this "man of God." Read 2 Kings 13:14-20 for the

account of Elisha's death. Amos and Hosea were Jonah's successors.

b) Even though the book of Jonah is about the prophet's ministry to the foreign city of Nineveh, Jonah was primarily a prophet of Israel to Israel. However, God did not choose to record in Scripture any details of his homeland ministry beyond what we learn from a passage in 2 Kings (see below).

c) Jeroboam II, the most powerful king of Israel, reigned during all of Jonah's public ministry. Read 2 Kings 14:23-29 for a summary of Jeroboam's evil reign. Note the reference to Jonah's prophecy that Jeroboam would regain Israel's northern boundaries from Syria. "God gave Israel a last chance of repentance [14:26-27], seeing whether prosperity would accomplish what affliction had not."³ When we study Amos and Hosea we will see that Israel chose not

to return to God.

d) In a way, Jonah was an intermediary between the Jewish world and the Gentile world. Assyria was Israel's main military threat during Jonah's ministry, although the worst threat was yet to come (fifty years later). Spiritually, Assyria was as idolatrous as Israel. In light of this information, why would Jonah not want to preach the message of repentance to the Assyrian Ninevites?

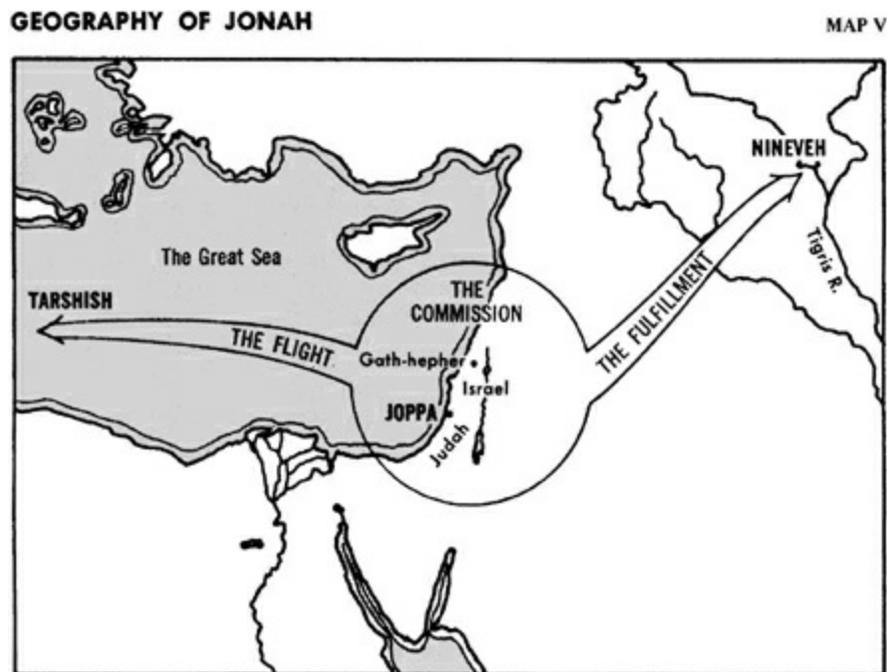
e) Only God knows what the relationship between Assyria and Israel would have been after Jonah's preaching to Nineveh (chap. 3) if Israel herself were right with God.

f) Note that Israel fell to Assyria only about fifty years after the close of Jonah's ministry. Do you think Jonah might have had foreknowledge of this imminent captivity?

## B. THE BOOK OF JONAH

1. *Author.* The traditional view is that Jonah wrote this book about himself. The fact that the narrative does not use the first-person pronoun does not preclude this. Hebrew authors (e.g., Moses) often wrote autobiography in the style of third-person biography.

2. *Date.* The book was written toward the end of Jonah's career, around 770 B.C.



3. *Type of writing.* The style of Jonah is biographical narrative, similar to the stories

of Elijah and Elisha (1,2 Kings), whom Jonah succeeded as prophet.⁴ Hidden in the historical account is a predictive, typical purpose. The main type concerns Jonah and the whale, which prefigured Christ's burial and resurrection (read Matt 12:39-41). Jonah's deliverance from the belly of the whale was also a sign to the Ninevites. What did it signify, according to Jesus (Luke 11:29-30)?

*4. Purposes.* Three main purposes of the book of Jonah are:

- a) To teach God's people their responsibility to deliver the message of salvation to all people—Jew and Gentile.⁵
- b) To demonstrate that God honors repentance for sin, whoever the person (cf. Jer 18:7-10). Read Romans 1:16; 2:9-10; 3:29; 2 Peter 3:9; Mark 16:15.
- c) To show to people of the Christian era

that Christ's death and resurrection, prefigured in Jonah's experience, were in the divine plan before Christ ever walked this earth.

5. *The geography of Jonah.* [Map V](#) shows the three key geographical points in the story of Jonah: Jonah's homeland, Tarshish, and Nineveh.

- a) The homeland—the place where God commissioned Jonah to go to Nineveh. This was Israel, north of Judah. Exactly where Jonah was when the call of 1:2 came, is not known. Shown on the map are Gath-Hepher, Jonah's hometown, and Joppa, where he boarded a ship to go to Tarshish.
- b) Tarshish—the city where Jonah wanted to flee to, to hide from the Lord's presence. It may have been the city of Tartessus, of southwestern Spain.

c) Nineveh—The earliest reference to Nineveh in the Bible is at Genesis 10:11-12. Read these verses and observe the references to Rehoboth, Calah, and Resen. It appears that these three adjoining cities were part of the Nineveh district of city-state, and that the whole area, by virtue of its size, was referred to as a “great city.” Nineveh was five hundred miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee, located on the banks of the Tigris River.

## **II. SURVEY OF JONAH**

The book of Jonah is one of the easiest and most interesting books to read in the Bible. One author says it is the most beautiful story ever written in so small a compass.

### **A. A SURVEY READING**

1. First scan the four chapters, for overall impressions. Does the book have a natural opening? What about a conclusion?

2. Is there a progression in the plot of the story? Who is the main person in the action? Are any other individuals involved?

## B. SURVEY CHART

Study carefully the survey [Chart 99](#). Observe the following in connection with the chart:

1. The book is of two main parts. What three outlines on the chart show this?

2. Study carefully the bottom of the chart, which compares the narratives of the two halves of the book. Note the similarities and differences. Refer to the Bible text to support parts of the outlines which are not clear.

3. At some time during your study you

may want to make your own outlines of the book.

4. Read the key verses shown. Note also the key words. Add to this list your own choices.

### **III. APPLICATIONS OF JONAH**

What does this book teach about

1. the universal message of salvation

2. the divine commission of service

3. fleeing from God

4. recompense for disobedience

5. repentance

6. forgiveness of sin

7. complaining

8. prayer

9. miracles

10. God's supernatural control of nature

How did Jesus apply the story of Jonah, according to these verses: Matthew 16:4 (cf. Matt 12:39-41); Luke 11:30?

#### IV. SELECTED READING

##### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 295-303.

Ellison, H. L. *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 55-61.

Freeman, Hobart E. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, pp. 160-71.

Gaebelein, Frank E. *Four Minor Prophets*, pp. 57-138.

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Commentary.

Deane, W. J. *Jonah*. Pulpit Commentary.

Keil, C. F. “Jonah.” In *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament Minor Prophets*, vol. 1.

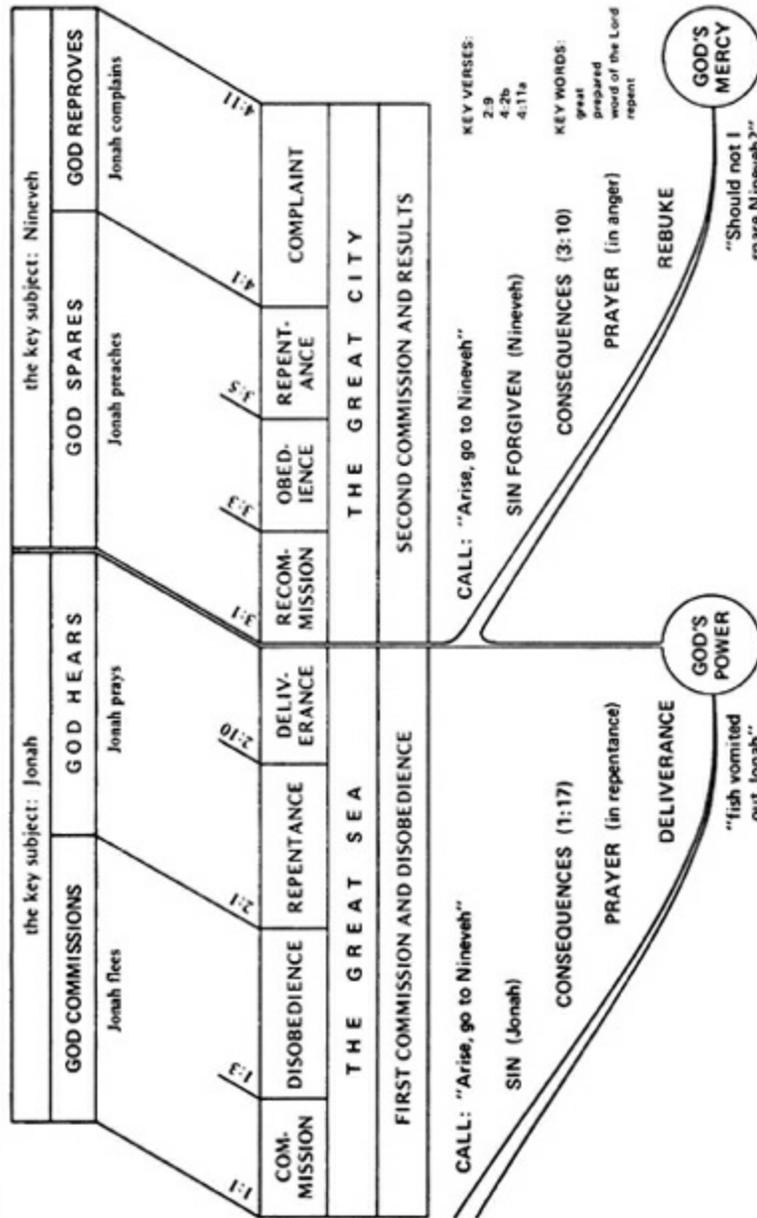
Kennedy, James H. *Studies in the Book of Jonah*.

Kleinert, Paul. “Jonah.” In Lange’s *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*.

## **AMOS: PREPARE TO MEET GOD**

Amos was God’s prophet to prosperous Israel, steeped in religiosity, immorality, and complacency. Amos was one of the most colorful personalities among the prophets. He was humble and rugged, a son of the wilderness, like Elijah and John the Baptist. One writer says that his was “one of the most wonderful appearances in the history of the human spirit.”⁶

# JONAH GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD



## I. BACKGROUND

### A. THE MAN AMOS

1. *Name and family.* The name Amos means "burden-bearer" (from the Hebrew root *amas*, "to carry"). No reference is made in the book to any relative, including Amos's

father. The fact that his father is not named may suggest a very humble birth. There is no reference to Amos in any other Bible book.⁷

Amos was a native of Tekoa, a small village some six miles south of Bethlehem, overlooking the Dead Sea. The town was just a few miles from the busy caravan route linking Jerusalem with Hebron and Beer-sheba (see [Map W](#)). In this barren hill country, Amos was a herdsman of sheep and goats, and a grower of sycamore figs (1:1; 7:14).⁸ As a wool merchant he probably made many trips into the northern cities of Israel and saw firsthand the religious and social corruption of its people.

*2. Ministry as a prophet* God called Amos to be a prophet while he was tending his flock (7:15). Recall that David's commission came as he tended his sheep (1 Sam 16:11-

13); and Gideon was called from a threshing floor (Judg 6:11-14). Amos's ministry was mainly to the Northern Kingdom of Israel (1:1; 7:14-15), even though he also preached to Judah and the surrounding foreign nations. We might ask why God sent a native of Judah to prophesy to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. James Robertson says the reason is not far to seek.

It is the manner of the prophets *to appear where they are most needed*; and the Northern Kingdom about that time had come victorious out of war [2 Kings 14:25], and had reached its culmination of wealth and power, with the attendant results of luxury and excess, while the Southern Kingdom had been enjoying a period of outward tranquillity and domestic content.⁹

The message God wanted to deliver to

Israel was strong and severe, so God chose for His messenger a man who had withstood the rigors of a disciplined life, and who knew what hardness was. In the howling wildernesses around Tekoa, life was full of poverty and danger—it was an empty and silent world. Amos knew God, and he knew the Scriptures, even though he was not trained in the school of the prophets (7:14). Living in Tekoa was ideal preparation for his task and was just as much of God as was his call. His prophetic ministry lasted about ten years (765-755 B.C.).

## B. THE BOOK OF AMOS

1. *Author and date.* Amos wrote this book toward the end of Jeroboam's reign, around 760 B.C. Most of the nine chapters are "the words" (i.e., messages, or sermons) of Amos (1:1). One narrative section appears at 7:10-17.

**Chart 100** shows Amos among his contemporaries. Study this carefully, to fix in your mind the book's historical setting. What prophets of Israel ministered before and after Amos? What kings reigned over Israel and Judah during Amos's ministry? Compare 1:1.

*2. Audience.* Amos's main audience was Israel, which politically and economically was at a zenith of power. The threat of war was eased, and business was booming. A spirit of self-sufficiency and smug complacency thrived on material prosperity. The rich were getting richer, and the poor were getting poorer. Idolatry, hypocrisy, moral corruption, and social injustices were everywhere. The nation was truly on the brink of disaster. In fact, on God's timetable, destruction was due in about three decades (722 B.C.). Such was the soul and destiny of the audience of Amos the prophet.

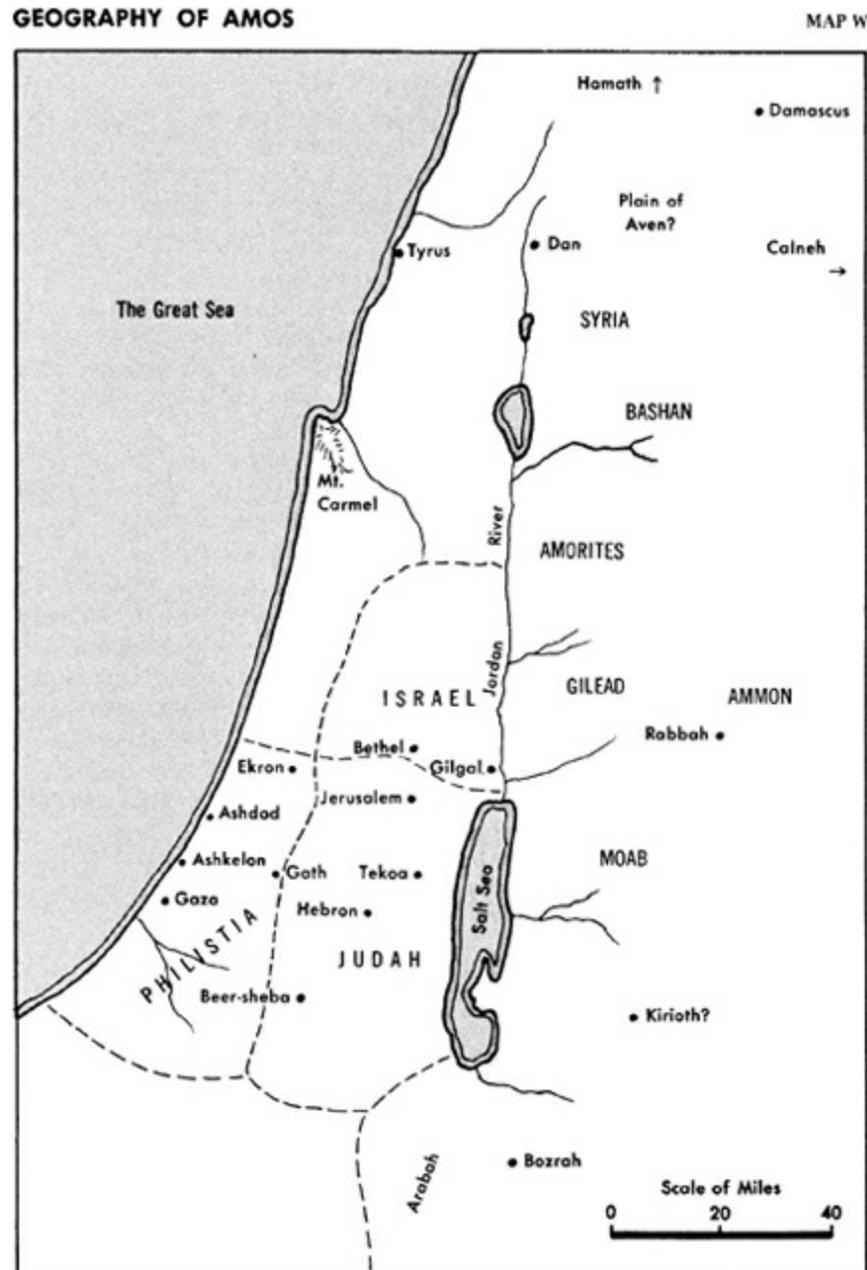
3. *Message.* Amos's preaching was so sharp and vigorous that he was accused of sedition by Amaziah, the idolatrous high priest of Bethel (7:10-17).

Like most prophets, Amos underscored these key truths:

- a) the people's sin
- b) the coming of judgment
- c) the righteousness and holiness of God
- d) the mercy of God in offering deliverance

The book has often been criticized as a "dark book." But Amos's main purpose in stirring conviction of sin and repentance in the hearts of the people was not to alleviate his own grief over their evil ways. Rather, he yearned that the people, as individuals and as a nation, would come to a personal knowledge of God as their Lord. A key statement of his book is the Lord's gracious

invitation, “Seek Me that you may live” (5:4).



## II SURVEY OF AMOS

### A. FIRST READINGS

Scan the book once or twice for overall

impressions. Here are some things to look for in such a survey:

1. Overall tone (e.g., Is the book severe, mellow, meditative, philosophical, practical?)
2. Tone of the opening chapters as compared with that of the closing verses (9:11-15).
3. Groupings of Amos's messages (e.g., beginning at 7:1 is a group of visions).
4. Repeated words and phrases.
5. Verses which strike you, for whatever reason.

## B. SURVEY CHART

**Chart 101** is a survey of the book of Amos, showing its structure and highlights. Observe the following on the chart, reading the Bible passages which are cited:

1. The book has a short introduction (1:1-

2), but no formal conclusion.

2. There are three types of writing:

a) Lyric prophecy (oracles)—chapters 1-2.

Key repeated phrase: “Thus says the LORD” (e.g., 1:3).

b) Teaching discourse (sermons)—chapters 3-6.

Key repeated phrase: “Hear this word” (e.g., 3:1)

c) Dramatic revelation (visions)—chapters 7-9.

Key repeated phrase: “The Lord GOD showed me” (e.g., 7:1)

3. Most of the book is about judgment. What is the last section (9:11-15) about? What other two-point outline represents the book?

4. Four sections are clearly discernible in the book. Mark these in your Bible. Check

the Bible text to see the identifying phrases which mark the sections.

Judgments against the nations—chapters 1-2

Judgments against Israel—chapters 3-6

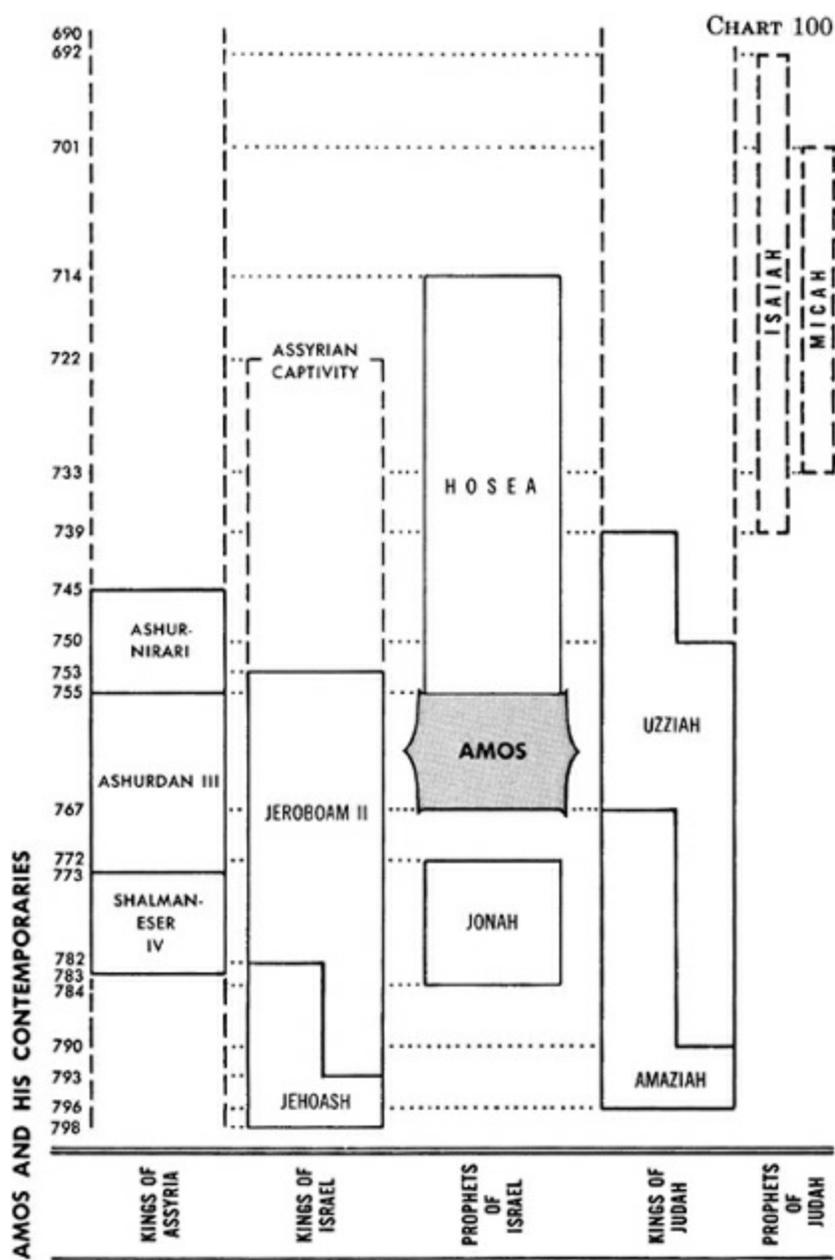
Visions of judgment—7:1—9:10

Messianic promise—9:11-15

5. Study the two outlines at the top of the chart which identify the people whom Amos's messages are about. Read in your Bible the verses which support the identifications listed on top of page 409.

6. Complete the listing of the five visions, beginning with locusts.

7. As you proceed with your study, look for other references to deliverance and salvation which may appear in the text (e.g., 5:4). (The high point of this redemptive theme is the last section, 9:11-15.)



8. Note the key words and key verses. Add to these lists along the way.

GENTILE and JEW	{ Gentile Nations (1:3—2:3). Judah (2:4-5). Israel (2:6-16).	See 1:3,6,9,11,13; 2:1. See 2:4. See 2:6.
ISRAEL (Northern Kingdom)	Israel (mainly) (3:1—9:10).	See 7:10-17 for a distinction between Israel and Judah. ¹⁰
JEW and GENTILE	{ Israel and Judah (9:11-15). Gentiles	See 9:11-14 for references to the chosen people of God. See 9:12 (KJV) ("heathen").

### III. APPLICATIONS

1. How did James apply the message of Amos, according to Acts 15:16-17? (Cf. Amos 9:11-12.)

2. Why is fire often a part of God's judgment?

3. Two basic attributes of God are love and holiness. Are both of these manifested in Old Testament history? What references to God's grace did you read in the book of Amos? How is God's love related to His holiness?

4. People of Judah "rejected the law of the LORD" (Amos 2:4). Is this sin committed today by unbelievers? Can it be committed by backslidden Christians? If so, in what ways?

5. Someone has written, "A man does not choose to be a prophet; he is chosen." How

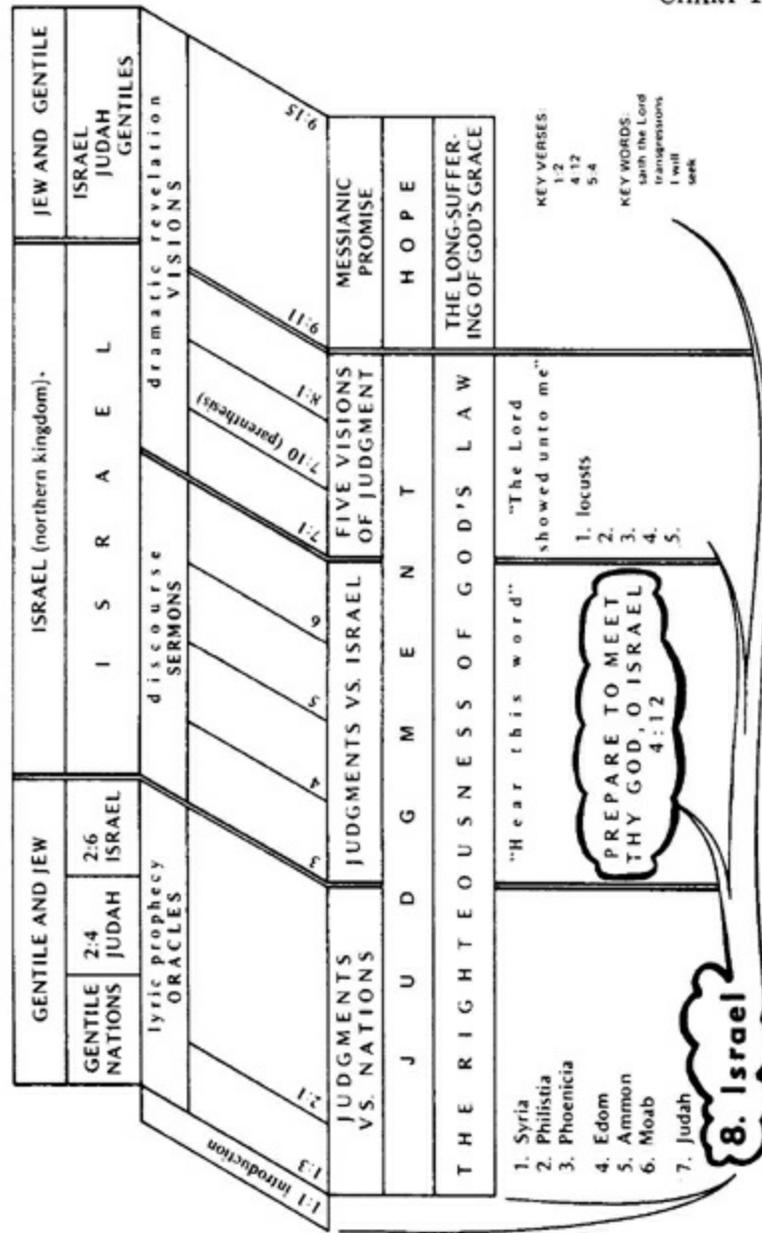
does this truth apply to Amos? See 1:1; 3:8; 7:14-15. Does it apply to Christian workers today?

6. Is there hope for a people when their religious leader is a false shepherd? Recall the story of Amaziah, the priest of Bethel (7:10-17).

7. Evaluate this statement: “Every prophecy of judgment is an invitation to repentance.”¹¹ What do you think is meant by the words, “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel” (4:126)? Are they a warning; a call to repentance; or both?

8. Write a list of various spiritual lessons taught by 3:1—9:10.

# AMOS PREPARE TO MEET GOD



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Wolfe, Rolland E. *Meet Amos and Hosea*.

# **HOSEA: GOD'S LOVE FOR BACKSLIDERS**

Hosea was the last writing prophet to minister to Israel before they fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. He has been called the prophet of “Israel’s zero hour,” because “the nation had sunk to a point of such corruption that a major stroke of divine judgment could no longer be staved off.”¹² But even though judgment is a main subject of Hosea’s message, the book is remembered mostly for its vivid pictures of God’s love and grace. Someone has well remarked, “There is nothing of divine grace that is not found in the book of Hosea.” Your study of this inspired Scripture should lead you into a deeper knowledge of who God is and how He deals with sinners.

## **I. BACKGROUND**

### **A. THE MAN HOSEA**

1. *Name.* The name Hosea (Heb., *Hoshea*) means “salvation.” It is interesting to observe that the names Joshua (Num 13:16) and Jesus (Matt 1:21) are derived from the same Hebrew root as Hosea.

2. *Family and home.* Hosea’s father was named Beeri (1:1). We do not know what Beeri’s occupation was. He may have been a middle-class merchant, or a farmer or cattleman. Hosea used many illustrations of agricultural settings when he wrote, which suggests that the prophet lived close to the soil in his young life (cf. 4:16; 6:4; 10:12). His home may have been in a town of Ephraim or Manasseh (see [Map X](#)), though this also is only speculation.

3. *Ministry.* Hosea probably had no formal training in a school of the prophets, but his writings show him to be a very knowledgeable man. We do not know

precisely when God originally called him to be a prophet. The messages recorded in the book were given to him probably between 754 and 714 B.C. [Chart 102](#) shows who his contemporaries were. Note the following:

a) During Hosea's ministry seven kings reigned over Israel, while four kings reigned on Judah's throne.¹³

b) In a sense Hosea was a successor to the prophet Amos. Recall that Amos was a native of Judah. This makes Hosea the only writing prophet *of* Israel *to* Israel. As one writer has said, "His book is the prophetic voice wrung from the bosom of the kingdom itself."¹⁴

c) Hosea was ministering at the time the Assyrian invaders conquered Israel (722 B.C.).¹⁵ Refer to [Chart 102](#) and note that Jeremiah was ministering to Judah when the Babylonian Captivity began (586 B.C.). Hosea

and Jeremiah both preached the same kind of message; both were “weeping prophets.”

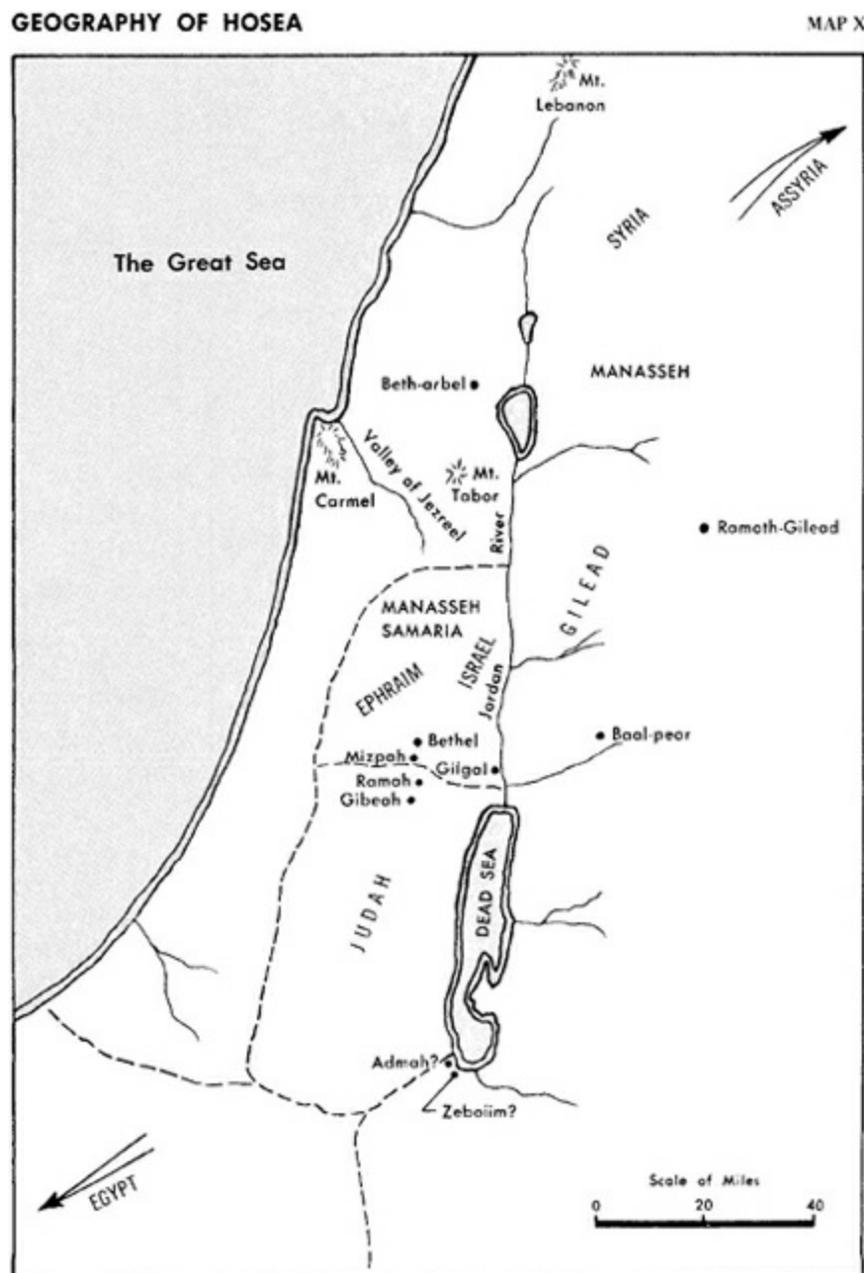
d) Isaiah and Micah were prophets of Judah, while Hosea was prophesying to Israel. (As is shown later, a few of Hosea’s messages were directed to the Southern Kingdom.)

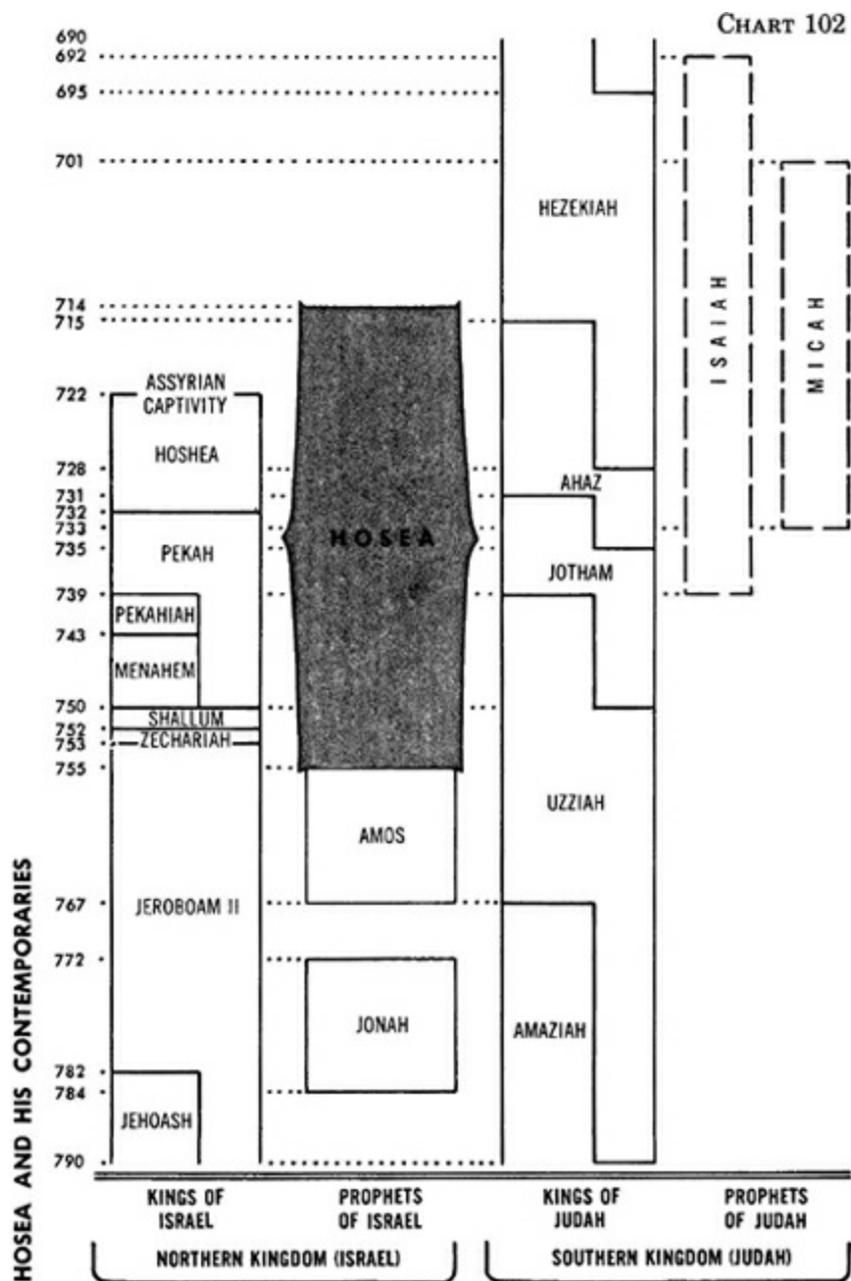
Hosea was one of the tenderest of the prophets in his contacts with Israel. He has been called “the prophet of the broken heart.” His divine commission was to plead with the people of Israel to return to God. They did not respond, and so captivity came (read 2 Kings 17). Although his message went unheeded, he did not fail as a prophet. He was obedient to God who called him, delivering God’s message to the people.

## **B. THE BOOK OF HOSEA**

*1. Date.* The messages of the book of Hosea, delivered sometime between 754 and 714 B.C., were probably compiled by Hosea

into one book toward the end of that period. Gleason Archer suggests 725 B.C. as a possible date.¹⁶ If that is so, Hosea completed the book before the Assyrian Captivity (722 B.C.). That judgment was foretold in the book; it was not reported as having already taken place.





2. *Setting.* In the days of Hosea, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was politically plagued by anarchy, unrest, and confusion. The quick succession of kings ([Chart 102](#)) suggests such an instability. One political faction favored alliance with Egypt; another, with Assyria. One writer comments on 7:11

thus, “Israel was like a silly dove... fluttering everywhere but to God.”¹⁷

Economically, the nation was prosperous. Spiritually, it was the darkest hour of Israel. Idolatry, immorality, and haughty rejection of God’s love spelled disaster. Israel was a backslidden people when Hosea preached to them (14:4). Read 2 Kings 15-17 to feel how black the darkness was.

*3. Theme.* The theme of Hosea is this: the tender-loving God offers one last chance of restoration to hardhearted, adulterous Israel. Israel is the unfaithful wife who has deserted her husband and gone after other lovers. God through the prophet Hosea invites her back: “Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God” (14:1). Read these passages about God’s love: 2:14,15,19,20; chapter 3; 11:3,4,8; chapter 14; compare Romans 11:22. John has been called the apostle of

love in the New Testament; Hosea could be called the prophet of love in the Old Testament.

4. *Language and style.* Hosea's style is abrupt, short, and sharp ("he flashes forth brilliant sentences"). But tenderness is the book's prevailing tone. Scroggie says, "His message is one of the most profound and spiritual in the Old Testament."¹⁸ The authoritarian tone is heard throughout the book, even though the familiar declaration "thus saith the LORD" appears only four times. Symbols and metaphors abound throughout the book, the prominent one being that of marriage (chap. 1-3). The messages of chapters 4 to 14 were apparently not compiled with an outline in mind. Transitions are hard to detect because they are submerged in the emotional makeup of the book. As one writer observes, "The sentences fall from him like the sobs of

a broken heart.”¹⁹

## II. SURVEY

1. Scan chapters 1-3. Who are some of the main characters of this narrative? At this point, don't ponder over questions that come to your mind concerning the Lord's instructions to Hosea.

2. Study the survey [Chart 103](#). Observe that there are two main divisions in the book. How do chapters 4-14 differ from 1-3 as to content? Scan chapters 4-14 to verify this.

3. Spend the next hour or so making a casual reading of chapters 4-14. When a verse describes sin or guilt of God's people, mark *S* in the margin of your Bible. Keep scanning until the subject changes to judgment (*J*), invitation (*I*), restoration (*R*), or grace (*G*). When there is a change of

subject, record the new letter at that point. When you have done this for all the chapters, you will note that all the subjects mentioned above appear scattered throughout the whole section. In other words, a clear outline is not evident. However, observe on [Chart 103](#) what subjects seem prominent in chapters 4-8; 9-10; and 11-14. Compare this outline with the markings you have just made. For example, is judgment more prominent than sin in chapters 9-10?

4. How do chapters 4-14 reflect Hosea's experiences in chapters 1-3, according to [Chart 103](#)?

5. The last chapter of Hosea (chap. 14) is a key Bible passage on the cure for spiritual backsliding. How does the chapter serve as a conclusion to Hosea's book? Who is the prominent person of the last sentence of the

book?

6. Note the list of key words on the chart. Note also the key verses which are cited. Read the verses in your Bible. Relate them to the theme of the book.

### III. APPLICATIONS

1. See how the following passages of Hosea are applied in the New Testament:

Hosea 1:9-10; 2:23	—	Romans 9:25; 1 Peter 2:10
6:6	—	Matthew 9:13 (12:7)
13:14	—	1 Corinthians 15:55

2. How is marriage a figurative representation of the Christian's relation to Christ? (Cf. Eph 5:30-32; John 14:3; Rev 19:7-9.) What can mar this intimate relationship, bringing on spiritual adultery? (Cf. James 4:4.)

3. Can a backslidden Christian be restored to fellowship with Christ? If so, how is such

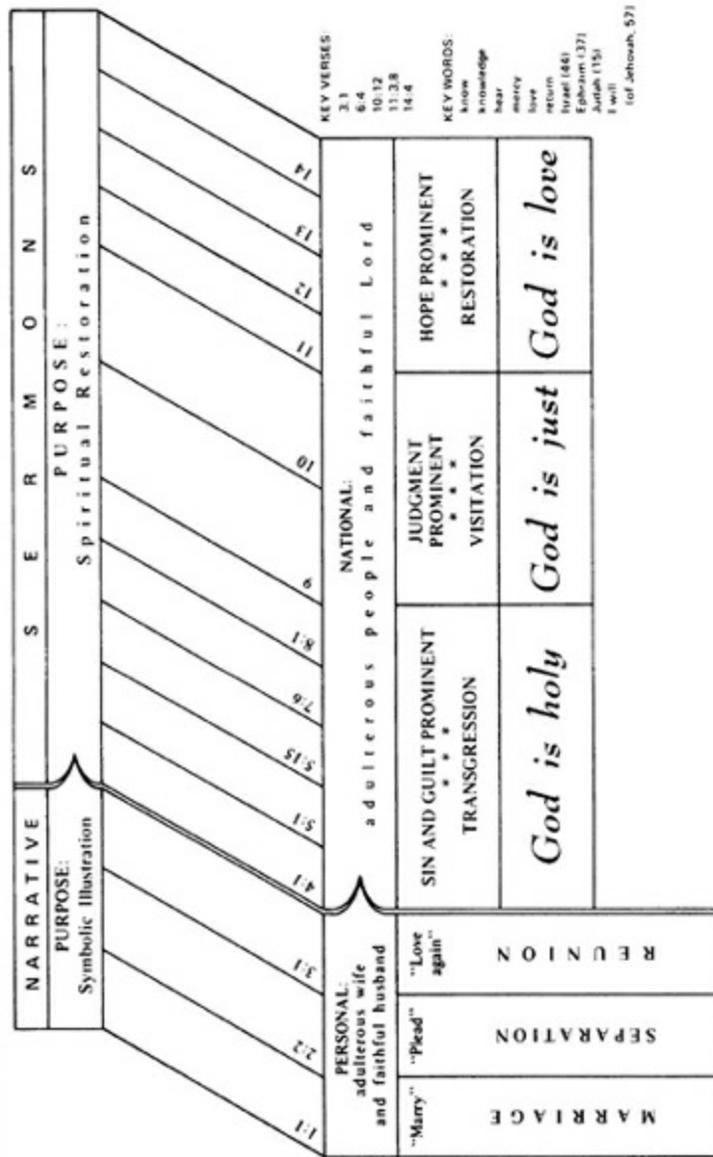
a restoration brought about? (Cf. Rev 2:4-5).

4. Relate Hosea 1:4 to these verses about the vengeance of God: Romans 3:5; 12:19; Hebrews 10:30.

5. What is temporary about the pleasures and allurements of the world? See 2:7a. Also, read Hebrews 11:24-26.

6. Why is it important for Christians to continually acknowledge God's gracious provisions for all their needs? Is it possible that ingratitude is a cause as well as a symptom of backsliding? See 2:8.

# HOSEA GOD'S LOVE FOR BACKSLIDERS



7. How do the words “she forgot Me” (2:13) describe a backslidden believer?

8. Would you find it difficult to truly love someone who has deserted or harmed you? What does 3:1 teach about God’s love for His people?

9. Apply the following phrases to the present day:

“Like people, like priest” (4:9).

“I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice” (6:6).

“They sow the wind, and they reap the whirlwind” (8:7).

“The days of punishment have come” (9:7).

“It is time to seek the LORD” (10:12).

10. Is man’s responsibility proportional to the light which God gives him? Read Hosea 12:10; Romans 1:19-23; Luke 12:47-48.

11. Is the security of a nation ultimately dependent on military might? See 14:3a. On the phrase, “We will not ride upon horses,” compare Isaiah 30:16; 31:1.

12. What does Hosea 14 prophesy about the future of Israel? Read Romans 11 to learn what Paul taught about Israel as a

nation. Was there a remnant of believing Jews in Paul's day (Rom 11:5)? How far into the future was Paul looking when he wrote 11:25-26?

#### IV. SELECTED READING

##### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 308-11.

Ellison, H. L. *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 95-110.

Freeman, Hobart E. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, pp. 172-83.

Schmoller, Otto. "Hosea." In Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, pp. 1-20.

Schultz, Samuel J. *The Prophets Speak*.

##### COMMENTARIES

Cheyne, T. K. *The Book of Hosea*.

Gaebelein, Frank E. *Four Minor Prophets*.

Morgan, G. Campbell, *Hosea*.

Pfeiffer, Charles F. "Hosea." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

1. There is a Jewish tradition that Jonah's mother was the widow of the town of Zarephath and that Elijah raised Jonah from the dead (1 Kings 17:8-24).

2. Read the Pharisees' statement of John 7:52 about prophets coming out of Galilee. Were the Pharisees correct?

3. H. L. Ellison, "I and II Kings," in *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 325.

4. In the Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Kings are classified among the Former Prophets, and John among the Latter Prophets.

5. Acts 10-11 and Romans 9-11 show the application of this New testament times, when the early Jewish Chirtiens hesitated accepting

Gentile believers into their fellowship.

6. Cornili, quoted by George Adam Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, 1:71.

7. The Amos of Luke 3:25 and Amoz of 2 Kings 20:1 are different persons.

8. Pastoral scenes abound in the book at these and other places: 1:2; 2:13; 3:4-5; 4:7; 6:12; 7:1; 8:1; 9:6. When God inspired men to write the Scriptures, He did not set aside such *things* as their personality and home background.

9. James Robertson, “Amos,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1:121.

10. At some places (e.g., 3:1) in this long section, Amos is speaking about both kingdoms—Israel and Judah. For the most part, however, his message concerns Israel, with its capital at Bethel.

11. Arnold Schultz, “Amos,” in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 834.

12. J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, 4:89.

13. Only Jeroboam’s name is mentioned in

1:1. The omissions have been explained in various ways. (Consult commentaries.)

14. Ewald, quoted by James Robertson, "Hosea," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 3:1425.

15. Some think that Hosea moved to Judah at the time of the conquest.

16. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 310.

17. E. Heavener, "Hosea," in *The New Bible Dictionary*, p. 539.

18. W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 1:166.

19. Robertson, 3:1426.

## *The Minor Prophets of Judah*

(Obadiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah,  
Habakkuk)

Six of the twelve minor prophets ministered to the Southern Kingdom of Judah prior to the Babylonian Captivity (see [Chart 96](#)). The chronological order in which the prophets ministered is the order followed in the six surveys of this chapter. [Chart 104](#) shows which kings were reigning over Judah during the times of those prophets.¹ The shaded areas indicate the evil reigns; the unshaded areas, the righteous reigns. What seems to have brought on the appearance of prophets: good, or evil reigns? Or is such a pattern not

clear? Also keep in mind the larger setting of Old Testament history, as represented on [Chart 3](#).

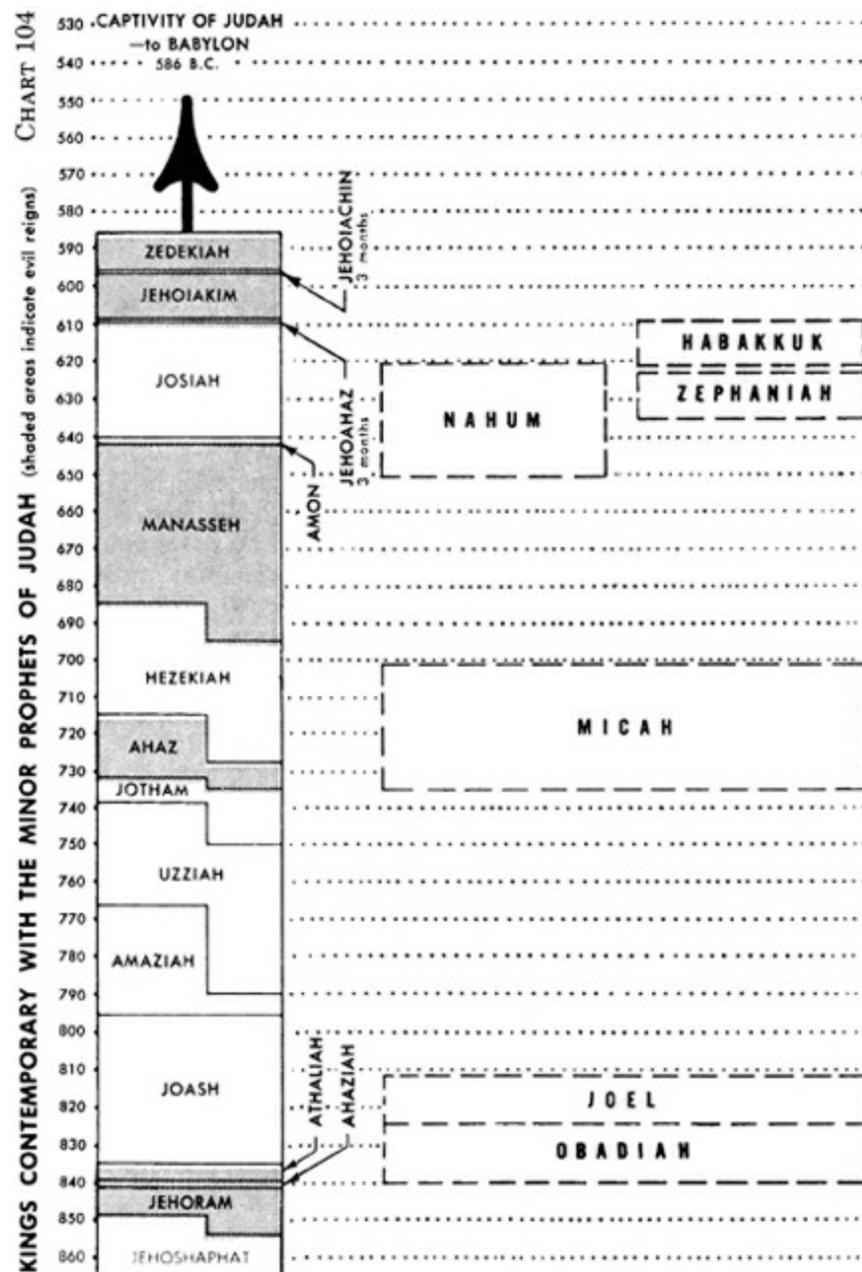
When you begin to study each book, refer to [Chart 104](#) to help you visualize the setting.

History always involves places, and since the books of the minor prophets have a historical setting, we may expect to see geographical references in the books. [Map Y](#) shows the geography of the minor prophets of Judah. Try to fix these places in your mind before you begin to survey the Bible text.

## **OBADIAH: A ROCK THAT FAILS AND A KINGDOM THAT ENDURES**

Some of God's prophets were commissioned to preach to foreign nations closely involved with Judah's history. Obadiah was His messenger to Edom, hostile

kingdom southeast of Judah (see [Map Y](#)). The Gentile Edomites felt militarily secure in the fortresses of their steep mountains, and wanted nothing to do with Israel's God.



If any city of Edom was a symbol of arrogant self-confidence, it was Petra (Heb.,

*Sela*, 2 Kings 14:7). This now famous tourist attraction of the red-rock canyons was located about fifty miles south of the Dead Sea. Obadiah may have had Petra in mind when he wrote, “The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the *rock* [Heb., *sela*; Gr., *petra*]”² (v. 3, KJV, italics added).

## I. BACKGROUND

### A. THE MAN OBADIAH

The name Obadiah appears twenty times in the Bible, representing thirteen different persons. The only reference to the writing prophet is in verse 1 of his book. His home was in Judah, and he lived probably during the reigns of Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah, and Joash ([Chart 104](#)).³ The name Obadiah means “servant of the Lord” or “worshiper of the Lord.”

## B. THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

1. *Date written.* There are a few possible dates. If we knew which plundering of Jerusalem Obadiah was referring back to in verses 11-14, we could be more certain of the book's date. (The book was written later than the plundering.) Read verses 11-14. Four invasions of Jerusalem are recorded in Old Testament history:

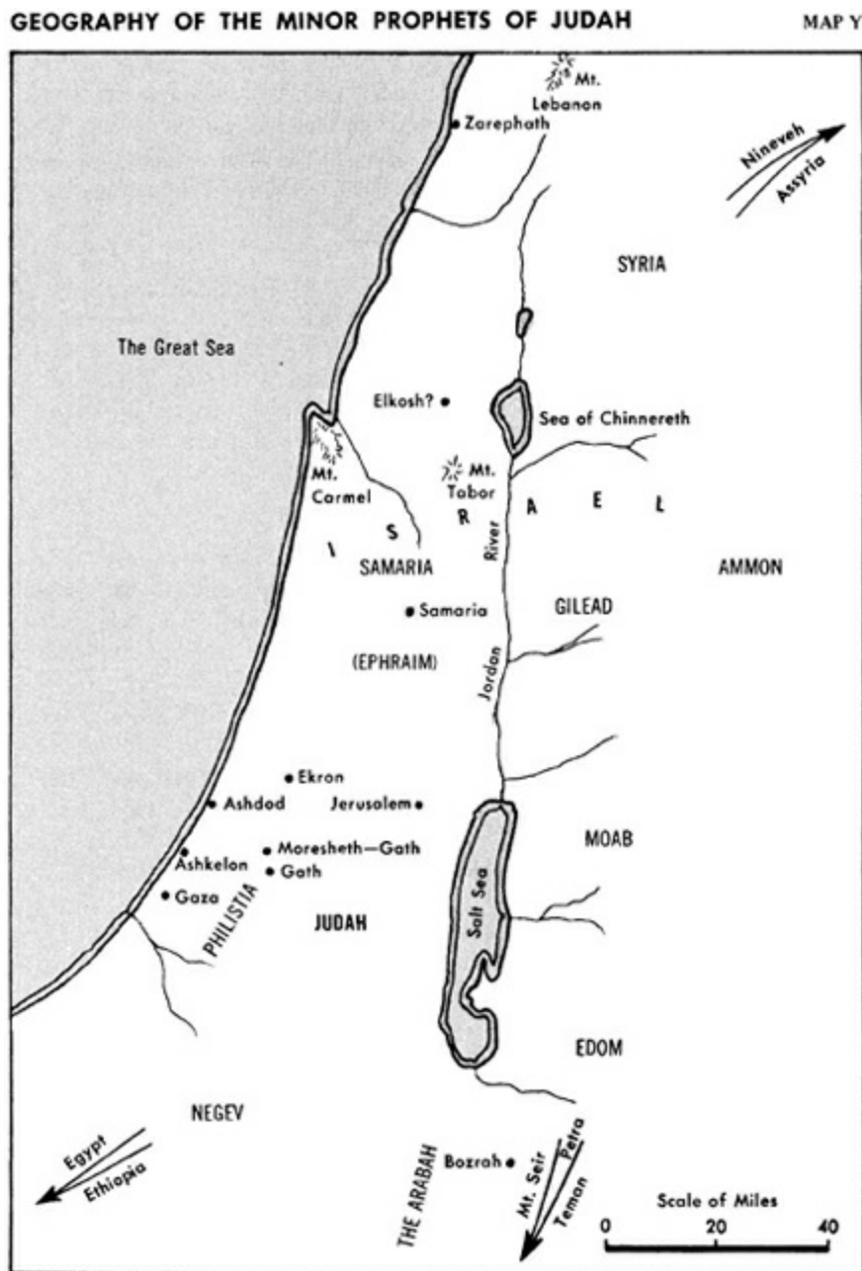
- a) by Shishak, king of Egypt, (925 B.C.); (1 Kings 14:25-26; 2 Chron 12)
- b) by Philistines and Arabians (during reign of Jehoram; see [Chart 104.](#)); (2 Chron 21:16-17, cf. 2 Chron 21:8-10; Amos 1:6, 11-12)
- c) by Jehoash, king of Israel (c. 790 B.C.); (2 Kings 14; 2 Chron 25)
- d) by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (586 B.C.); (2 Kings 24-25; cf. Psalm 137:7)

Read the four groups of passages cited

above. This book takes the position that Obadiah, in verses 11-14, was referring to the plundering by Philistines and Arabians (second invasion cited above).⁴ Based on this, his book was written between 840 and 825 B.C.

2. *Content and style.* Obadiah is the shortest book of the Old Testament, but the familiar slogan *multum in parvo* (“much in little”) certainly applies to it. The style of the book is vigorous and colorful, using many striking comparisons. It is a compact version of the typical prophetic book, where the opening chapters deal with sin and judgment, and bright Messianic prophecies appear toward the end. The tragic aspect of the book is that Edom as a nation has come to a spiritual “point of no return,” that is, she is not offered any hope of salvation. One writer says, “She is the only neighbor of the Israelites who was not given any promise of

mercy from God.”⁵ This is not because God was unmerciful. Edom had already spurned the mercies of God.



3. *Historical background.* Since the destiny of Edom is a key subject of this book, some highlights of that nation’s history are listed

below, to furnish setting for the prophecy.  
(Read all the Bible passages.)

- a) Nation was descended from Esau (Gen 25:19-34).
- b) Nation settled in the regions of Mount Seir, between the Dead Sea and Gulf of Akaba, to the east of the Arabah (Gen 36). (See [Map Y](#).)
- c) Nation rejected the Israelites' request to travel through Edom on the journey from Egypt (Num 20:14-21).
- d) Antagonism originating with the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau (Gen 27), persisted through the centuries involving Israel (Jacob) and Edom (Esau). Recall the passages cited earlier in this chapter about the plundering of Jerusalem. Also read 2 Samuel 8:14; 2 Kings 14:1-7; 2 Chronicles 28:17.
- e) Nation was continually subject to foreign

kingdoms, losing its identity as a nation before the time of Christ, and finally disappearing from history in A.D. 70 (Romans' destruction of Jerusalem).

## II. SURVEY

Read the twenty-one verses of Obadiah in one sitting, aloud if possible. What are your first impressions? In your own words, what is the book mainly about?

**Chart 105** shows the structural organization of the text of Obadiah. Note the following on the chart, referring to the Bible text as you study the chart:

1. The book is of three main sections: verses 1-9; 10-14; and 15-21. Note the three different verb tenses shown at the top of the chart. Read the Bible text to see if these are the prevailing ones of each section. (Note that the past tense of such verses as 2 and 7

in the first paragraph are more correctly represented as future tense.⁶

2. What part does Edom play in the book, according to the outlines shown? Check this out with the Bible text.

3. What part does Judah play in the book? (The reference to “Israel” in verse 20 is not to the Northern Kingdom exclusively, but to the chosen nation as a whole. This also is how the name Israel is used on the chart.)

4. Where is the bright section of the book?

5. Compare the beginning (v. 3) and the end (v. 21) of Obadiah. Relate to this the title shown at the top of the chart.

6. Note the outline of words beginning with the letter s. Read the verses in the Bible text.

7. Note the key verses and key words. Add to the list of key words as you study the

Bible text further.

### III. APPLICATIONS

1. In what ways do people today practice the sin of arrogant independence of God?

2. What does the Bible teach about the consequences which fall upon the nation which oppresses His chosen people? Does Genesis 12:3 apply to today, and to end times?

3. Does justice triumph? This question has been asked by people throughout the ages. Does the book of Obadiah give any answers?

4. God's "mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 106:1, KJV). Why do some people see a conflict between this truth and the fact of eternal judgment?

5. Compare these verses which state the eternal law of returns:

“As you have done, it will be done to you”  
(Obad 15).

“By your standard of measure, it shall be  
measured to you” (Matt 7:2b).

“Whatever a man sows, this will he also  
reap” (Gal 6:7).

#### IV. SELECTED READING

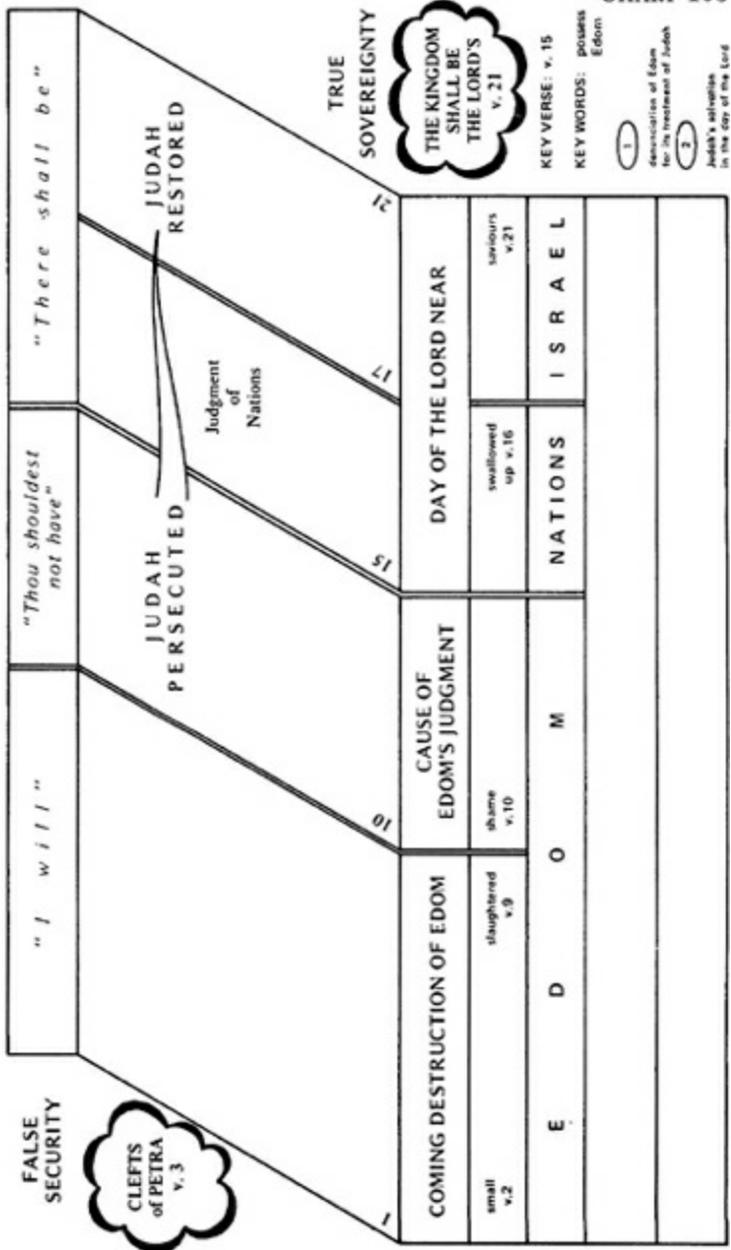
##### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament  
Introduction*, pp. 287-91.

Ellison, H. L. *The Old Testament Prophets*, pp.  
95-97.

Freeman, Hobart E. *An Introduction to the Old  
Testament Prophets*, pp. 139-44.

# OBADIAH A ROCK THAT FAILS AND A KINGDOM THAT ENDURES



Gaebelein, Frank E. *Four Minor Prophets*, pp. 11-53.

Young, Edward J. *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 252-53.

## COMMENTARIES

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Commentary, vol. 14.

Kleinert, Paul. “Obadiah.” In Lange’s  
*Commentary on the Holy Scriptures.*

Livingston, G. Herbert. “Obadiah.” In *The  
Wycliffe Bible Commentary.*

Robinson, D. W. B. “Obadiah.” In *The New-  
Bible Commentary.*

## **JOEL: THE DAY OF THE LORD**

Joel was the prophet who focused his message primarily on the great and terrible “day of the LORD.” His book of three chapters is a clear and strong presentation of the world-history view which sees all history culminating in Christ, and Israel as a prominent participant in end-time events.

### **I. BACKGROUND**

R. A. Stewart calls Joel “one of the most disturbing and heart-searching books of the

Old Testament.”⁷ Let us look at the setting in which such a book originated. (First scan the book quickly before studying the background.)

#### A. THE MAN JOEL

Very little is known of this prophet. According to 1:1, Joel (“Jehovah is God”) was the son of Pethuel (“persuaded of God”). This is the only appearance of Pethuel in the Bible. The name Joel was very common in Old Testament times. This is borne out by the fact that there are about a dozen persons in the Bible with the name.

Joel lived in Judah, possibly Jerusalem, during the reign of King Joash (see [Chart 104](#)). Some think he was a priest when God called him to be a prophet.⁸ Obadiah was Judah’s prophet just before Joel appeared on the scene.

#### B. THE BOOK OF JOEL

1. *Date written.* If Joel lived during the reign of Joash, he was one of the earliest writing prophets. The book, then, was written around 820 B.C. ([Chart 104](#)). Some Bible students prefer the view that Joel lived after the Babylonian Exile (586 B.C.).⁹ This manual follows the view of the early date.

## 2. *Setting.*

a) Political and religious. Joash¹⁰ was king of Judah when Joel ministered as the nation's prophet. He began his forty-year reign when he was only seven years old, and his guardian-instructor in the early years was the godly high priest Jehoiada.¹¹ Up until Jehoiada's death, Joash's reign was mainly a righteous one (2 Kings 12:2). When Jehoiada died, Joash defected to idolatrous ways, even slaying Jehoiada's godly son (read 2 Chron 24:15-25). Joel probably wrote his book while Joash was still a minor

under Jehoiada's tutelage. This may partly account for the absence in Joel of long descriptions of national sin, usually found in the messages of the prophets.

During Joash's reign Judah was not free from the threat of invasion by foreigners. Read 2 Kings 12:17-19 and 2 Chronicles 24:23-25, which describe the Syrian invasion toward the end of Joash's life.

b) Economic. Severe plagues of locusts and drought had recently devastated the land of Judah when Joel penned his prophecy. In the opening lines of the book he asks the elders, "Has anything like this happened in your days or in your fathers' days?" (1:2). He is referring to the locust plagues, described in the next verse:

What the gnawing locust has left, the  
swarming locust has eaten;

And what the swarming locust has left,

the creeping locust has eaten;  
And what the creeping locust has left,  
the stripping locust has eaten (1:3).

Only those who have witnessed a locust plague can fully appreciate why it is so dreaded. Joel could not have used a better symbol than this to prefigure the coming “terrible day of the LORD.”

*3. Style.* The smooth and vivid style of Joel has contributed to his book being called one of the literary gems of the Old Testament.

*4. Purposes.* Three main purposes of Joel’s prophecy are (1) to foretell coming judgments upon Judah for their sin; (2) to exhort Judah to turn their hearts to the Lord; and (3) to impress upon all people that this world’s history will culminate in the events of the Day of the Lord, when the scales of justice will finally rest.

5. *The Day of the Lord.* Five times in Joel the phrase “the day of the LORD” appears. Joel uses the phrase to refer to end times. Even when the New Testament writers referred to that day, it was still future. For example, read 2 Thessalonians 2:2 and 2 Peter 3:10. In the Old Testament the phrase occurs over thirty times, in such verses as Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Zephaniah 1:7, 14. Read these passages, observing that the descriptions of this “day” are usually about judgment and war against sinners, a necessary purge before righteousness can reign. Saints are involved in this day in the sense that when the Lord brings judgment upon unbelievers, the saints are associated with their Lord in the victory. (For example, the Millennium, issuing out of the Battle of Armageddon, may be considered a part of this “day of the LORD.” In this connection it

should be observed that it will be during the Millennium that the many Old Testament promises to Israel will be fulfilled. Thus, the Millennium is especially Israel-oriented.) It is the view of this book that Joel's prophecies of "the day of the LORD" are about the Messianic Kingdom at the end of the world, which will begin when God's final judgments will fall upon unbelieving nations, and when believing Israel will be delivered from their enemies.

There are various views as to when the Day of the Lord will begin. Three of the more common views are:

- a) at the rapture when the Tribulation period begins
- b) shortly after the rapture, during the Tribulation
- c) at the revelation (Christ's return to this earth after the Tribulation) when Christ

defeats His foes at the Battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev 16:16)

You will want to come to your own conclusions concerning this identification. Refer to commentaries for help.

## II. SURVEY

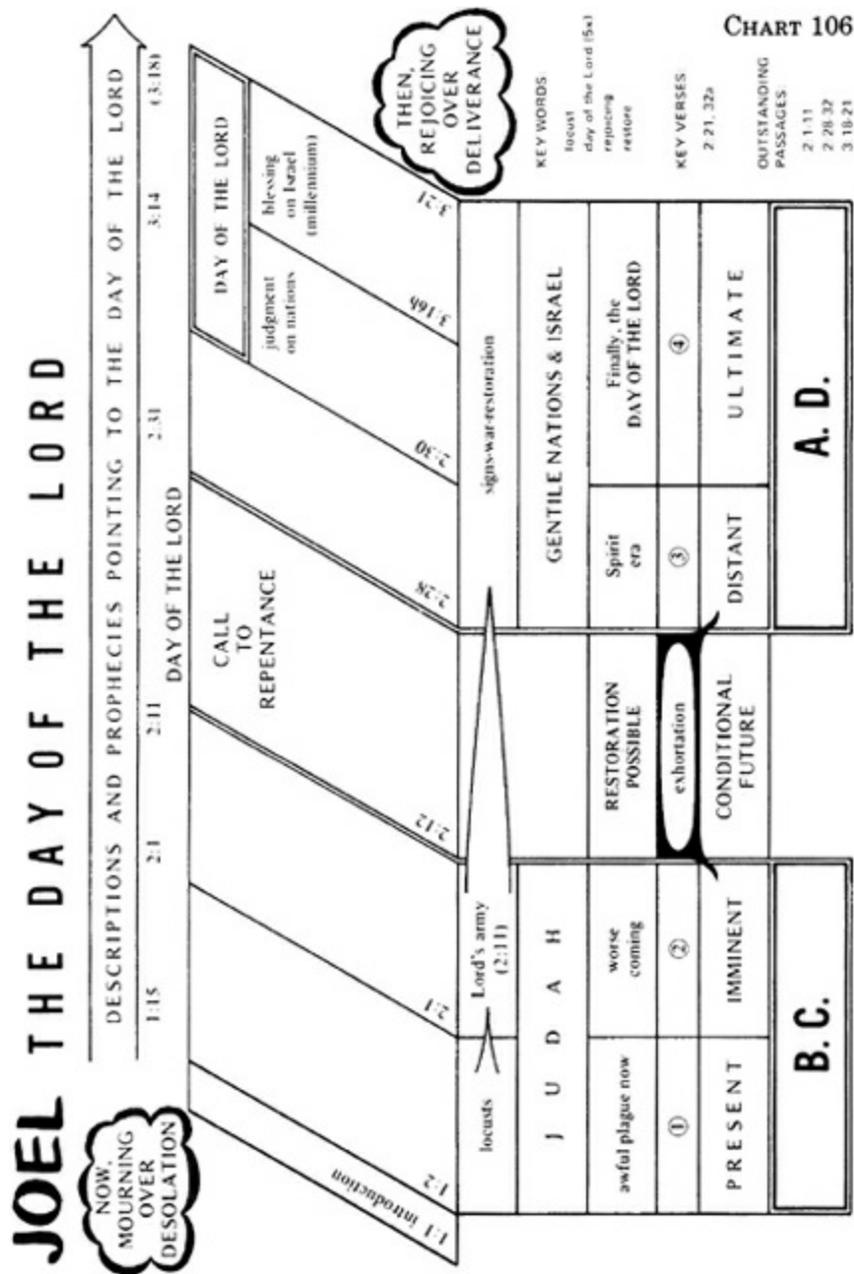
Spend the first ten minutes of your survey in reading the three chapters in one sitting. What are your first impressions? What words and phrases especially stand out as prominent ones?

Study [Chart 106](#) very carefully. As you survey the Bible text, try to justify the inclusion of all the entries and outlines shown on the chart.

1. The first verse is the book's introduction. Is there a similar concluding verse?

2. The book is of two main parts (1:2—

2:11 and 2:28—3:21), with a bright section of exhortation sandwiched in between (2:12-27). At what point in the book does Joel look beyond the time of Christ (A. D.)?



3. Notice the sequence shown on the chart: locusts—Lord's army—signs—war—

restoration.

Scan the passages in your Bible to see the basis for this outline.

4. Study the other outlines shown below the base line. Is there an overall progression in the theme?

5. Note where the five references to “the day of the LORD” appear in the book. Read each reference in your Bible.

6. What two aspects of “the day of the LORD” appear in the two parts of 2:30—3:21?

7. Compare the beginning of the book (“Now”) with the ending (“Then”).

8. Read the key verses in your Bible. Note the list of key words. Add to this list as you continue your study of the book.

### **III. APPLICATIONS**

1. Are any or all of God’s judgments only

for purposes of punishment?

2. In what sense is God sovereign in all of His judgments? Can man's repentance change God's pronouncement of judgment? In answering this, see Jeremiah 18:7-10. When is a judgment of God irreversible?

3. "I will restore to you" (2:25, KJV). Does God still engage in the work of restoration? Support and illustrate your answer.

4. In what ways has Israel been persecuted by Gentiles since the days of Joel? Who has preserved a remnant of believing Jews through the centuries?

5. Try to think of other spiritual lessons taught by the book of Joel.

#### **IV. SELECTED READING**

##### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 291-95.

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#### **MICAH: WHO IS LIKE JEHOVAH?**

The book of Micah is especially noted for its predictive messages. For example, Micah predicted the exact location of Jesus'

birthplace, Bethlehem (Mic 5:2; cf. Matt 2:5). Hobart E. Freeman observes that no Old Testament prophet exceeds Micah in the proportion of predictions concerning Israel's future and the Messiah's advent and Kingdom.¹²

## I. BACKGROUND

### A. THE MAN MICAH

1. *Name.* The name Micah means “Who is Jehovah like?” or “Who is like unto Jehovah?” Read the first words of 7:18. Do you think the prophet may have been thinking of his own name when he penned those words?

2. *Home.* Micah's hometown was Moreshethgath (1:1, 14), located about twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem (see [Map Y](#)). The name Moresheth-gath means “possession of Gath,” which suggests that

the town was an annex of nearby Gath. The busy highway from Egypt to Jerusalem went through this area, so the “country boy” Micah was not too far removed from the city ways of his contemporary, Isaiah.

3. *Time.* Study [Chart 80](#), which shows the contemporaries (kings and prophets) of Micah. Answer the following on the basis of the chart:

- a) Between what years did Micah minister as a prophet?
- b) What two other prophets ministered during Micah’s time?
- c) Who were Judah’s kings when Micah was prophesying?
- d) What calamity befell the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the middle of Micah’s ministry?
- e) Read Micah 1:5-7. (Samaria was the

capital of Israel, just as Jerusalem was the capital of Judah.) Did Micah write these verses before or after the Assyrian Captivity of 722 B.C.?

4. *Ministry.* Micah was a prophet mainly to Judah, though his messages did involve Israel (cf. 1:1; 3:8). He had a clear conviction as to his prophetic calling (3:8). His messages were directed to various evils: moral corruption, idolatry (1:7; 6:16), formal religion, corrupt leadership by false prophets (3:5-7) and by priests (3:11). There was social decay, with the rulers and wealthy people oppressing the poor (2:2; 3:1-3). There was a haunting political unrest, especially over fear of invasion by foreign powers (see Isa 7-12).

5. *Political setting.* To learn about the political setting of Micah, read 2 Kings 15:17—20:21 and 2 Chronicles 26-30.

(Chronicles reports mainly about the Southern Kingdom.) Refer to [Chart 80](#) as you read these historical sections, to see when each king reigned.

King Uzziah's reign was a successful one, but toward the end of his life he strayed far from God (2 Chron 26:16-23). His son Jotham, who succeeded him, "did right in the sight of the LORD" (2 Chron 27:2). Although he was not able to lead the people out of their corrupt ways, Jotham apparently supported Micah's spiritual program. But when, at his death, his son Ahaz mounted the throne, affairs took a different turn.

During Jotham's reign, clouds had begun to gather on the political horizon in the shape of a military coalition of Syria and Israel against Judah (2 Kings 15:37). When Ahaz became king of Judah, instead of searching out and dealing with the national

sins for which God was allowing this chastisement, he formed an alliance with Tiglathpileser, king of Assyria, an alliance which in the days of his son Hezekiah would prove almost fatal to the kingdom. He also introduced idolatry, with all its attendant evils, and even caused God's holy altar to be set aside, and one of heathen design put in its place (2 Chron 28:22-25).

King Hezekiah, who succeeded Ahaz, honored Jehovah in his administration of the kingdom. But such leadership and example brought only a measure of obedience on the part of the people. Though the outward form and ceremony of Temple worship was kept up, all manner of sins were being committed by the people—sins of idolatry, covetousness, impurity, injustice, and oppression. Against all this, the prophet's voice needed to be lifted. Micah and Isaiah were God's spokesmen for such a

time as this.

## B. THE BOOK OF MICAH

The content and style of Micah's book reveal that he was a very gifted and knowledgeable servant of God. Let us look at some of the book's characteristics.

*1. Date written.* A probable date of writing is after the Assyrian conquest of Damascus (734-32 b.c., 2 Kings 16:5-9; Isa 7-10), and before the fall of Samaria (722 B.C., 2 Kings 17).

*2. Main theme.* The main theme which runs through the book of Micah is that God will send judgment for Judah's sin, but pardon is still offered. The message underscores the two divine attributes cited in Romans 11:22a; "Behold then the kindness and severity of God."

*3. Prophecies now fulfilled.* Six specific prophecies of Micah have become events of

history.

- a) fall of Samaria (722 B.C., 1:6-7)
- b) invasion of Judah by Sennacherib (702-701 B.C., 1:9-16)
- c) fall of Jerusalem, (586 B.C., 3:12; 7:13)
- d) exile in Babylon, (586 B.C., 4:10)
- e) return from captivity (c. 520 B.C., 4:1-8,13; 7:11,14-17)
- f) birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (5:2)

4. *Literary forms.* Word pictures abound in the book of Micah. Contrasts are prominent (e.g., 3:9-12 and 4:1-5), and questions appear often (1:5; 2:7; 4:9; 6:3,7,10,11; 7:10,18). Compare the first question (1:5) and the last (7:18).

5. *Quoted in the Bible.* Micah is quoted three times in the Bible. Each occasion is significant. Read the passages:

- a) elders of Judah, quoting Micah 3:12 in

## Jeremiah 26:18

b) magi, quoting Micah 5:2 in Matthew 2:5-6

c) Jesus, quoting Micah 7:6 in Matthew 10:35-36

## II. SURVEY

1. Read the book first for overall impressions.

2. Read the Bible text again, watching for key words and phrases. For example, do you observe any repeated words and phrases? What word is common to these three verses: 1:2; 3:1; 6:1? Who is addressed in each verse?

3. Study the opening verse of the book. What is meant by “The word ... which he saw”? What was the subject of Micah’s “visions,” according to this verse?

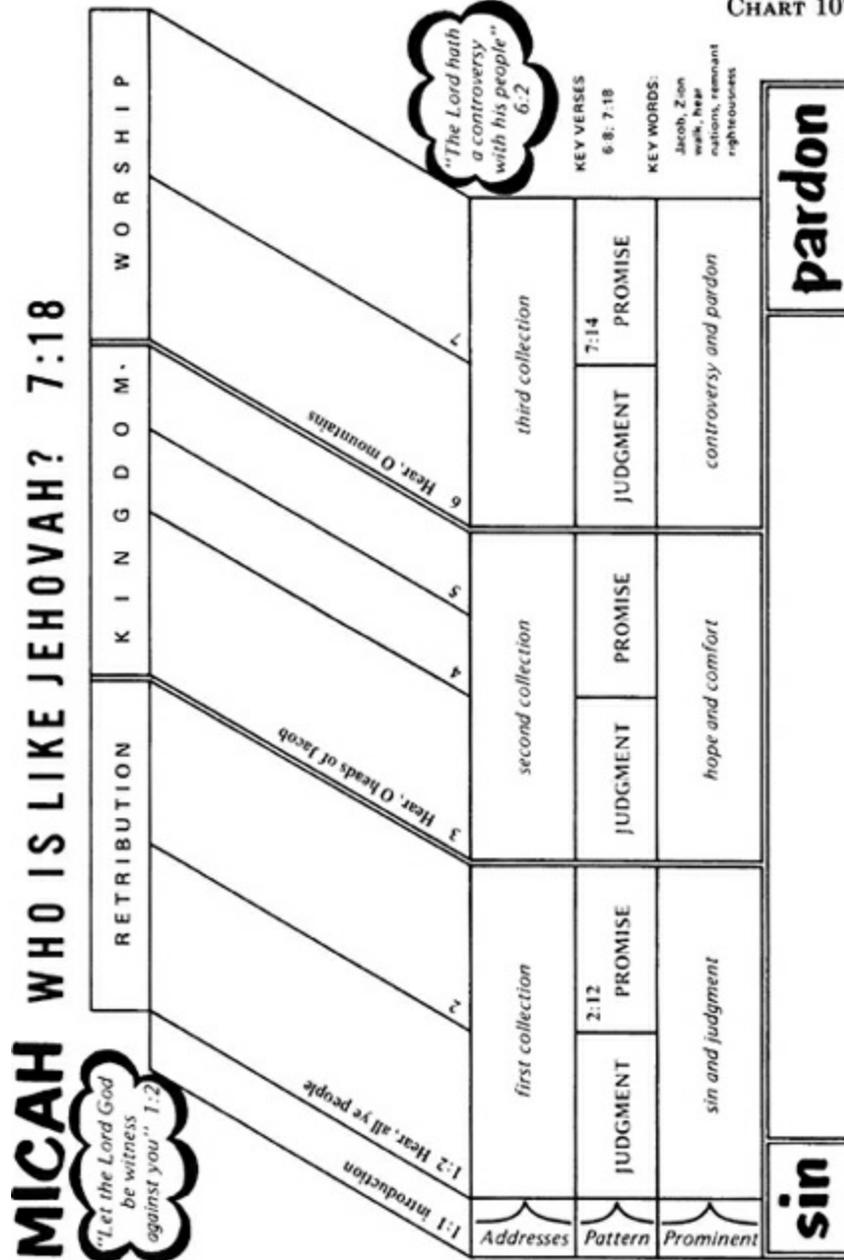
4. Compare the opening and closing verses of the book. For example, compare 1:2 and 6:2.

5. Read each chapter, and record on paper the main content of each. Which chapters refer much to judgment, and which contain promises?

6. Read 6:8 and 7:18. Why may these be regarded as key verses for the book?

7. Study the survey [Chart 107](#). Note that the book of Micah is shown to be organized around three main collections of messages.¹³ Note the opening word of each, “Hear.”

8. What three-part outlines appear on the chart? According to these, how does Micah’s theme progress throughout the book? Compare the outlines with your own observations of the book’s organization.



9. What pattern repeats itself in each of the three parts? Mark this in your Bible, scanning the text to justify such an outline.

10. Note the list of key words. Add to the list the words you have observed.

### III. APPLICATIONS

1. Leaders of Israel were “supposed to know right from wrong” (3:1, TLB). Are today’s Christian leaders accountable for the lives of other people? If so, in what ways?

2. What evil motives can ruin the ministry of Christian workers today? (Cf. 3:11.)

3. What is intended by these words in the Lord’s prayer: “Thy kingdom come” (Matt 6:10)? Compare Micah 4:8.

4. Why did God choose a small, insignificant city, Bethlehem, as the place of Jesus’ birth? Was God trying to say something about true Messiahship, as well as about His own ways of performing?

5. Why will Jerusalem be a key city in the last times? What is its status now?

6. Does God have a rightful claim on the lives of all people (6:8)?

7. What is genuine repentance? What part

does it play in the conversion of a sinner?

8. Does the effectiveness of prayer depend on your believing that God hears your praying (7:7)?

9. In what ways has the Lord been a “light” to you personally since you became a Christian (7:8)? Have you had opportunities to share such a testimony with others?

10. What do these words mean to you: “Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (7:19)? Do you think the intent is that God overlooks sin, or that no judgment or penalty is involved? Why did Christ die? Whose sins did He bear on the cross?

11. Compare Micah 6:8 with what the New Testament teaches about how a person is saved (e.g., Rom 3:21—5:21).

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**NAHUM: WOE TO NINEVEH!**

Over a hundred years after Jonah preached to Nineveh, God sent another prophet, Nahum, to pronounce its doom. The book of Nahum demonstrates how false is the view that “might makes right.” The great Assyrian Empire, of which Nineveh was the capital, boasted its might and wealth, but it did not acknowledge its sin, nor would it listen to God. The fall of such a haughty nation was inevitable, as the text of Nahum reveals.

## I. BACKGROUND

### A. THE MAN NAHUM

Very little is known of the personal life of Nahum. His name does not appear at any other place in the Bible (unless he is the Naum of Luke 3:25, KJV).

1. *Name.* The name Nahum, which is a shortened form of Nehemiah, means

“consolation” or “comforter.”

2. *Home.* According to 1:1, Nahum was from a town called Elkosh. Four possible locations of Elkosh have been suggested: (1) in Assyria, north of Nineveh; (2) southwest of Jerusalem; (3) somewhere in Galilee; (4) the site of Capernaum (Capernaum). Wherever Nahum’s home was, we should keep in mind that when he was born¹⁴ the Assyrian armies had already invaded Palestine twice:

722 B.C.—conquest of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) by Sargon II (2 Kings 17:6)

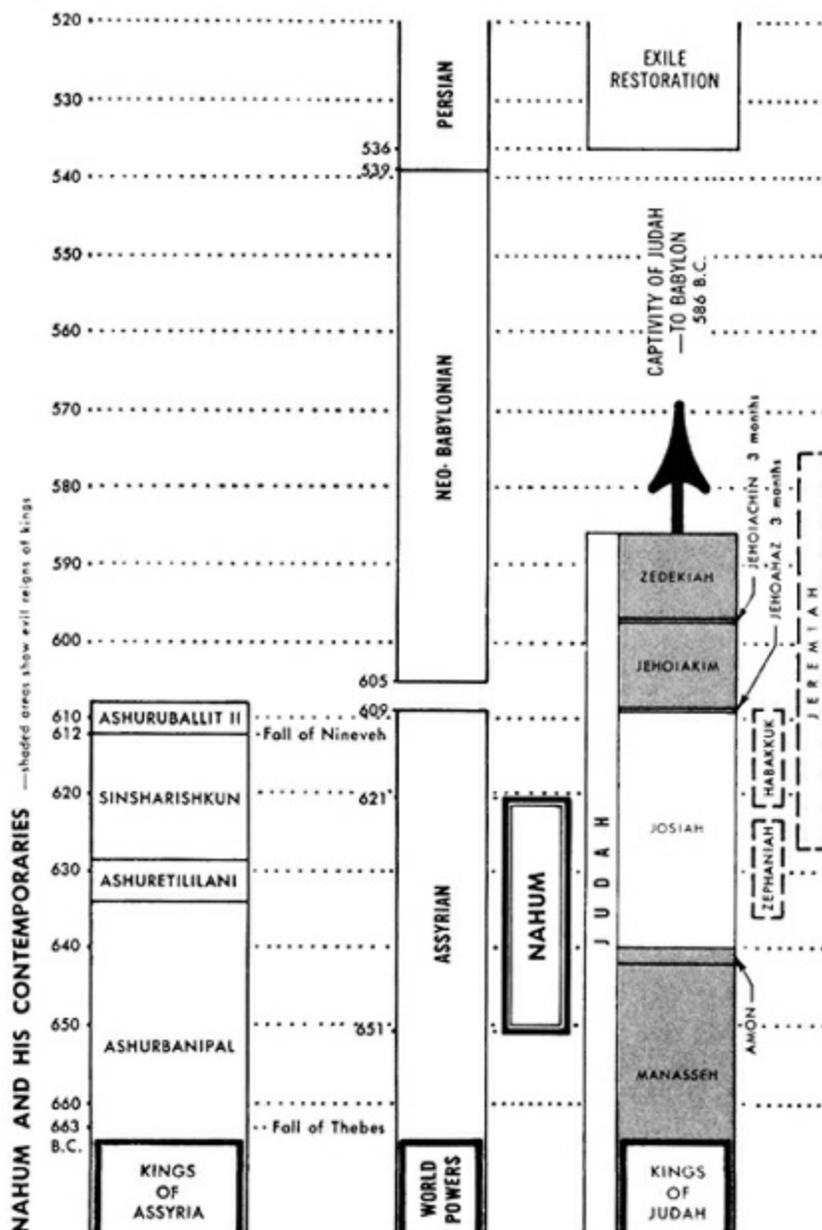
701 B.C.—invasions against Judah by Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:13-18)

3. *Time.* [Chart 108](#) shows the contemporary leaders of Nahum’s day. Refer to it as you answer the questions below.

a) During Nahum’s ministry, three kings ruled over Judah. Who were they?

Whose was the righteous reign? (See [Chart 104.](#))

- b) Which was the ruling world empire of Nahum's time?
- c) Which Assyrian king was reigning during the earliest years of Nahum's ministry?
- d) When did Nineveh fall? What empire succeeded Assyria as the world power?
- e) What other prophets were ministering around the time of Nahum?



4. *Kings and cities.* A few things should be noted concerning some rulers and cities directly related to the book of Nahum.

a) King Ashurbanipal. He was the last of the famous kings of Assyria. After his death (633 B.C.) the power of Assyria faded away. Ashurbanipal was exceptionally cruel.

Skinning captives alive, forcing a prince to wear the bloody head of his king around his neck, and feasting with the head of a Chaldean monarch hanging above him, are examples of the gruesome stories about this tyrant.

b) King Josiah. Josiah reigned over Judah in the fear of the Lord. Read 2 Kings 22:1—23:28. Nahum may have written his book during Josiah's reign.

c) Thebes. Thebes is the Greek name for the Egyptian city of No (Hebrew). (See 3:8.) The capital of Egypt, it was conquered by the Assyrians in 663 B.C. Nahum refers to this conquest in 3:10.

d) Nineveh. The capital of Assyria, it was founded around 2000 B.C. During Nahum's ministry it was at a peak of wealth, power, and fame (read 3:16-17). The city walls were considered to be impregnable, yet

Nahum prophesied their fall (e.g., 2:5-6). In 612 B.C. Nineveh was conquered and demolished by the Babylonians, Medes, and Scythians. The city has remained through all the centuries as a heap of desolate ruin.

Recall your earlier studies of the prophet Jonah (see [Chart 98](#)). Jonah was a prophet of Israel, whom God sent to preach to Nineveh. Nahum was a prophet of Judah, but his ministry also involved Nineveh. (Read Jonah 1:1-2 and 3:1-10.) What was Jonah's message; the people's reaction; and God's response? Was a specific destruction of Nineveh foretold? Jonah 3:5 says, "Then the people of Nineveh believed in God." Do you think this generation of believers had been replaced by the time Nahum came on the scene?

## B. THE BOOK OF NAHUM

1. *Date.* Nahum wrote his book some time

after 663 and before 612 B.C. This dating is based on his *reporting* of the fall of Thebes (3:10), which had already taken place (663 B.C.), and on his *foretelling* the fall of Nineveh (e.g., 2:8-10), which was still future (612 B.C.). **Chart 108** shows Nahum's public ministry extending from about 650 to 620 B.C.

2. *Theme and purpose.* The theme of Nahum may be stated thus: The Lord, in His sovereign holiness and goodness, will bring judgment upon sinful Nineveh, and spare righteous Judah. The book is mostly about Nineveh, the subject which the opening sentence (1:1) introduces. It is also addressed mainly to Nineveh. It is the sequel to the book of Jonah.

Nahum also wrote for the benefit of the people of Judah. He clearly answered questions raised by his brethren, such as:

Why does cruel Nineveh prosper?

Has God abandoned Judah?

Where is justice?

Do these questions have their counterparts in the world today?

## II. SURVEY

1. Read Nahum 1:1. What does this introductory verse suggest as to what Nahum's message is about? Scan the remainder of the book to get the feel of the prophet's burden.

2. Follow the progression of Nahum's thought by using the following outline:

I. God the Sovereign Judge (1:2-8)

(What are the different things said about God here?)

II. Nineveh to Fall, and Judah to Be Protected (1:9—2:2)

Here Nahum alternates back and forth between the two subjects of judgment and deliverance. Observe what is said about Judah or Nineveh in each case:

1:9-12a Nineveh

2:1 Nineveh¹⁶

1:126-13¹⁵

Judah 2:2 Judah

1:14 Nineveh

1:15 Judah

### III. The Fall (2:3-13)

### IV. The Causes (3:1-19)

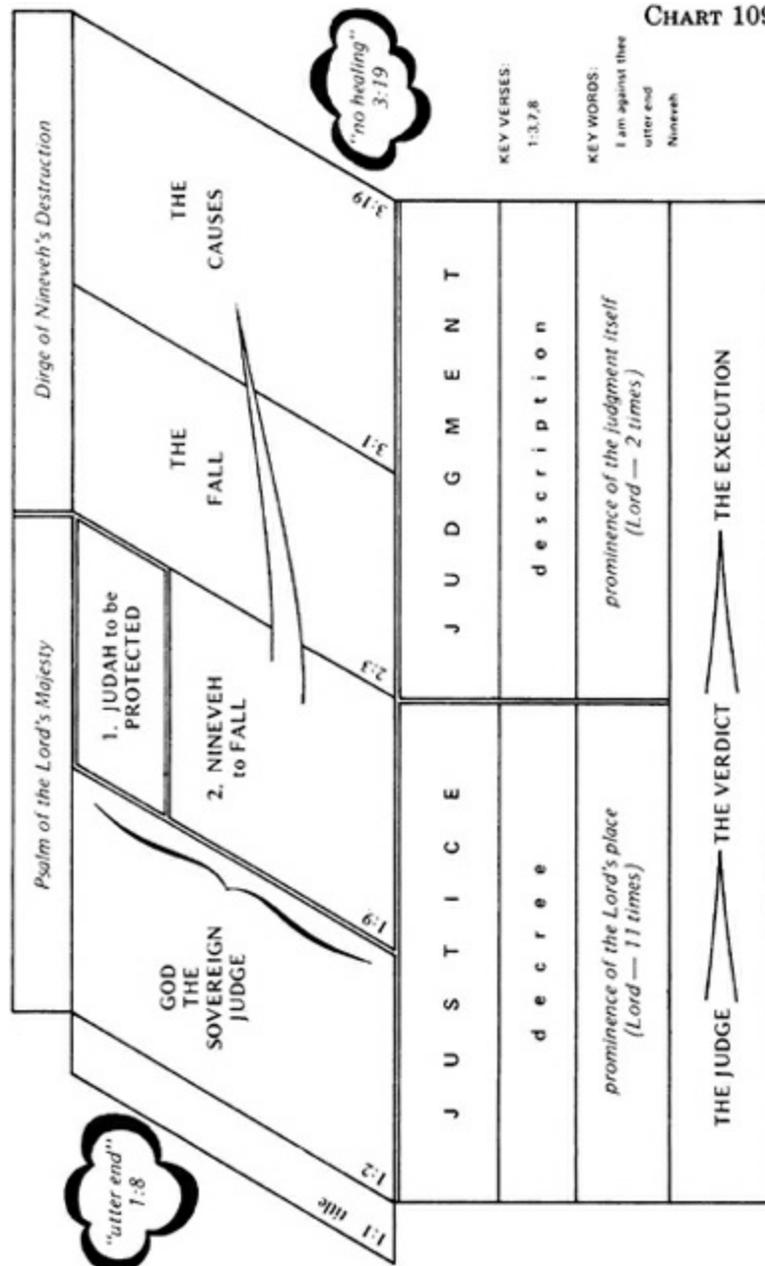
3. Study the survey [Chart 109](#), and try to determine what each outline or entry is based on, in the Bible text.

4. Note the following on the chart:

- a) There is a natural progression in the book. (See bottom of the chart. Also note the progression in the three sections, beginning with Nineveh to fall.)
- b) How is the first paragraph (1:1-8) set off from the rest of the book?

- c) Study the four outlines which divide the book into two main sections.
- d) How is Judah brought into the book?
- e) Add to the list of key words.
- f) Read the key verses in the Bible text. How do they represent the main theme of the book?

# NAHUM WOE TO NINEVEH!



## III. APPLICATIONS

1. What does the book of Nahum teach about God?
2. What place does righteous wrath have in the life of a Christian? What are your reactions to these comments:

Surely there is a place for a book like Nahum even in the revelation of Grace. Instead of taking the Book of Nahum out of the Bible, we had better leave it there. We need it. It reminds us that love degenerates into a vague diffusion of kindly feeling unless it is balanced by the capacity of a righteous indignation. A man who is deeply and truly religious is always a man of wrath. Because he loves God and his fellow men, he hates and despises inhumanity, cruelty and wickedness. Every good man sometimes prophesies like Nahum.¹⁷

3. How may the Gospel be likened to news about the downfall of one's enemy? (Cf. Nah 1:15 and Rom 10:15.)

#### **IV. SELECTED READING**

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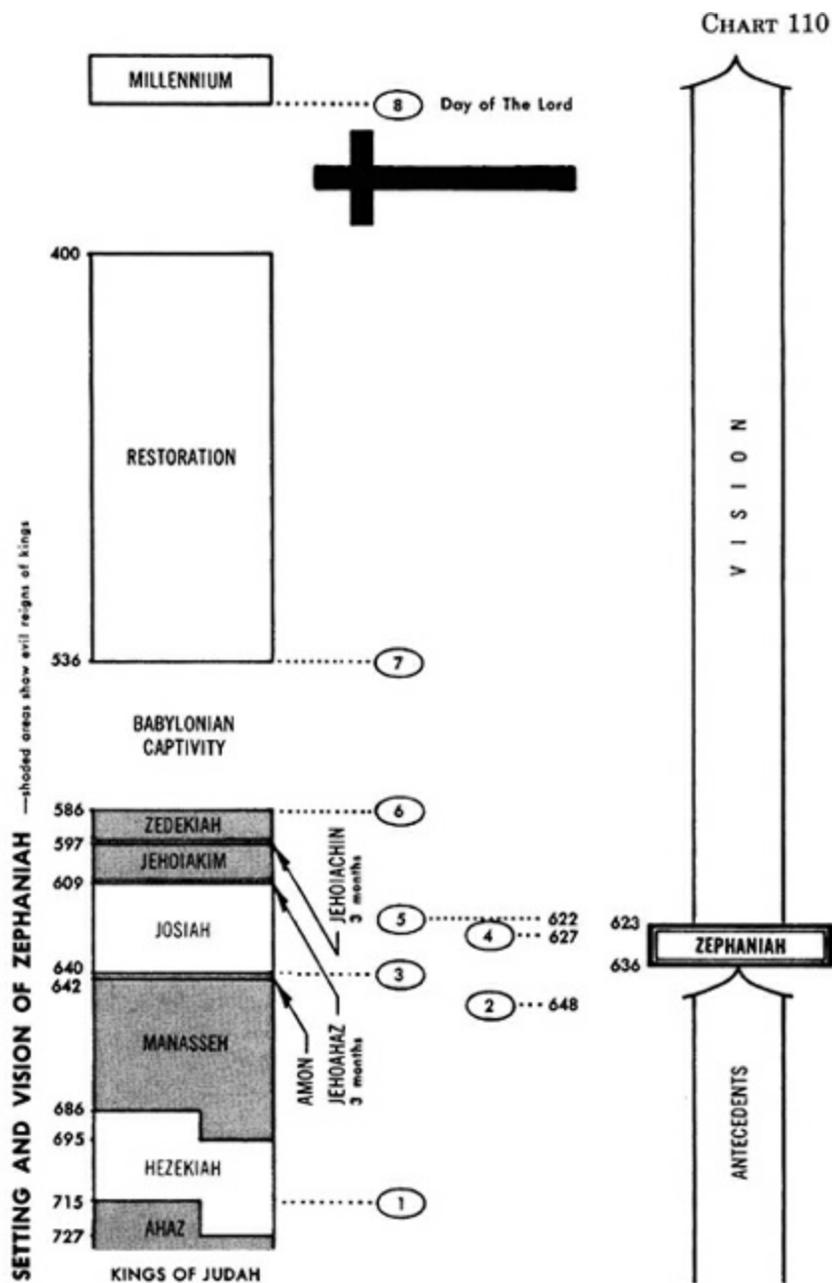
**ZEPHANIAH: DAY OF DESOLATION AND**

# **DELIVERANCE**

Zephaniah was one of the last prophets of Judah before the nation fell to the Babylonian invaders. Josiah, who reigned over Judah during Zephaniah's ministry, was the last of the righteous kings of this Southern Kingdom. So the Jews had the offer of much spiritual guidance and help in those years. Their sin in rejecting this light from God is a dark chapter of their history.

## **I. BACKGROUND**

Before going any further in your study, scan the three chapters of Zephaniah. This will take the book out of the "stranger" category for the survey that follows.



First, refer to [Chart 3](#) to see Zephaniah's place among all the Old Testament prophets. Then look at the setting of Zephaniah's writing by following its antecedents in a chronological order. [Chart 110](#) shows this historical background as well as Zephaniah's vision into the future.

Note on the chart the eight significant points, numbered consecutively. Refer to the chart as you study carefully each of the following eight descriptions.

1. King Hezekiah. He was one of Judah's righteous kings. He may have been the Hizkiah of Zephaniah 1:1 (KJV). If so, he was the great-great-grandfather of Zephaniah, the only prophet with royal blood.

2. Birth of Zephaniah. If the prophet was about Josiah's age, he was born around 648 B.C. (cf. 2 Kings 22:1). This was during the wicked reign of Manasseh. The name Zephaniah means "hidden, or protected, by Jehovah." Could it be that his parents gave him this name in gratitude for his life being spared during the atrocities of King Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6; cf. Heb 11:37)? It is interesting to note that an important part of Zephaniah's message concerned the

protection of Judah from harm in the day of God's judgment (see 2:3).

Zephaniah's home may have been in Jerusalem. Suggested dates for the term of his public ministry are 636 to 623 B.C.

3. King Josiah. Josiah was a great-grandson of Hezekiah (2 Chron 32:33; 33:20, 25). How then was Zephaniah possibly related to Josiah? Josiah was only eight years old when he began to reign over Judah (2 Chron 34:1). At age sixteen he "began to seek the God of his father David" (2 Chron 34:3). It may very well be that Zephaniah's access to the royal court gave the prophet ample opportunities of witness to the king. In fact, he may have been the key spiritual influence in Josiah's early life.

4. The book of Zephaniah is written (c. 627 B.C.). The prophet probably wrote his book during the early part of Josiah's reign,

since there is no reference in the book to Josiah's reform of 622 B.C. (For example, the idolatrous practices condemned in 1:3-6 were dealt with in the reforms.)

5. Josiah's reforms. At age twenty, Josiah began a six-year program of national reform (2 Chron 34:3), which was completed in 622 B.C. (2 Chron 34:8). Read 2 Chronicles 34-35 or 2 Kings 22-23. The sins which Zephaniah condemns in his book were the sins over which Josiah lamented.

6. Fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.). Zephaniah prophesied judgments for Jerusalem, the first destruction coming about a half century later. His prophecies also referred to judgments of succeeding centuries up to the last days. (This is an example of multiple prophecy, commonly found in the Old Testament.)

7. Restoration (536 B.C. and later).

Zephaniah also prophesied restoration of the chosen nation of God's people. This was fulfilled, at least in token measure, when God led His people back to the land at the end of the Babylonian Captivity. But the full measure of restoration is yet to be. (This is another example of multiple prophecy.)

8. Final "day of the LORD." The end-time judgments of the Day of the Lord will usher in the Messianic Kingdom (Millennium), when Zephaniah's prophecies of restoration will be fulfilled on a grand and total scale. Recall that the "day of the LORD" was a prominent subject of Joel's prophecy.

Be sure you are well acquainted with the previous eight points before moving on to the survey of the Bible text.

## **II. SURVEY**

1. First, mark the following paragraph

divisions in your Bible: 1:1,2,7,14; 2:1,4,8,12; 3:1,8,14.

2. Earlier in your study you scanned the three chapters of Zephaniah. Now, with pencil in hand, read the book once or twice more, underlining key words and phrases as you read. What repeated phrases strike you as very prominent in this book?

3. What is Zephaniah's message mainly about? Compare the opening verses (1:2-6) with the closing ones (3:14-20).

4. Refer to the survey [Chart 111](#) as you follow the study suggestions given below. Read all the Bible references in your Bible. Try to justify the chart's outlines by the text of the Bible.

5. What is the function of the opening verse (1:1)?

6. How many main divisions in the book does the chart show? Mark your Bible to

show the new divisions beginning at 2:4 and 3:8.

7. The title of the chart reflects the keynote of Zephaniah. Read the two key verses cited on the chart. What two outlines develop the subject of the Day of the Lord? What does this tell you about the day? (The word “day” in the phrase “day of the LORD” does not refer to a twenty-four-hour solar day. Rather, it is an extended period of time, whether weeks, months, or even years.)

8. How much of the prophecy deals with Judah? How much deals with Gentile nations?

9. What makes possible a day of deliverance in Zephaniah’s prophecy? Observe the function of 2:1-3 as shown on the chart.

10. Compare your answer for question 9 with the conditions a sinner today must

fulfill to appropriate the blessings of the Gospel.

11. Read the Bible text to account for the two short sections beginning at 3:1 and 3:6.

12. Note the chart's contrasting phrases taken from the opening and close of the book. Also, read in your Bible contrasting messages of the text:

Judgment: 1:14-18

Restoration: 3:14-17

13. Note the key words listed on the chart. Add to this list as you continue your study in the book.

### **III. APPLICATIONS**

1. Why is it necessary, when studying a book of the Bible, to believe that the book was infallibly inspired? Do you believe Zephaniah's prophecies are wholly accurate?

2. What are some applications of 1:1—3:7 to today? What does this section of Zephaniah teach about God and man?

3. What is your definition of sin? Compare the phrase “against the LORD” (1:17) with 1 John 3:4.

4. Is sin a justifiable cause of the severe judgments described in Zephaniah (e.g., 1:17)?

5. What various kinds of sins are exposed in 3:1-5? Are such sins common today?

6. Can a sinner become so hardened in his rebellion against God that any possibility of salvation is cancelled? Is there such a thing as “a point of no return” in this life, spiritually speaking?

7. How do you apply such prophecies as 1:2-6 and 2:1-3 to the end times?

8. The Day of the Lord will be a day of

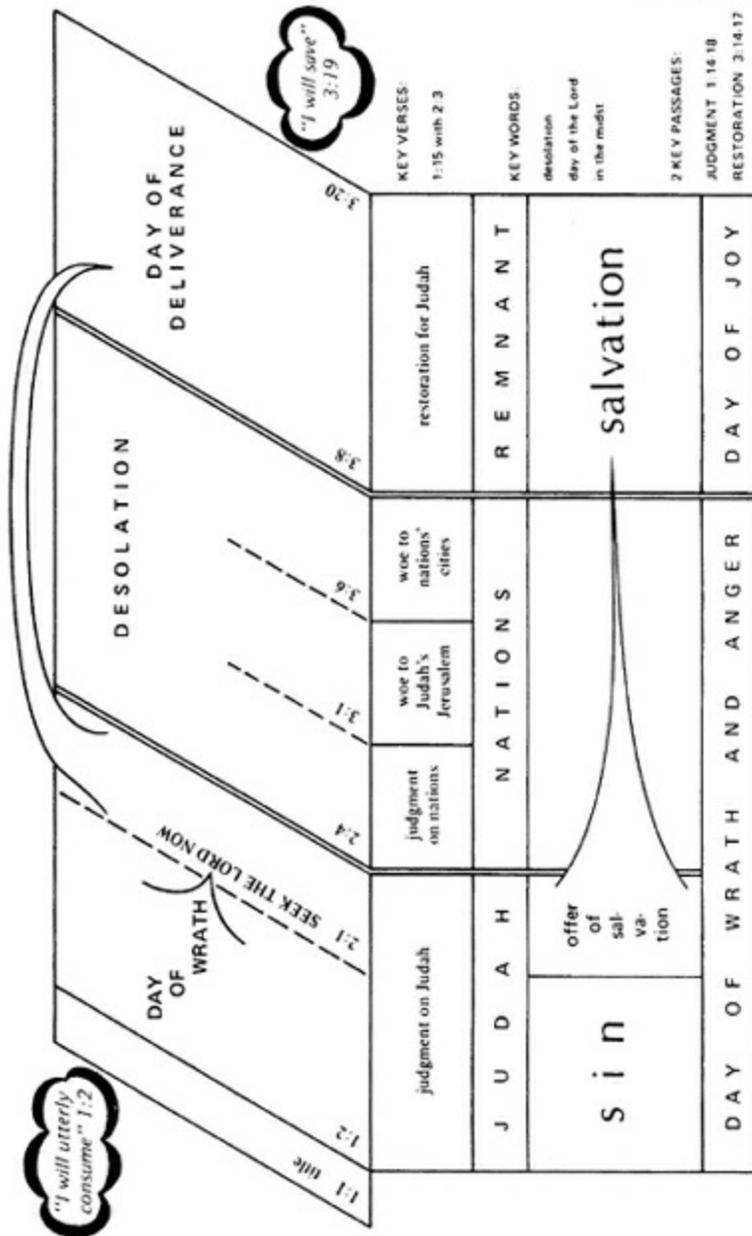
judgment for some and a day of deliverance for others. Relate this to Psalm 76:9.

9. Read 2 Peter 3:10-18. Note the appearance of the phrase “day of the Lord.” What spiritual lessons can a Christian learn here in connection with the prophesied Day of the Lord?

10. What does it mean to you that the Lord is “in the midst” of His people (3:5,15,17)? How does a believer sense the presence of the Lord? Why is His presence so vital?

11. The first words of God to the elect people, the Jews, are recorded in Genesis 12:1-3. Read these verses. What prophecies of Zephaniah 3:8-20 perfectly fulfill the promises given in the Genesis passage?

# ZEPHANIAH DAY OF DESOLATION and DELIVERANCE



12. Relate 3:8-20 to Paul's prophecy of Romans 11:25-28 about what will happen to believing Israel in end times.

13. Reflect on the great truth of 3:156(KJV): "Thou shalt not see evil any more." When will this be? Compare this prophecy with the descriptions of New

## Jerusalem in Revelation 21:1—22:5.

14. The Old Testament prophets spoke more about the Messianic Kingdom of the end times than about the earthly life of Jesus. Can you think of reasons why this was so?

15. Do you think it is possible that God can raise up a modern “prophet” today to influence the course of a nation even as He used Zephaniah to influence Josiah and Judah?

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## **HABAKKUK: THE RIGHTEOUS LIVE BY FAITH**

Habakkuk was the last of the minor prophets of Judah, called by some “a major minor prophet.” J. Sidlow Baxter writes that “the last two or three decades had set in for

Judah when Habakkuk took up his pen to write; and it was perhaps to Habakkuk that God first revealed *how near* the end was.”¹⁸

## I. BACKGROUND

### A. THE MAN HABAKKUK

The little we know about the man Habakkuk is inferred from his short book. The name Habakkuk means literally “embracer.”¹⁹ Of this, Luther wrote:

Habakkuk has a right name for his office. For Habakkuk means a heartener, or one who takes another to his heart and his arms, as one soothes a poor, weeping child, telling it to be quiet.²⁰

The text of 1:1 identifies Habakkuk as a prophet, which in itself reveals much about his ministry. Some think his call to be a

prophet came while he was serving as a Levitical chorister in the Temple.²¹ This is suggested by the musical notations at 3:1 and at the end of the book: “For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.”²² The prophecy of 1:6 points to the fact that Israel, the Northern Kingdom, had already gone into Assyrian Captivity, for now the Chaldeans (Babylonians) were threatening Judah. Thus, Habakkuk was a prophet of Judah.

## B. TIMES IN WHICH HABAKKUK MINISTERED

Refer back to [Chart 108](#), which shows Habakkuk to be a contemporary of Jeremiah. There are various views as to exactly when Habakkuk ministered as a prophet and wrote his book, because the Bible text does not give direct information on this. The historical setting of [Chart 112](#) suggests various possibilities of the book’s

date. The three strong options for the date of Habakkuk are ⓐ, ⓑ, and ⓒ, shown on the chart.

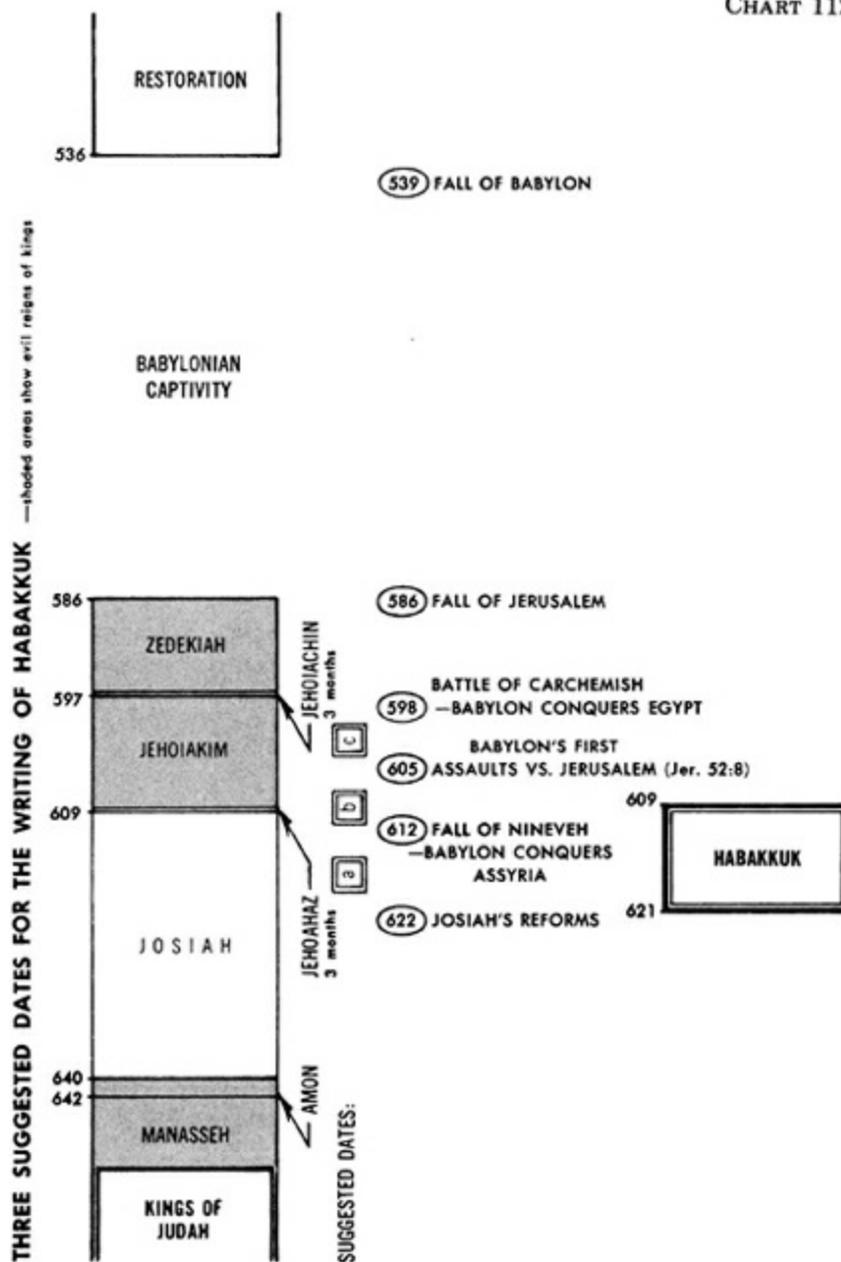
- ⓐ—after Josiah’s reform program (622 B.C.) but *before* Babylon (Chaldea) emerged as the threatening world power (612 B.C.).
- ⓑ or ⓒ—*after* Babylon emerged as the threatening world power (612) and 605). Of the two, ⓑ is the preferred view.

The spiritual condition of Judah when Habakkuk was ministering was one of dark apostasy (1:2-4). The fruits of Josiah’s reform program must have been very temporary, if a prophet of God would complain about national corruption only a decade later. Observe on [Chart 108](#) that the last three kings of Judah were evil rulers. Read 2 Chronicles 36:14-16 for a description of the people’s heart just before the Babylonians conquered Judah. Also read

Jeremiah 10, which reveals Judah's sin of idolatry at this time. (Jeremiah, a contemporary of Habakkuk, was Judah's last prophet before Babylonian captivity.)

### C. THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

1. *Message.* Among the prominent teachings of the book are these:



- Iniquity does *not* triumph.
- God does not overlook sin.
- The righteous man lives by his faith.
- The Lord is God of the universe. Happy is the believer who waits patiently for the manifestations of His will.

e) God wants His children to talk with Him.

2. *Features.* Some interesting features of Habakkuk include:

a) The book is similar to Jonah in that each book opens with the prophet plagued by a problem, and closes with the prophet having experienced God's solution.

b) A large proportion of Habakkuk (about two-thirds) is devoted to conversation between the writer and God.

c) A key verse of the book, 2:4, is quoted in three important New Testament passages. Read Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38. The truth of these verses was a keynote of the sixteenth-century Church Reformation, and it is for this reason that Habakkuk has been called the grandfather of the Reformation.

d) the literary quality of Habakkuk is

unsurpassed in the Hebrew Scriptures.  
Concerning chapter 3, Unger writes:

The magnificent lyric ode of ch. 3 contains one of the greatest descriptions of the theophany in relation to the coming of the Lord which has been given by the Holy Spirit, awaiting fulfillment in the day of the Lord (cf. 2 Thess 1:7-10).²³

## II. SURVEY

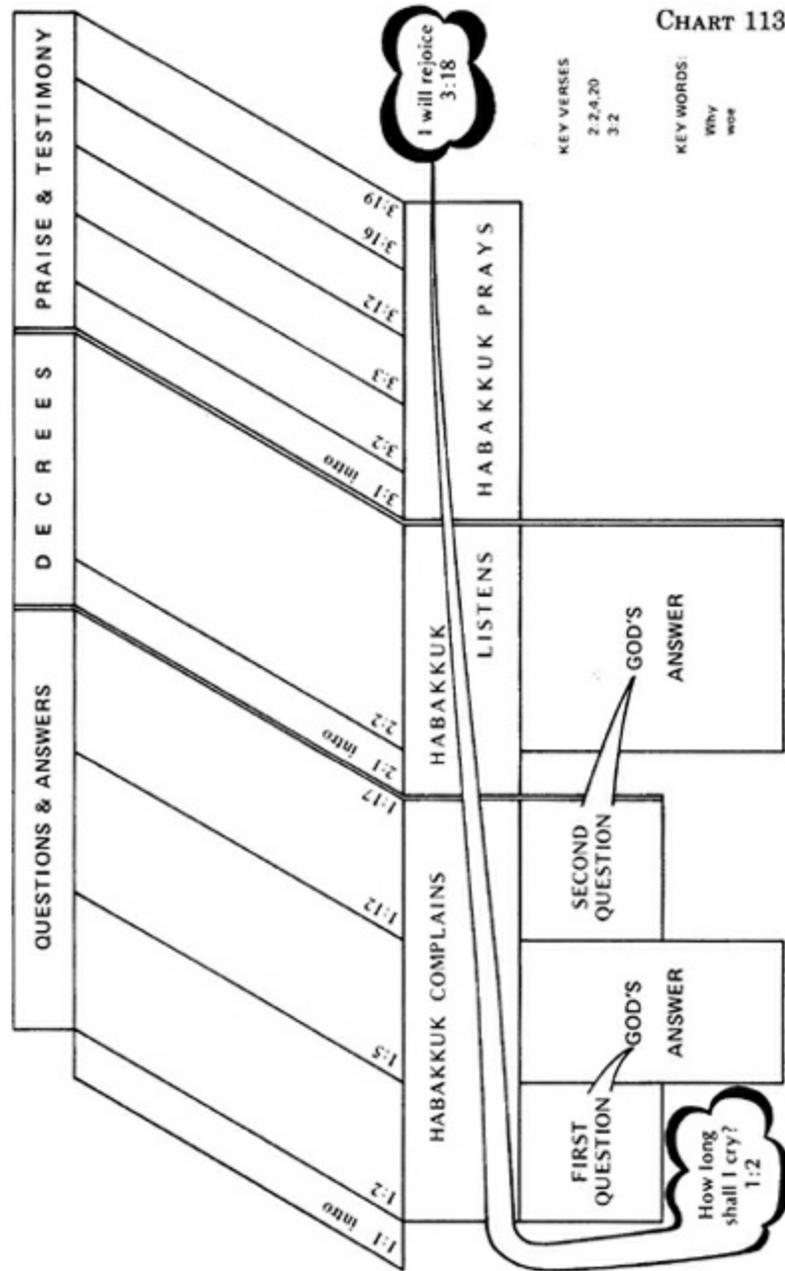
1. Read through the book twice. What words and phrases stand out as prominent ones?
2. Compare 1:1 with 3:1. Also compare 1:2 with 3:18-19. What are your observations?
3. Study the survey [Chart 113](#) very carefully. The questions or suggestions given below are based on the chart.

4. Read each paragraph of the Bible text and assign a title to each paragraph.

5. How much of the book records Habakkuk's words? God's words?

6. Note the three-part outline showing a progression of the prophet's mental attitudes.

# HABAKKUK THE RIGHTEOUS LIVE BY FAITH



7. Note the three-part outline at the top of the chart. Compare the introductory verses of each of those parts.

8. In what sense is the last chapter the highest peak of the book?

9. Note the key words. Read the key

verses in the Bible. Add to the two lists as you proceed with your study.

### III. APPLICATIONS

1. Does God have a listening ear to complaint, of whatever sort it is? How did God react to Habakkuk's complaining?

2. What other sins does doubt lead to?

3. What does the Bible teach about patience and endurance? See Romans 5:3-5. Why does God often move slowly in performing His work?

4. Compare Galatians 2:20 and Habakkuk 2:4.

5. What is the ultimate test of one's faith? Compare your own faith with Habakkuk's, as he testified in 3:17-19.

6. Compare Paul and Habakkuk, as the two men are represented by their

testimonies of Philippians 4:11-13 and Habakkuk 3:17-19.

7. The word “salvation” is an important Bible word. How would you define salvation in the spiritual realm? Read Habakkuk 3:13,18, where the word appears three times. The Hebrew is *yesha*, which is the origin of the name Jesus. Read Matthew 1:21. Why is Jesus the true Saviour?

#### IV. SELECTED READING

##### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Baxter, J. Sidlow. *Explore the Book*, 4: 206-13.

Freeman, Hobart E. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, pp. 251-60.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, pp. 272-86.

Phillips, John. *Exploring the Scriptures*, pp. 153-55.

## COMMENTARIES

Davidson, A. B. *Habakkuk*. Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.

Lloyd-Jones, D. Martin. *From Fear to Faith*.

Kerr, David W. "Habakkuk." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

1. Most of the dates are from John C. Whitcomb's chart of kings and prophets. See the Appendixes for the listing of all the kings of Judah.

2. An alternate reading of this phrase is, "Thou that dwellest in the clefts of Sela" (ASV).

3. This is based on the view of an early date of the book, discussed later in the chapter.

4. Read Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, pp. 140-41, for reasons supporting this view. Many Bible students prefer the fourth view, which places Obadiah as the last of the minor prophets of

Judah and a contemporary of Jeremiah. Consult various commentaries about this.

5. Clyde E. Harrington, "Edom," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 234.

6. Often a prophet worded a prediction in the past tense, to give the emphasis of *sureness* of fulfillment.

7. R. A. Stewart, "Joel," in *The New Bible Dictionary*, p. 639.

8. Recall that Jeremiah was a priest when he received the prophet's call (Jer 1:1).

9. Refer to a commentary for a discussion of the different views on date. Among the authors favoring the early date are Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 292-95; and J. T. Carson, "Joel," in *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 690-91.

10. Joash is the shortened form of Jehoash. Both names appear in the Bible, referring to the same king.

11. This story of Joash and Jehoiada is

reported in 2 Kings 11-12. Read these chapters to get a feel of the times in which Joel lived.

12. Freeman, p. 217.

13. Many Bible students see a main division beginning at 4:1 instead of 3:1. Also, some see a two-fold structure: Denunciation, chaps. 1-3; Consolation, chaps. 4-7. This is similar to Isaiah's twofold makeup, and for this reason Micah has been referred to as "Isaiah in shorthand."

14. The year of Nahum's birth is unknown, but he was probably younger than fifty when he began his prophetic ministry.

15. The verse 1:126 begins with the phrase, "Though I have afflicted you."

16. *The Living Bible* paraphrases the opening lines of 2:1 in this way: "Nineveh, you are finished! You are already surrounded by enemy armies!"

17. Raymond Calkins, *The Modern Message of the Minor Prophets*, p.86.

18. J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, 4: 208.

19. Read these verses where the same Hebrew word (translated “embrace”) appears: 2 Kings 4:16; Job 24:8(KJV); Ecclesiastes 3:5; Song of Solomon 2:6.

20. Quoted in Frank E. Gaebelin, *Four Minor Prophets*, p. 142.

21. Cf. 1 Chronicles 25:1. If this is so, his home was in Jerusalem.

22. Compare this reading with the paraphrase of *The Living Bible*.

23. Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Handbook*, p. 425. “Theophany” is an appearance or manifestation of God to man.

## *The Postexilic Prophets*

(Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were the last writing prophets to minister to Israel in Old Testament times. They are called postexilic prophets because they served after the Jews had returned to Canaan from exile in Babylon. See [Chart 96](#). Who were the preexilic prophets, and who were the exilic prophets? Do you see why the postexilic prophets are also called the restoration prophets?

These first pages of the chapter are devoted to a study of the historical setting of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The Bible text of the three books will come alive

to you if, among, other things, you have seen what situations moved God to commission the three prophets to write.¹

The historical books which have the same setting as the postexilic prophets are Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Therefore, it will be helpful to review the backgrounds of those books, studied in chapter 15. Most of that material is not repeated in this chapter.

## I. TWO KINGDOMS AND TWO CAPTIVITIES

Before you begin your study of the postexilic prophets, review the historical setting *before* restoration. Recall that when we speak of “restoration” we are referring to the conditions accompanying the *return* of God’s people to Canaan *from captivity*. The captivity itself took place in two stages, known as the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Refer back to chapter 15 and

study again the descriptions of these two captivities. Israel, the Northern Kingdom, was taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Judah, the Southern Kingdom, was conquered by the Babylonians, one hundred twenty-six years later, in 586 B.C.

## **II. DURATION OF THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY**

The exile began with Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion of Judah in 605 B.C. (2 Chron 36:2-7), and ended with the first return of the Jews to Canaan in 536 B.C.² (Ezra 1). See [Chart 57.3](#)

## **III. CONTEMPORARY RULERS**

Review this subject as it is discussed in chapter 15. Identify these names on [Chart 57](#), and relate them to the times of the postexilic prophets: Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes. The name Darius appears three

times in each of the books of Haggai and Zechariah.

#### **IV. JEWISH LEADERS OF THE RESTORATION**

Review this subject also as it first appeared in chapter 15. Note these names on [Chart 57](#): Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Observe on the chart that most of Malachi's ministry took place during Nehemiah's return visit to Babylon. Those were years of backsliding on the part of the Jews in Canaan, when the first spiritual zeal had subsided. Hence, the message of Malachi was mainly about sin and its judgment.

#### **V. IMPORTANCE OF THE RESTORATION FOR THE JEWS AND THE WORLD**

The restoration was important for various reasons. For Israel, it showed that God had

not forgotten His promise to Abraham concerning the land of Canaan. (Read Gen 13:15 and note the strength of the word “forever”.) Hence, the *relocation* of a returning remnant. Hope for a missionary outreach to Gentiles was stirred up in *revival* of true worship, for a key mission of Israel was to show heathen nations what true worship of the true God was. And then, the restoration was directly related to the life and ministry of the coming Messiah, in the *renewal* of the Messianic promises. For example, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Zion were some of the geographical places woven into the promises concerning Jesus’ coming. In about four hundred years Jesus would be born of the seed of David in *Bethlehem*, not in Babylon. The Holy Land of *promise*, not a land of captivity, was where His people would be dwelling when He would come unto them, “his own” (John 1:11).

## **VI. RESTORATION OF END TIMES**

Israel's restoration in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. was but a mere shadow of the final restoration in the Messianic Kingdom of the end times. This is the principle of multiple fulfillment studied earlier. Be ready to apply the principle to the messages of the postexilic prophets. For clear revelation that Israel will play a prominent role in world history of the end times, read Romans 11.

## **VII. THE MINISTRIES OF THE LAST THREE PROPHETS**

See [Chart 57](#) and note that Haggai and Zechariah ministered around the beginning of the restoration period, and Malachi toward the end. In the pages that follow, more will be said about the immediate setting of the writing of each of their books. This may be noted now: the main appeal of Haggai and Zechariah was to inspire the

Jews to finish building the Temple which had been discontinued in 534 B.C. ([Chart 57](#)), and the burden of Malachi was the tragic apostasy of God's people. Whatever there was of revival and spiritual restoration in Israel's return from exile had, by Malachi's time, degenerated to spiritual coldness with threat of disaster. It is not without significance that the last word of Malachi, and therefore of our Old Testament, is the awful word "curse" (Mal 4:6). What thoughts come to you as you compare this last verse with the Bible's first verse, Genesis 1:1?

## **HAGGAI: BUILD THE HOUSE, AND I WILL BE GLORIFIED**

Haggai is one of the shortest books of the Bible, called by someone "a momentous little fragment." Among its prominent teachings is the necessity of putting first

things first. Not long after God led the Jews out of exile back to Jerusalem, the people became self-satisfied and began to neglect the things of the Lord. They were building houses for themselves, but hardly a soul was grieved that the Temple-building project, discontinued fourteen years earlier, was yet at a standstill. To such a stagnant situation, Haggai was sent with God's message.

## I. BACKGROUND

(Scan the book of Haggai before proceeding with this study of background.)

### A. THE MAN HAGGAI

Very little is known of the prophet Haggai. His name appears in two verses outside of his own book: Ezra 5:1; 6:14. Read these verses.

1. *Name.* The name Haggai means "festal" or "festive." The root of the word Haggai

has the literal meaning of *celebration*. Read 1 Samuel 30:16, where the Hebrew word is translated “dancing.” What ever led Haggai’s parents to this name, it was well chosen, for, as one writer has observed, “Haggai was one of the few prophets who had the inexpressible pleasure of seeing the fruits of his message ripen before his very eyes.”⁴

2. *Home.* Haggai was probably born in Babylon during the captivity years. We know nothing about his family. He was among the first contingent of Jews returning to Jerusalem, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, in 536 B.C. (Ezra 2:2).

3. *Ministry.* The prophet Haggai is often referred to as “The Successful Prophet.” No prophet saw a faster response to his message than did Haggai. Also, he has been called “the prophet who said it with bricks.” This is because the main subject of his message was

the completion of the Temple structure.

Haggai and Zechariah were companions in the prophetic ministry (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). How was the principle of co-working practiced in New Testament times? (Cf. Mark 6:7.) What are the advantages of a dual witness?

## B. THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

*1. Date.* The book of Haggai clearly dates itself: “second year of Darius the king,” (1:1), which was 520 B.C. All four messages recorded in the book bear the same date, as to year.

*2. Historical setting.* As mentioned earlier, the Temple project is the focal issue of the book of Haggai. The story of that project, in the early years, is tragic. To fully appreciate the prophet’s burden, the following sequence of events, predating his writing, should be learned. (Read the Bible references, and locate some of the dates on

## Chart 57.)

- 586 B.C. Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed by the Babylonian invaders.
- 539 B.C. Fall of Babylon. The Persian Empire, ruled by King Cyrus, becomes the world power. The Jews in exile are not subject to Cyrus.
- 538 B.C. God moves Cyrus to issue a decree permitting and encouraging the Jews to return to their homeland (Ezra 1:1-4).
- 536 B.C. First return of Jews under Zerubbabel. Read Ezra 1:5—2:70 and Nehemiah 12. The total number of returnees: about fifty thousand (see Ezra 2:64-67).
- 536-535 B.C. Altar of burnt offerings built at Jerusalem, on the site of the Temple ruins. Feast of Tabernacles kept. Sacrifices observed (Ezra 3:1-6). Foundations of the Temple laid (Ezra

3:7-13).

535-534 B.C. Opposition to the Temple project by the neighboring Samaritans (Ezra 4:1-5).

534 B.C. Work on the Temple ceases⁵ (Ezra 4:24).⁶

536-520 B.C: Israel's ruler is governor Zerubbabel, who represents the king of Persia. Joshua the high priest is their religious leader.

520 B.C. Haggai and Zechariah “prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel” (Ezra 5:1; cf. Hag 1:1). Temple project is resumed (Ezra 5:2; Hag 1:14-15). For how many years had the people neglected the work?

516 B.C. Temple project is finished (Ezra 6:14-15).

**Chart 114** shows the ever changing spiritual state of Israel during Old Testament times, and how Haggai's and Zechariah's ministries related to this.

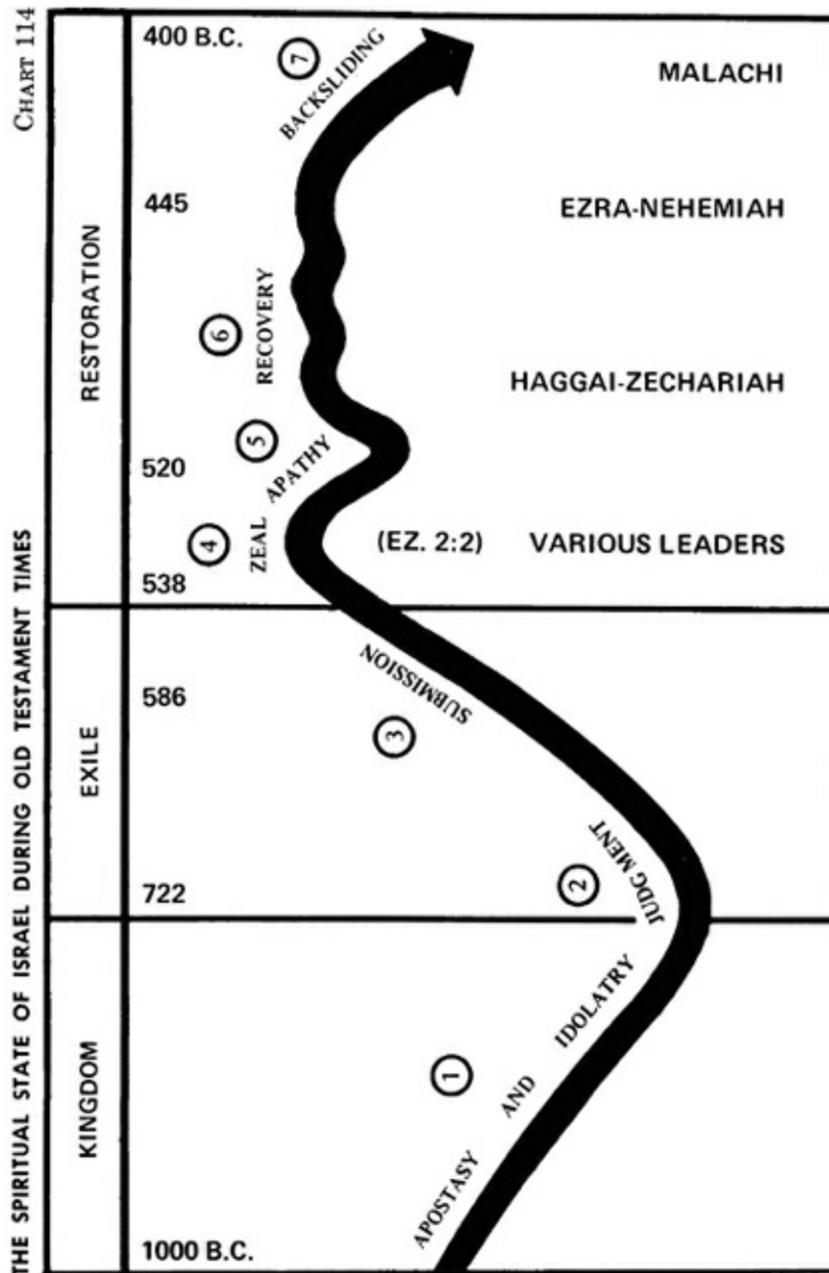
*3. The importance of the Temple.* We may rightly ask why the Temple building was so crucial in the life of the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem. Gleason Archer suggests two basic reasons.

It should be remembered that much of the Mosaic constitution presupposed the carrying on of worship in such a sanctuary, and the failure to complete a suitable house of worship could lead to a paralyzing of the religious life of the Jewish community. It should also be understood that the second temple was to play a very important role in the history of redemption, for it was in this temple (as remodeled and beautified by Herod the Great) that the

Lord Jesus Christ was to carry on His Jerusalem ministry. It was, of course, His advent that fulfilled the promise of Haggai 2:9, “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.”⁷

The Temple building itself, as a symbol, was intended to remind the Israelites that God was a real Person, alive, dwelling in Zion (Joel 3:21), and wanting to enjoy fellowship with man as well as be worshiped by him. Exodus 25:8, referring to the original tabernacle, gives clear insight into this fellowship aspect: “And let them construct a sanctuary [*miqdash*, “a place set apart”] for Me, that I may dwell among them.” There was no higher spiritual experience for a Jew in Haggai’s time than by faith to let God as Lord dwell personally in his heart. (Cf. Acts 7:47-48; Isa 66:1-2.) In such an experience the Temple symbol bore

its choicest and eternal fruit.



4. *Theme of the book.* The divine message which Haggai passed on to his Jewish brethren could be summarized thus: “If you want to be restored to a blessed relationship with the Lord, put first things first in your

life. For example, resume work on the Lord's Temple."

5. *Names in the book.* Four important names of the book are mentioned in its opening verses: Haggai the prophet; Darius the king; Zerubbabel the governor; and Joshua the high priest. Observe on [Chart 57](#) the appearances of the first three names. Joshua (also called Jeshua) is listed in Ezra 2:2 as one of the leaders of the first return of exiles.

## II. SURVEY

### A. FIRST READINGS

1. First, mark paragraph divisions in your Bible, beginning at these verses: 1:1,3,7,12; 2:1,10,20.

2. Scan the book. The purpose of this scanning is to see highlights, feel the tone, and get some general impressions.

3. Scan the book again, with pencil in hand. Underline key repeated words and phrases as you read.

4. Did you notice various date references? Mark these in your Bible: 1:1; 1:15; 2:1; 2:10; 2:20.

5. At what places in the book does this group appear: Zerubbabel, Joshua, remnant? Does Haggai deliver a message to Zerubbabel only, at anyplace in the book?

## B. SURVEY CHART

**Chart 115** shows, in layout form, how the book of Haggai is organized. Study the chart carefully, then follow the study suggestions given below. Keep referring to the Bible text to justify the observations and outlines that appear on the chart.

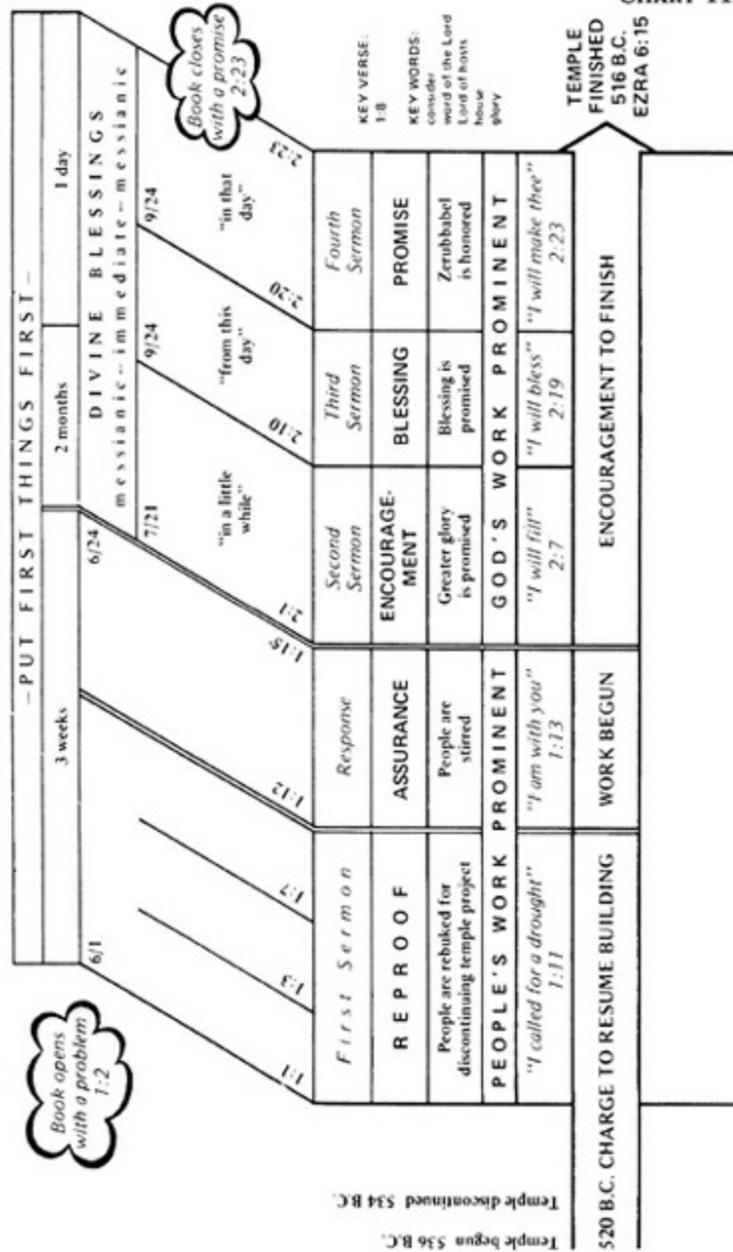
1. Note the title given to the book (see 1:8). Did you observe many references to God's house when you scanned the text of

Haggai? (An exhaustive concordance will quickly locate all the references.)

2. Compare the book's opening (1:2) and closing (2:23).

3. Study the chronological sequence of the Temple project, beginning with the date 536 B.C. What three-part outline of Haggai relates to this?

# HAGGAI BUILD THE HOUSE, AND I WILL BE GLORIFIED



4. How many “sermons” appear in the book? Check your Bible and note that each is dated. Note the dates recorded on the chart. What is the total time span of the book?

5. What is the function of the short paragraph 1:12-15 between the first and

second sermons?

6. Study the other outlines shown on the chart.

7. In what parts of the book of Haggai do Messianic prophecies appear?

8. Note the list of key words and phrases.

### III. APPLICATIONS

1. Do you learn any practical lessons about procrastination in chapter 1? What are your thoughts about “time” as the word is used in 1:2 and 1:4?

2. Why is a local church building, when truly devoted as the Lord’s house, an important *ingredient* of Christianity? Compare this with the Temple of Old Testament times.

3. When God sends or permits financial setback to a believer, what may be His

purposes?

4. Why is obedience to God the key to being in-His will?

5. What does Haggai 1 teach about how a believer's works are related to his heart?

6. Is unholiness communicable (2:13-14)? How can a Christian guard himself from the defilement of worldly things? Is holiness communicable (2:12)? In what sense can a Christian's good witness influence others?

7. Why was the Temple such an important object in the life of Israel? Relate 1 Peter 2:5 to this, as involving Christians.

8. Apply the following teachings of Haggai about work to the unfinished task of the Church:⁸

- a) The Lord's work takes priority over every other obligation of service.
- b) Those who obey God and do His work,

trusting in His abiding presence and power, are kept from discouragement.

- c) The Lord's work demands clean instruments, separated from sin.
- d) The Lord's work, believingly carried on, is linked to His sovereign plan for men and nations.

#### IV. SELECTED READING

##### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Ellison, H. L. *The Old Testament Prophets*, pp. 117-22.

Freeman, Hobart E. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, pp. 326-32.

Gaebelein, Frank E. *Four Minor Prophets*, pp. 199-242.

McCurdy, James Frederick. "Haggai." In Lange's *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, pp. 3-6.

## COMMENTARIES

Baldwin, Joyce G. *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*.

Earle, Ralph. *Meet the Minor Prophets*.

Jennings, A. C. "Haggai." In *Commentary on the Whole Bible*.

## **ZECHARIAH: KING OVER ALL THE EARTH**

Zechariah, the longest book of the minor prophets, was often quoted by the New Testament writers. This is because so many of its prophecies point forward to Christ the Messiah. One Bible scholar has called Zechariah "the most Messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological, of all the writings of the Old Testament."⁹

Visions, symbols, and prophecies of the end times (eschatology) abound in Zechariah. These are the main ingredients of apocalyptic literature (Greek *apokalupsis*,

meaning “uncovering,” “disclosure,” “revelation”). This is why the book is often referred to as “The Book of Revelation of the Old Testament.” As such, it is very appropriate that the book appears as the next to the last book of the Christian canon of the Old Testament.

# I. BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

## A. THE MAN ZECHARIAH

1. *Name.* The Hebrew name Zechariah means “The Lord remembers.” It was a common name in Old Testament times (around thirty men in the Old Testament are so named). Many parents no doubt gave the name as an act of gratitude to the Lord for remembering them with the gift of a baby boy.

2. *Family.* Zechariah’s father was the priest Berechiah; his grandfather, priest Iddo (1:1).¹⁰ Zechariah’s family was among the Jewish exiles who returned from Babylon in 536 B.C. under Zerubbabel (read Neh 12:4, 16). Zechariah was a young child at that time, if he was a young man when he began to prophesy in 520 B.C. (The “young man” of 2:4 may be Zechariah.)

3. *Ministry.* In 520 B.C., when God began

revealing to Haggai the message he should preach and write, Zechariah was ministering to the Jews as a priest, a position passed down from his forefathers (Neh 12:16). Then, two months later, Zechariah was commissioned with a similar prophetic task (cf. Hag 1:1 and Zech 1:1). This made him a prophet-priest, like his predecessors, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jewish tradition honors Zechariah (along with Haggai and Malachi) as a priest of the Great Synagogue, responsible for gathering and preserving the sacred writings and traditions of the Jews after the Babylonian Exile.

The main task that Zechariah and Haggai shared was to exhort the Jews to finish rebuilding the Temple. This project had been discontinued in 534 B.C., fourteen years before the prophets began their ministry. Read Ezra 6:14-15 to learn how successful the prophets were. In what year was the

# Temple completed?

## B. THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

1. *Date.* There are datelines in the book of Zechariah: at 1:1; 1:7; and 7:1. The second year of Darius (1:1) was 520 B.C., and the fourth year (7:1) was 518 B.C. The opening words of 8:1 suggest a later revelation to Zechariah, as do the opening words of 9:1. How much later these revelations were given, however, cannot be determined. It is possible that chapters 1-8 were written during the building of the Temple (520-516 B.C.); and chapters 9-14, after the Temple was completed in 516 B.C. (see [Chart 116](#)).

2. *General contents.* Like all biblical prophecy, the book of Zechariah contains both foretelling and forthtelling. The forthtelling is the prophet's appeal to the people concerning their *heart* relationship to God, so that the work of their *hands* (e.g.,

Temple project) might prosper. The foretelling concerns Israel's fortunes and judgments in the years to come, culminating in the nation's glory when the Messiah comes. Such predictions were intended to make the Jews yearn to see their King.

3. *Main purposes.* Four purposes of the book may be cited:

- a) To bring about spiritual revival. What was the first message of the Lord to the Jews? (See 1:2-3.)
- b) To inspire the people to complete the Temple building. See 1:16 and 4:9 for two specific references to the Temple.
- c) To comfort and console the people (see 2:13). The Jews were going through severe trials at the time.
- d) To register in divine Scripture unmistakable prophecies about the coming Messiah. The fact that the Jews

hearing Zechariah's prophecies did not live to see the fulfillments did not detract from the intended inspiration of the prophecies to their souls (cf. 1 John 3:2-3).

There are more prophecies of Christ in Zechariah than in any other prophetic book except Isaiah. Underline these in your Bible now. (The list of verses about fulfillment is a partial list.)

PROPHECY OF CHRIST		FULFILLMENT
Servant	3:8	Mark 10:45
Branch	3:8; 6:12	Luke 1:78, margin (KJV)
King-Priest	6:13	Heb 6:20—7:1
Lowly King	9:9-10	Matt 21:4-5; John 12:14-16
Betrayed	11:12-13	Matt 27:9
Hands pierced	12:10	John 19:37
Cleansing fountain	13:1	Rev 1:5
Humanity and deity	13:7; 6:12	John 8:40; 1:1
Smitten shepherd	13:7-9	Matt 26:31; Mark 14:27
Second coming and coronation	14:5,9	John 10:16; Rev 11:15; 21:27

## II. SURVEY

1. First, mark in your Bible the twenty units shown on [Chart 116](#). That is, draw a line across the page of your Bible at 1:1, at 1:7, at 1:18, and so forth. (Note: The units of

chapters 1-8 are paragraphs; those of 9-14 are full chapters.)

2. Now scan the entire book, with pencil in hand. Note especially the opening verse of each of the twenty units. Underline any key words and phrases that strike you.

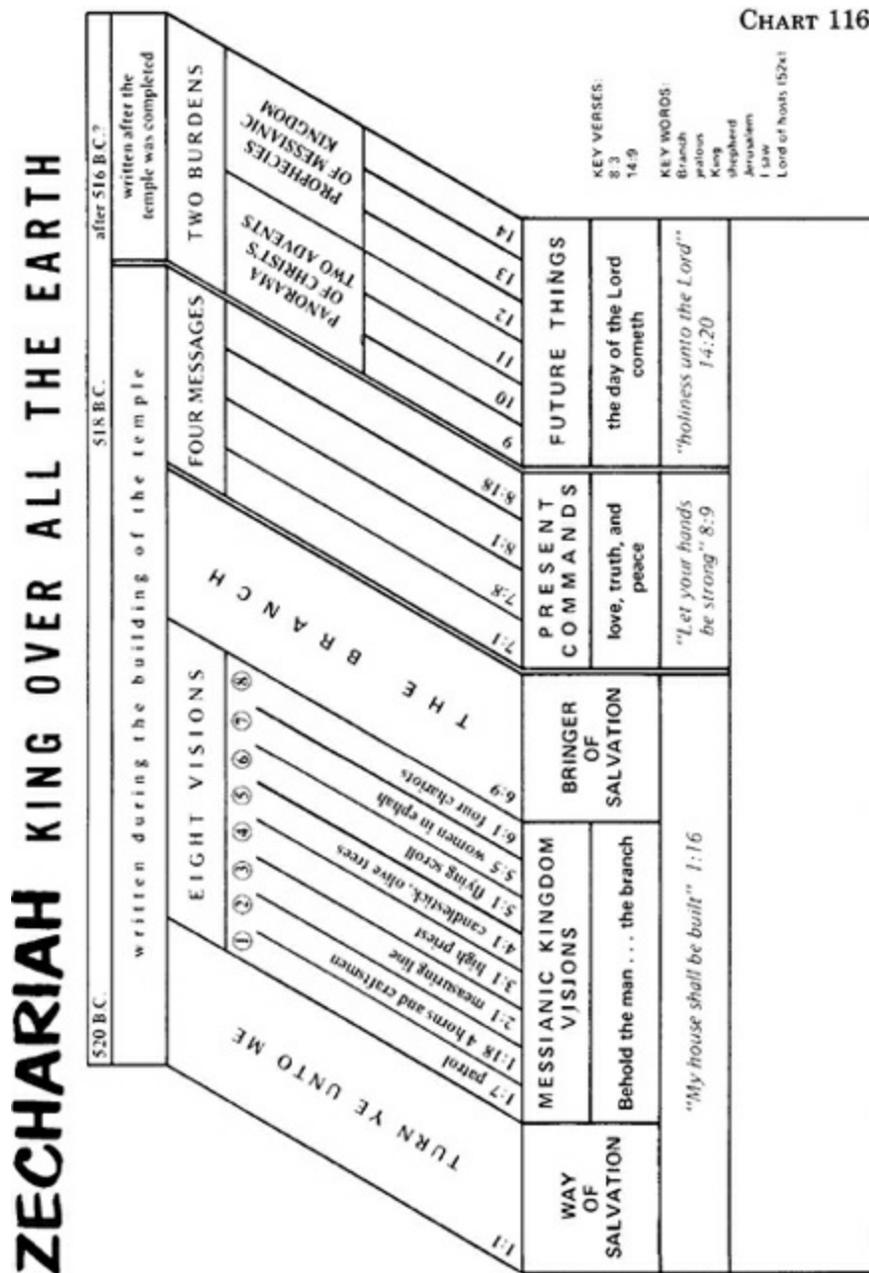
3. Study [Chart 116](#). Note that the chart divides the book into three main divisions. What are they?

4. How does the paragraph 1:1-6 introduce the book? Is there a formal conclusion to the book?

5. Note where the eight visions are recorded. Read each of these visions in the Bible text, and justify the titles shown on the chart. Note how the words “saw,” “looked,” or “eyes” introduce the visions.

6. Read 6:9-15. The absence of sight words in 6:9-15 is the reason for not identifying this passage as a vision. How is

this paragraph a fitting conclusion to the divine revelation of chapters 1-6?¹¹ Compare the last words of 6:15 with 1:3.



7. Note on [Chart 116](#) the middle section called "Four Messages." Read from the Bible the four verses cited on the chart. What

common phrase introduces each of the messages?

8. chapters 9-14 are identified as “Two Burdens.” Read 9:1 and 12:1 for the origin of this title.

9. Study chapters 9-14 in the Bible text, and try to justify the outlines shown on the chart.

10. Note the title assigned to the book of Zechariah, shown at the top of the chart. Compare this with the key verses. Also, note the key words. You will probably want to add to this list in your later studies.

### **III. APPLICATIONS**

1. Was Israel intended to be God’s channel of revelation to Gentiles in Old Testament days? If so, how successful was the mission? What will be a blessed relationship between the two peoples in the end times (2:11)?

Compare Psalm 67; Isaiah 2:3; 60:3.

2. What does 3:1 teach about Satan?

3. Why does God use human instruments to accomplish His crucial work on earth? (Cf. 4:14.)

4. What are your reflections about this truth: ““Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts” (4:6)?

5. What attributes of God are prominent in chapters 1-6?

6. In what sense is the stage being set in Palestine today for events foreshadowed in the book of Zechariah?

7. What is your definition of fasting?

8. Mourning and praying are often associated with fasting in the Bible (Zech 7:5; Acts 13:3). Why?

9. A good measure of a person’s heart in fasting is how he acts in days of feasting

(Zech 7:6). Why?

10. Is it easy or difficult to visualize the literal fulfillment of a millennial Kingdom on earth? Why? Compare the Lord's words to His people: "This seems unbelievable to you ... but it is no great thing for me" (Zech 8:6, TLB).

11. The Lord saw the Jews' successful witness to Gentiles as a cause for deep joy (8:19-23). Why is personal witnessing by a Christian such a joyous experience?

12. What have you learned from Zechariah 7-8 which will help you to be a better Christian?

13. The last three chapters of Zechariah are specific prophecies about Israel. But the applications need not be confined to Israel. Go through the three chapters once again and list spiritual truths which may be applied to Christians and non-saved.

## IV. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Ellison, H. L. *The Old Testament Prophets*, pp. 123-32.

Leupold, H. C. *Exposition of Zechariah*, pp. 1-18.

Robinson, George L. "The Book of Zechariah." In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 5:3136-41.

Unger, Merrill F. *Zechariah*, pp. 9-14.

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## **MALACHI: WILL A MAN ROB GOD?**

The book of Malachi contains the Lord's last recorded words of Old Testament times. In many respects it is a sad book, because it reveals what little progress—if any—Israel had made since the nation was born fifteen hundred years earlier (Gen 12). Dark and distressing as this is, however, the sun of God's grace arises out of its pages; so, when the reader has arrived at the last verses, there is no question but that in the end the day of glory will come for a repentant Israel, as well as for all believers.

# I. BACKGROUND

## A. THE MAN MALACHI

The Bible furnishes virtually no biographical information about Malachi. He was a prophet of God (1:1); a contemporary of Nehemiah. His name is an abbreviated form of the Hebrew *Malachiah*, which means “messenger of Jehovah.” It is interesting that the word “messenger” appears three times in this short book (read 2:7; 3:1.)

## B. THE BOOK OF MALACHI

1. *Date.* Malachi probably wrote his book around the time of Nehemiah’s visit to Babylon, in 433 B.C. (Neh 13:6). See [Chart 57](#). In support of this view are these facts:

a) The Temple project had already been completed, and Mosaic sacrifices were being offered (Mai 1:7-10; 3:1,8). See [Chart 57](#) for the date when the Temple was completed.

b) A Persian governor, not Nehemiah, was ruling the Jews at the time. Read 1:8.¹³

c) The sins denounced by Malachi were the same sins that Nehemiah dealt with during his second term.¹⁴ For example:

laxity and corruption of priests (Mai 1:6—2:9; Neh 13:1-9)

mixed marriages (Mai 2:10-16; Neh 13:23-28)

neglect of tithes (Mai 3:7-12; Neh 13:10-13)

In the words of G. Campbell Morgan, “The failures of the people that angered Nehemiah, inspired the message of Malachi.”¹⁵

(Since Nehemiah and Malachi were contemporaries, it would be very enlightening to study their two books together.)

2. *Occasion and message.* When Malachi wrote his book, the Jews as a nation had been back in the land of Canaan for about one hundred years. Prophets like Haggai and Zechariah had predicted that God's blessings would be given to the people in days to come, especially in "the day of the LORD." "But several decades had passed and these prophecies of hope were still unfulfilled. The days had become increasingly drab and dreary. It was a period of disappointment, disillusionment, and discouragement, of blasted hopes and abroken hearts."¹⁶ The Jews' faith and worship were eroding, and their daily lives showed it. In this backslidden condition they were hypercritical of God's ways. That God would even speak with them is evidence of His long-suffering and mercy.

The main subjects of Malachi's message were the love of God, the sin of the priests

and people, judgment for sin, and blessing for righteousness. One cannot help but observe that the Gospel of God has been the same message for sinners of all generations.

3. *Features.* The most notable feature of this book is its repeated pattern of discourse.¹⁷ Three steps are involved (example is shown):

Affirmation (charge or accusation): “You are robbing Me” (3:8).

Interrogation (introduced by “you say”):  
“But you say, ‘How have we robbed Thee?’” (3:8).

Refutation (answer to the question): “In tithes and contributions” (3:8).

The common repeated phrase in these discourses is “you say.” It appears eight times: 1:2,6,); 2:14,17; 3:7,8,13.

Another feature of Malachi’s message is

his strong emphasis on the Law of God (read 4:4). Also, the book surpasses all other prophetic books in the proportion of verses spoken by the Lord to Israel (forty-seven out of the total of fifty-five).

*4. The place of Malachi in the Bible canon.* Malachi is both a conclusion and a connecting link. It concludes the story of Israel for the span of 2000-400 B.C., and it is the last prophetic voice of the Old Testament. The book connects the Old Testament with the New Testament by its prophecies of John the Baptist and Christ's first advent. Its "messianic flashes (3:1-6; 4:2) prepare us for the NT revelation and focus our attention on Him who alone is the world's hope."¹⁸ Beyond that, the book reaches into the end times when it prophesies about the final day of the Lord (second advent).

## II. SURVEY

**Chart 117** is a survey chart showing the general pattern and highlights of Malachi. Study it carefully after you have scanned the entire book and have completed the other usual procedures of survey study. Then follow the study suggestions given below. (Always read the Bible passages which are cited.)

1. The first verse (1:1) is a typical introduction to the book.

2. The last paragraph (4:4-6) is not only a conclusion to the book, but also a fitting conclusion to the whole Old Testament.

3. The first half of the book (1:2—3:15) is mainly about sin. What subjects does Malachi write about after 3:16?

4. What bright prophecy appears at 3:1-6? Why do you think this prophecy is

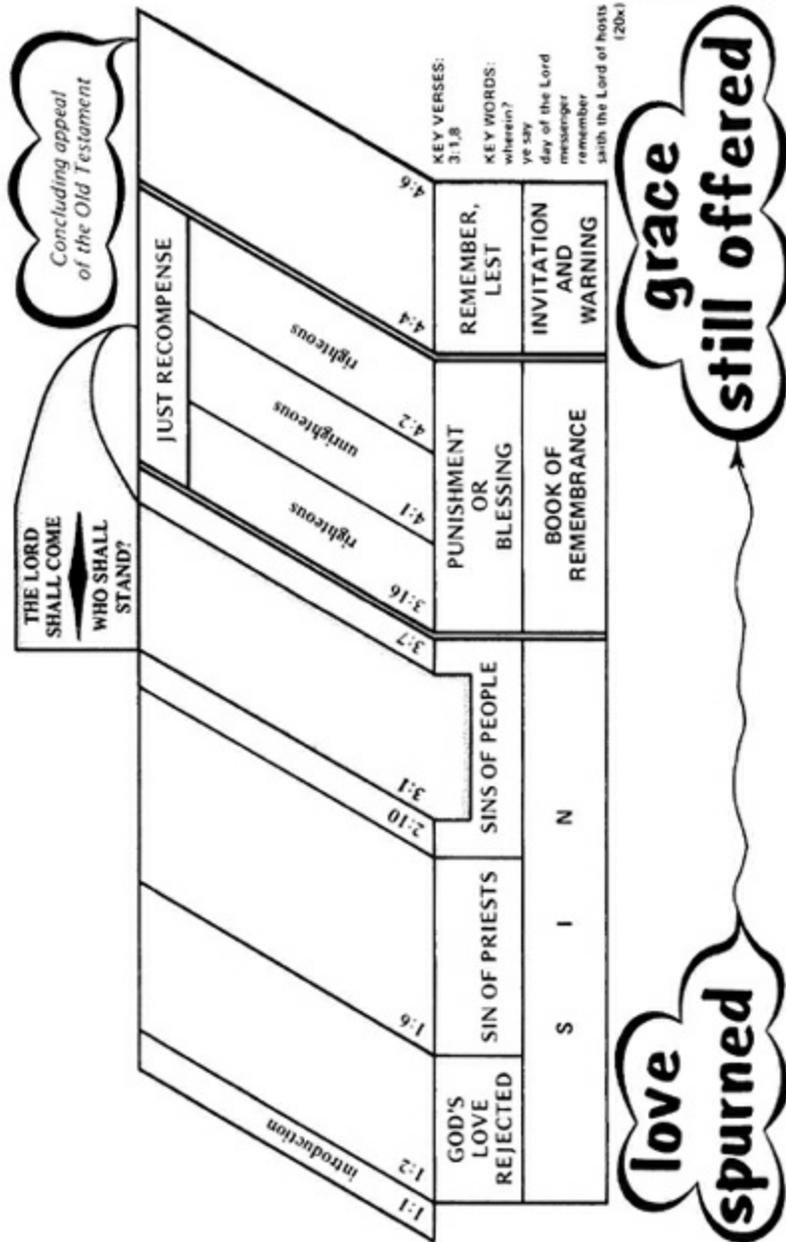
mentioned in the middle of the section about the people's sins?

5. How does the chart compare the beginning and end of Malachi's prophecy?

6. Read the whole book again, following the chart's outline as you read. Try to justify the various outlines on the basis of the Bible text.

7. Note the key words and key verses shown on the chart. Can you add to the list?

# MALACHI WILL A MAN ROB GOD?



## III. APPLICATIONS

1. Are the kinds of sins committed by the priests of Malachi's time being committed by Christian leaders today? How can lay Christians deal with such a problem?
2. Does *the principle* of tithes and offerings

(3:8) apply to today? If so, how? For background of Old Testament origins of the tithe, read Leviticus 27:30-33; Numbers 18:20-32; Deuteronomy 14:22-29. Verses on offerings include Exodus 30:13; Leviticus 7:14; Numbers 15:19-21. A classic New Testament passage on Christian giving is 2 Corinthians 8-9.

3. The last verses of the Old Testament are about obeying God's commandments. What is the Christian's relationship to God's laws, such as the Ten Commandments? Are the commands of the New Testament essentially laws of God?

4. Does God keep "records" of a Christian's daily walk? (See Mai 3:16; 2 Cor 5:9-10.)

5. The commands of Malachi about everyday living are timeless. Ponder the suggestions made by W. Graham Scroggie.

Malachi's message is eminently necessary and appropriate today, for these abuses have their equivalents in the modern Church. How prevalent is "a form of godliness," the powers being denied; how weak are multitudes of Christians with regard to great moral questions; how frequent is alliance in marriage of saved and unsaved; and how shamefully lax are Christians in the matter of giving of their substance for the maintenance of God's work. To this situation Malachi still speaks.¹⁹

#### **IV. THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD**

The four hundred years between the days of Malachi and the advent of Christ are known as the intertestamental period. They are called the "four hundred silent years" because God did not cause any Scripture to be written during this time. It was a crucial era, for this is when God was preparing the

world for the coming of His Son as Saviour and Lord (read Gal 4:4). With the help of outside sources, study the religious, political, social, and secular preparations which were involved.²⁰ Such a study will enhance your appreciation and understanding of the two Testaments and of the connections between the two.

## **V. TEN KEY SUBJECTS OF OLD TESTAMENT REVEALED TRUTH**

Now that you have completed your survey of the books of the Old Testament, it would be very helpful to review the main teachings of this part of God's Scripture. What revealed truths stand out to you? Compare your reflections with the following list of subjects:

1. person and works of God
2. origins of the human race and the

universe

3. nature of man
4. sin of man
5. way of salvation; fellowship with God; and worship of God
6. origins and early history of Israel; and prophecies of Israel in the end times
7. philosophy of world history throughout all time
8. prophecies of Christ
9. daily conduct acceptable to God
10. qualities of acceptable service of God, including the mission of the evangel to lost souls

## **VI. SELECTED READING**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 416-17.

Earle, Ralph. *Meet the Minor Prophets*.

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Freeman, Hobart E. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, pp. 347-55.

Rendtorff, Rolf. *God's History*, pp. 65-77.

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Robinson, George. *The Twelve Minor Prophets*.

1. The prophets also preached many, if not all, of the message they were divinely inspired to write.

2. If Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10) is interpreted from an ecclesiastical standpoint, with the Temple as the key object, then the seventy-year period extended from the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C. to the year of completion of its reconstruction, which was 516 B.C.

3. Most of the dates of [Chart 57](#) are those of John C. Whitcomb's chart, *Old Testament Kings and Prophets*.

4. J. McClmoyle, "Haggai," in *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 743.

5. Other factors, besides the Samaritans' harassments, caused the Jews to stop working on the Temple. Among these were: (1) the people's earlier adjustment to worshiping without a temple when they were in Babylon; (2) their disillusionment upon returning, to find mostly desolation, hostility, and hardship; (3)

poverty resulting from failure of crops; (4) preoccupation with their own building projects. (See Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, p. 329.)

6. Verses 6-23 of chapter 4 are parenthetical, referring to the Samaritans' later opposition to building Jerusalem's walls, during the reigns of Ahasuerus (486-464) and Artaxerxes (464-423).

7. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 408.

8. From Frank E. Gaebelein, *Four Minor Prophets*, p. 244.

9. George L. Robinson, "The Book of Zechariah," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 5: 3136.

10. Ezra 5:1 says Zechariah was a son of Iddo. In Jewish terminology, "son of" often had the wider designation of "descendant of." It is possible that Berechiah died before Iddo, causing Ezra to identify Zechariah with the *surviving* ancestor of the priestly line.

11. Recall from 1:1 that all of chapters 1-6 was revealed to Zechariah “in the eighth month of the second year of Darius.”

13. The word *pechah*, translated “governor” in 1:8, is a borrowed word, used for the Persian governors in Palestine in postexilic times. See *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 503.

14. Unfortunately, the revival fires of Nehemiah’s earlier ministry (Neh 10:28-39) had by now died out.

15. G. Campbell Morgan, *Voices of Twelve Hebrew Prophets*, p. 151. Another writer has commented, “The Book of Malachi fits the situation amid which Nehemiah worked as snugly as a bone fits its socket” (J. M. P. Smith, quoted in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 3:1970.)

16. Ralph Earle, *Meet the Minor Prophets*, p. 105.

17. This pattern has been called didactic-dialectic, or dialogistic.

18. Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 449.

19. W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 1:218.

20. A recommended brief treatment includes Henry E. Dosker, "Between the Testaments," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1:455-58. For more extensive discussion, consult Charles Pfeiffer, *Between the Testaments*; D. S. Russell, *Between the Testaments*; and F. F. Bruce, *Israel and the Nations*, pp. 120-225. A description of the period, with many excellent maps, is given in *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, pp. 110-41, by the Jewish authors Johanan Aharon and Michael Avi-Yonah.

# Appendix

## A

### Kings of Israel

CHART 1 8

KINGS OF ISRAEL	YEARS* OF REIGN	CHARACTER	RELATIONS WITH JUDAH	DETHRONED BY	HISTORY
1 JEROBOAM	22	Bad	War		I Kings 11 26—14 20 II Chronicles 9 29—13 22
2 NADAB	2	Bad	War	Baasha	I Kings 15 25-28
3 BAASHA	24	Bad	War		I Kings 15 27—16 7 II Chronicles 6 1-6
4 ELAH	2	Drunkard	War	Zimri	I Kings 16 8-10
5 ZIMRI	7 days	Murderer	War	Omri	I Kings 16 10-20
6 OMRI	12	Very Bad	War		I Kings 16 16-27
7 AHAB	22	Exceedingly Wicked	Alliance		I Kings 16 28—22 40 II Chronicles 18 1-34
8 AHAZIAH	2	Bad	Peace		I Kings 22 40, 51-53 II Kings 1 1-17 II Chronicles 20 35-37
9 JORAM	12	Bad	Alliance	Jehu	II Kings 3 1-3, 9 14-25 II Chronicles 22 5-7
10 JEHU	28	Bad	War		II Kings 9 1—10 36 II Chronicles 22 7-12
11 JEHOAHAZ	17	Bad	Peace		II Kings 13 1-9
12 JEHOASH	16	Bad	War		II Kings 13 10-25, 14 8-16 II Chronicles 25 17-24
13 JEROBOAM II	41	Bad	Peace		II Kings 14 23-29
14 ZECHARIAH	6 months	Bad	Peace	Shallum	II Kings 15 8-12
15 SHALLUM	1 month	Bad	Peace	Menahem	II Kings 15 13-15
16 MENAHEM	10	Bad	Peace		II Kings 15 16-22
17 PEKAHIAH	2	Bad	Peace	Pekah	II Kings 15 23-26
18 PEKAH	20	Bad	War	Hoshea	II Kings 15 27-31 II Chronicles 28 5-8
19 HOSHEA	9	Bad	Peace		II Kings 17 1-41

# APPENDIX B

## Kings of Judah

CHART 119

KINGS OF JUDAH	AGE BEGAN REIGNING	YEARS OF REIGN	CHARACTER	RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL	HISTORY
1 REHOBOAM	41	17	Bad	War	I Kings 12 1—14 31 II Chronicles 10 1—12 16
2 ABIJAM		3	Bad	War	I Kings 15 1-8 II Chronicles 13 1-22
3 ASA		41	Good	War	I Kings 15 9-24 II Chronicles 14 1—16 14
4 JEHOASHAPHAT	35	25	Good	Peace	I Kings 22 41-50 II Chronicles 17 1—20 37
5 JEHOAM	32	8	Bad	Peace	II Kings 8 16-24 II Chronicles 21 1-20
6 AHAZIAH	22	1	Bad	Alliance	II Kings 8 25-29, 9 27-29 II Chronicles 22 1-9
7 ATHALIAH (queen)		6	Bad	Peace	II Kings 8 18, 25-28, 11 1-20 II Chronicles 22 1—23 21, 24 7
8 JOASH	7	40	Good	Peace	II Kings 11 1—12 21 II Chronicles 22 10—24 27
9 AMAZIAH	25	29	Good	War	II Kings 14 1-14 II Chronicles 25 1-28
10 UZZIAH (Azariah)	16	52	Good	Peace	II Kings 15 1-7 II Chronicles 26 1-23
11 JOTHAM	25	16	Good	War	II Kings 15 32-38 II Chronicles 27 1-9
12 AHAZ	20	16	Bad	War	II Kings 16 1-20 II Chronicles 28 1-27
13 HEZEKIAH	25	29	Good		II Kings 18 1—20 21 II Chronicles 29 1—32 33
14 MANASSEH	12	55	Bad		II Kings 21 1-18 II Chronicles 33 1-20
15 AMON	22	2	Bad		II Kings 21 19-23 II Chronicles 33 21-25
16 JOSIAH	8	31	Good		II Kings 22 1—23 30 II Chronicles 34 1—35 27
17 JEHOAHAZ	23	3 months	Bad		II Kings 23 31-33 II Chronicles 36 1-4
18 JEHOIAKIM	25	11	Bad		II Kings 23 34—24 5 II Chronicles 36 5-7
19 JEHOIACHIN	18	3 months	Bad		II Kings 24 6-16 II Chronicles 36 8-10
20 ZEDEKIAH	21	11	Bad		II Kings 24 17—25 7 II Chronicles 36 11-21

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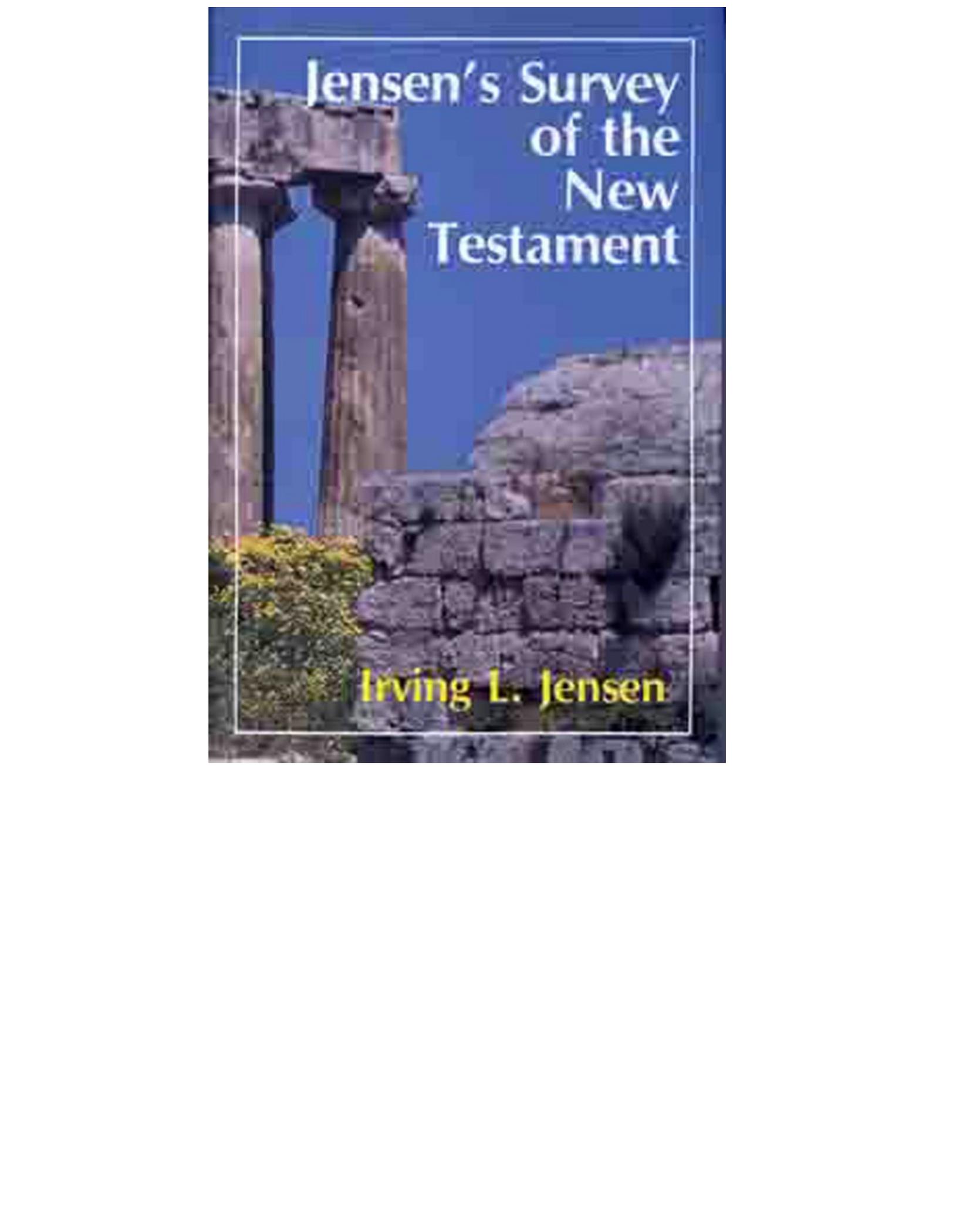
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Jensen's Survey  
of the  
New  
Testament

Irving L. Jensen

**JENSEN'S SURVEY  
OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT**

*Search and Discover*

*by*

**IRVING L. JENSEN**

**MOODY PUBLISHERS  
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Ground plan of Herod's Temple (p.68)

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***To Charlotte and our children — Donna,  
Karen, and Bob***

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have been very gratified over the reception that the companion volume, *Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament*, has had since its publication. It is my prayer that God will use this New Testament survey guide to inspire many of His children in the experiences of New Testament survey and give them priceless joys of discovering for themselves the blessed truths of His book.

Many thanks go to my wife, children, friends, students, and the Moody Press staff for all the inspiration, encouragement, and help that they shared in the production of this and other volumes. Those are the unexposed, supportive ministries always cherished and remembered by me.

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## *Preface*

The New Testament is the “new birthplace” of a Christian, because there is where divine power transformed his life. Spiritually, he feels at home there. There is a hunger in his heart to read and study the New Testament, because God gave that written Word not only for the believer’s salvation but also for his edification — food for growing and maturing and serving. And he should want to learn the *whole* New Testament, not just selected parts of it. A sound starting point for such a study project is *survey*, which is viewing the New Testament as a full unit, section by section, and book by book. That is the approach of this study guide.

The main purpose for this New Testament survey guide is to involve the reader *personally* in a firsthand

survey of the Bible text. All too often, students of New Testament survey read the sound instruction of others regarding the content of the Bible books but fail to spend time reading the Bible text for themselves. This book has been written to start the reader onto paths of study in each New Testament book, to *search and discover* for himself the great themes of each book. Throughout the chapters much help (such as outlines) is supplied on what the Bible books teach, but those suggestions are intended to confirm and amplify the reader's personal study and to encourage a pursuit into the more difficult or elusive New Testament portions. The reader is always encouraged to do his own study before dwelling long on help from others.

One specific aim of this book is to guide the student into seeing *how* the message of each New Testament book

is organized structurally, because for a full understanding of the Bible text one needs to know not only *what* God said, but *how* He said it. This aim partly accounts for the appearance of so many charts throughout the book, because charts show structural organization clearly and vividly.

Students of Bible survey often overlook the application stage of their study, because in survey they do not analyze the Bible text in detail. But survey study should not rule out practical application. One of this book's purposes is to lead the reader into a time of personal reflection as he considers practical spiritual applications of the Bible book that he has just surveyed. At that stage the slogan should be *reflect and apply*. That is how all Bible study should conclude.

This survey guide also includes other

important helps for study, as seen in the following descriptions of the parts of each chapter.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

The opening paragraphs of each chapter prepare the reader for his survey of the Bible book assigned to that chapter. This is a crucial part of one's study, because here is where motivation and momentum, as well as direction, are gained.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

Originally, every book of the Bible was written in a particular local setting. This section of the chapter discusses that background, much information of which is not always supplied by the text of the Bible book itself. Some important items are intentionally

repeated from time to time to help impress them on the reader's mind.

### **III. SURVEY**

The actual survey process is the main part of each chapter and should occupy most of the student's time. The basic Bible version used throughout these studies is the *New American Standard Bible*. [Chapter 3](#) is devoted entirely to a discussion of the survey method of study. Here the reader will learn what procedures are recommended for surveying a book of the New Testament.

### **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

Immediately following each chapter's Survey section is a discussion of prominent subjects of the Bible book. Technical subjects or problems of the

Bible text are not included, because these are not part of survey study. The comments that are shared are intended to round out the student's survey and to give suggestions for further study at a later time.

## **V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

Usually certain words and verses can be identified with the particular theme of each Bible book. Suggestions are made here, but the reader is urged to look for more.

## **VI. APPLICATIONS**

The questions asked here will help the student apply the teachings of the New Testament book to his own life and circumstances.

## **VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS**

An effective learning procedure is to review what has been studied by answering review questions. The questions given here are about the solid portions of the survey project and include the background of the New Testament book. They are not questions on the Prominent Subjects section.

## **VIII. FURTHER STUDY**

Suggestions for further study are intended for those who want to pursue various themes of the book in greater detail. This study is not part of the survey process.

## **IX. OUTLINE**

A brief outline of the New Testament book is included here, as a reference point for the survey project.

## X. SELECTED READING

Three kinds of books are cited here: general introduction, commentary, and other related sources. For the most part, the lists are of books in print, written from a conservative, evangelical viewpoint. (Exceptions are not identified as such.)

## XI. SURVEY CHART

Near the end of each chapter is a complete survey chart for the New Testament book.

Note: After the student has completed his survey of the New Testament, he is ready to begin the analytical stage of study, which moves segment by segment through each New Testament book. Helps for analysis may be found in my Bible Self-Study Guides (Moody Press) and *The Layman's Bible*

# *Study Notebook* (Harvest House).

# Introduction to the New Testament

## *Survey Method of Study*

These three introductory chapters prepare the reader for his survey studies of the books of the New Testament. [Chapter 1](#) views the fascinating story of how these writings came *from God to us*. [Chapter 2](#) describes the setting of the New Testament: historical, religious, political, and physical. Then in [Chapter 3](#) the reader is introduced to the survey method of study, in order to give him tools for his personal study of the New Testament books.

# *1History of the New Testament Writings*

The last words God ever wrote to man are recorded on the pages of the New Testament. The book is that momentous and precious. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to describe what the New Testament is and how it came to be, so that the reader's appreciation of its value will be enhanced. The principle applied here is, "He uses best what he values most."

## **I. GOD'S FINAL REVELATION**

In the Old Testament God had given a partial revelation of Himself, having spoken through prophets and angels, but the full and final revelation came by His Son Jesus. "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2a, NIV).

Observe how the two eras are compared in the accompanying diagram.

After Jesus had provided purification for sins, “He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” because His atoning death was finished (Heb. 1:3; cf. John 19:30). The revelation was that final. The written Word of the New Testament records the story and revelation of this Son of God.

To say that the New Testament is God’s final revelation of Himself is not to say that the Old Testament is obsolete. The New Testament was never intended to replace the Old. Rather, it is the sequel to the Old Testament’s origins, heir of its promises, fruit of its seed, the peak of its mountain. The ministry of Christ would be an enigma without the Old Testament. For example, it is the Old Testament that explains Jesus’ words, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of

the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). The best preparation for a study of the New Testament is to become acquainted with the foundations of the Old.



As God’s final revelation, the New Testament records the fulfillments of Old Testament prophecy, the last words and works of Christ on earth, the birth and growth of Christ’s church, prophecies of the last times, and clear statements and interpretations of the Christian faith. Every

earnest Christian wants to spend much time studying these final words of God.

## **II. THE NEW TESTAMENT FROM GOD TO US**

There was already a “Bible” when the first New Testament books were being written. Usually that book of God was referred to as the Scripture(s) (e.g., Matt. 21:42). We now call it the Old Testament; it was the only Bible of Jesus and the apostles. Then, a couple of decades after Christ’s ascension, the Holy Spirit began to move and inspire chosen saints to write letters and historical accounts that would eventually be brought together in a volume to be known as the New Testament.

Today when we hold a copy of the English New Testament in our hands, it is fair to ask how accurately it represents the original autographs. Involved in the answer is the

history of the New Testament — from God (first century A.D.) to us (twentieth century). It is a fascinating story of miracles, involving stages of transmission, canonization, and translation. The starting point of such a history is divine revelation.

## A. REVELATION

Revelation is God's communication of truth to man, without which man cannot know God. The word *revelation* (*apocalypsis*) means "uncovering," or "drawing away of a veil."

Before there was any Scripture, God revealed Himself to man through such media as conscience, nature (*general* revelation), and direct conversation with people (*special* revelation).¹ But there was need of a form of revelation that would be

permanent, explicit, and retentive of a large volume of revealed truth. For that, God chose the written form of human language to be read, learned, and applied by all the succeeding generations. In the words of Gleason Archer,

If there be a God, and if He is concerned for our salvation, this is the only way (apart from direct revelation from God to each individual of each successive generation) He could reliably impart this knowledge to us. It must be through a reliable written record such as the Bible purports to be.²

Recall the powerful words of Hebrews 1:1-3 (NIV) studied earlier: *God... has spoken to us by his Son*. The Son is the Living Word; the Bible is the written Word of the Son.

## B. INSPIRATION

All the books of the Bible — New Testament as well as Old Testament — came into being by the Holy Spirit’s direct ministry of inspiration. Two crucial questions at this point are: How did the human authors know what God wanted them to write? and, Were their writings without error? We cannot explain the supernatural process of inspiration that brought about the original writings of the Bible. Paul refers to the process as *God-breathing*. (Read 2 Timothy 3:16, where the phrase “inspired by God” translates the Greek *theo-pneustia*, which literally means “God-breathed.”) Peter says the Bible authors were undergirded, or carried along, by the Holy Spirit. (“Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit,” 2 Pet. 1:21, NIV.) These verses, along with

many others, assure us that when the Bible authors wrote, all their words expressed infallibly and without error the truths that God wanted to convey to mankind. In the original autographs, all the words were infallible in truth, and final in authority. Such accuracy applies to every part of the originals — to matters of history and science as well as to spiritual truths. If the Bible student does not believe this scriptural infallibility and inerrancy, his study of the biblical text will be haunted by confusing and destructive doubts.

As noted earlier, when the New Testament authors were writing their manuscripts, the only complete body of Scripture was the Old Testament.³ The question may be asked, Were the New Testament writers aware that they were composing works that would eventually become part of the total Scriptures of God? This is a valid question,

because not everything the authors wrote became part of the New Testament.⁴ We do not know to what extent the writers sensed or discerned the God-breathing or undergirding ministry of the Spirit in their minds and hearts as they wrote. They were surely conscious that they were recording God's truth (see 1 Cor. 14:37), just as they knew they were preaching His glad tidings publicly (see Gal. 1:11,12). Regardless of the nature of their own personal perception that they were authoring *uniquely inspired* manuscripts at the time they wrote, the truth remains unshakeable, based on the Bible's own statements of its origin, that all the Scriptures were inspired, written by chosen authors who were undergirded as they wrote. Just what New Testament books were among those inspired Scriptures is the subject of our later study of canonization.

## C. THE ORIGINAL AUTOGRAPHS

The twenty-seven books of the New Testament were written over a period of about fifty years (c. A.D. 45-95), by eight or nine authors. All but a few words and phrases were written in Koine Greek, which was the marketplace vernacular of the first-century Mediterranean world.⁵ It was written in that universal language to make it initially accessible to world readership.

The writing material of most of the autographs was paperlike papyrus. (Some autographs might have been written on animal skins, such as parchment or vellum.) Sheets of papyrus, usually about ten inches long, were attached together to make a long, rolled-up scroll, easy for reading.⁶ (The paged codex, or book, did not supplement the roll until the second or third century A.D.) The Bible text was written in

vertical columns with pen and ink, with no space between words, sentences, or paragraphs, and with no punctuation marks. Verse and chapter divisions were not made until centuries later.

Most of the New Testament books were letters (epistles) written to individuals (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:1-2), churches (e.g., 1 Thess. 1:1), or groups of believers (e.g., 1 Pet. 1:1-2). Luke wrote a gospel and a historical book to share with a friend Theophilus (Acts 1:1), and it is very likely that the other three gospels were written to share with individuals or churches.⁷

The present order (canon) of books in our New Testament is not the chronological order in which the books were written. Chart 1 shows a suggested chronological order of writing for the New Testament books.⁸ Study the chart carefully and try to

visualize the growing zeal of the saints during the last decades of the first century as the inspired writings began to circulate from city to city. Answer the following questions on the basis of the information supplied by the chart.

1. What was the first book to be written? the last? How many years transpired between the two?

2. Note when each of the gospels appeared.⁹ One of the reasons the gospels were not the first books to appear was that much of the content, such as the spoken words of Jesus, was already being shared with the people in oral form, having been memorized precisely.

# CHART 1: A CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE WRITING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

BOOK	AUTHOR		PLACE WRITTEN	DATE A.D.	PERIODS		
					PERSONNEL	APOSTOLIC LITERATURE	CHURCHES
JAMES	James		Jerusalem	45		BEGINNINGS	FOUNDING
GALATIANS	Paul	JOURNEY EPISTLES	Corinth	48	FIRST PAULINE PERIOD		
1 THESS				52			
2 THESS				55			
1 COR				56			
2 COR			Ephesus				
ROMANS			Macedonia				
			Corinth				
MATTHEW	Matthew		Jerusalem?	58	FIRST HISTORICAL RECORDS	CENTRAL	ESTABLISHING
LUKE	Luke		Rome	61			
ACTS	"						
COLOSSIANS	Paul	PRISON EPISTLES	Rome	61	CENTRAL PAULINE PERIOD		
EPHESIANS							
PHILEMON							
PHILIPPIANS							
1 TIMOTHY	Paul	PASTORAL EPISTLES	Macedonia	62	PAUL'S LEGACY		
TITUS			Corinth?	—			
2 TIMOTHY			Rome	67			
HEBREWS	?						
JUDE	Jude						
1 PETER	Peter			68?	PETER'S LEGACY		
2 PETER	Mark						
MARK							
JOHN	John		Ephesus?	85	JOHN'S LEGACY	CLOSING	CONTINUING
1 JOHN							
2 JOHN							
3 JOHN							
REVELATION			Patmos	96			

*There are various opinions as to the order of writing. For example, some place Galatians later and Mark earlier.*

3. Note the three periods of apostolic literature. Approximately how long was each period? There was a fifteen-year interim of “silent years” between the central and closing periods. The destruction of Jerusalem took place in A.D. 70. Is any

connection suggested between that event and the hiatus of writing?

4. The books' ministries to the local churches are identified by what three words (for the three main periods)? What is involved in each of the ministries?

5. Note the three Pauline periods. Scan the lists of books written during those times.

6. The gospel according to Mark is identified as Peter's legacy, because the apostle Peter was a key reporter to Mark of the narrative of Jesus' life.

7. Observe the different kinds of writings authored by John (gospel, epistle, vision).

8. The epistle of James stresses good works in the life of the believer. Why would such a message be the first one to be sent out in written form to the people of God?

9. In what sense was the book of

Revelation logically the *last* written communication to the church?

## D. TRANSMISSION

Transmission is the process by which the biblical manuscripts have been copied and recopied down through the ages, by hand or machine. God caused or allowed each of the original New Testament autographs to disappear from the scene, but not before copies were already in the hands of His people.¹⁰

Copies of the New Testament books were handwritten by scribes until the middle of the fifteenth century A.D. when Gutenberg invented movable type for the printing press. Scribal errors have been made in the copies,¹¹ but God has preserved the text from doctrinal error to this present time.

Thousands of Greek and non-Greek manuscripts of all or part of the New Testament text, supportive of the text's purity, exist today. Benjamin B. Warfield says that the purity is unrivalled:

Such has been the care with which the New Testament has been copied, — a care which has doubtless grown out of true reverence for its holy works, — such has been the providence of God in preserving for His Church in each and every age a competently exact text of the Scriptures, that ... the New Testament [is] unrivalled among ancient writings in the purity of its text as actually transmitted and kept in use....¹²

So when you are holding a copy of the New Testament in your hands, you may rest

assured that it is a wholly dependable translation, which represents the original, inspired autographs of the first century. As divine author, God wrote an infallible book (inspiration); as divine protector, He has preserved the text from doctrinal error (transmission).

## E. CANONIZATION

Canonization is the identification of a writing as being part of the Scripture. It was not enough that God inspired the *writing* of each book of the Bible. He also gave to His people, in a collective sense,¹³ the spiritual perception to *recognize* in each of these books genuine marks of divine inspiration and authority.¹⁴ With the Holy Spirit's guidance, they knew what spurious writings to reject, as well as what genuine writings to

accept. It was a long human process over a few hundred years, many of the details of which are veiled in obscurity. But it is clear that God's supernatural hand, working through humans, brought His inspired writings into the canon and excluded other writings.

1. *Order of the New Testament books.* The canon of the New Testament is the list of all the New Testament books that God inspired. Although the last New Testament book was written by A.D. 100, for the next couple centuries questions persisted concerning whether some books, such as 3 John, were inspired. By the end of the fourth century A.D. the canon was solidified, being composed of twenty-seven books.

Five of the New Testament books are historical in content; twenty-one are epistles (letters); and one is apocalyptic (revelation

of visions). The order in which they appear in our Bible is this:

*History:* Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts

*Epistles:* Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, Jude

*Visions:* Revelation

# CHART 2: CANONICAL ORDER OF N.T. BOOKS

HISTORY	1. MATTHEW 2. MARK 3. LUKE 4. JOHN  5. ACTS	
EPISTLES	6. ROMANS 7. 1 CORINTHIANS 8. 2 CORINTHIANS 9. GALATIANS  10. EPHESIANS 11. PHILIPPIANS 12. COLOSSIANS  13. 1 THESSALONIANS 14. 2 THESSALONIANS  15. 1 TIMOTHY 16. 2 TIMOTHY 17. TITUS 18. PHILEMON	to churches          to individuals
	19. HEBREWS 20. JAMES  21. 1 PETER 22. 2 PETER 23. 1 JOHN 24. 2 JOHN 25. 3 JOHN 26. JUDE	NON-PAULINE
VISIONS	27. REVELATION	

We do not know how or by whom the above order was determined, but the locations of most of the books in the list can be justified or explained in a variety of ways.¹⁵ Refer to Chart 2 and observe the following:

a. Doctrine is grounded in fact, so the historical books (gospels and Acts) precede

the epistles (where doctrine is prominent).

b. Revelation stands last because it is mainly about the end times.

c. Matthew, written especially with the Jew in mind, is a link between the Old Testament and the New and so appears first in the canon.

d. John is the gospel with much interpretation and reflection, written at the end of the first century, and so it fits best as the last of the four gospels.

e. Acts is the extension and fulfillment of the gospels, the proof that what Christ said and did was true and efficacious. It follows the gospels very naturally.

Acts can be associated with the epistles without overlooking the historical connection with the gospels. The accompanying diagram shows such comparisons.¹⁶

# COMPARISONS OF NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

GOSPELS	ACTS & EPISTLES	REVELATION
Past	Present	Future
Christ as Prophet	Christ as Priest	Christ as King
Setting: Israel	Setting: Church	Setting: Universe
Founder of Christianity	Fundamentals of Christianity	Fulfillment of Christianity
Introduction	Application	Realization
The Christ	The Church	The Consummation

f. Paul wrote most of the New Testament books (at least thirteen¹⁷), and his books were among the earliest to be written (see Chart 1). So his are the first of the epistles (Romans-Philemon).

g. The order of Paul's letters in the canon has various explanations.¹⁸ The first nine (Romans-2 Thessalonians) were written to churches; the last four (1 Timothy-Philemon) were written to individuals. The key opening epistle, Romans, is the classic book on salvation and the Christian walk. The Corinthian letters and Galatians, listed together, treat problems of the churches.

Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are usually kept together because all three were written from prison in Rome, and all three focus on deeper Christian living. The Thessalonian letters are last among the letters to churches; these look into the future, about Christ's second coming.

h. Paul's letters to individuals (1 Timothy-Philemon) appear last. They were among the last letters Paul wrote (see Chart 1). In the canon his letters to Timothy appear first. Timothy was Paul's closest companion and was serving in the key city of Ephesus. Philemon is Paul's shortest letter and contains the least doctrine of all his writings. The message of his letter to Titus is similar to the message of the Timothy letters and follows them accordingly.

i. The last eight letters are non-Pauline. For that reason alone they would be placed

*after* Paul's letters, because the apostle was looked up to as the key writer of Scriptures (cf. 2 Pet. 3:15,16). They were the last books of the New Testament to be recognized as inspired writings by the church leaders and councils, and that late recognition also would explain why they were placed at the end of the list of New Testament books.

j. Hebrews and James are placed together because both are addressed to Hebrew Christians. If Paul wrote Hebrews it is interesting to observe that it is located next to the other Pauline epistles.

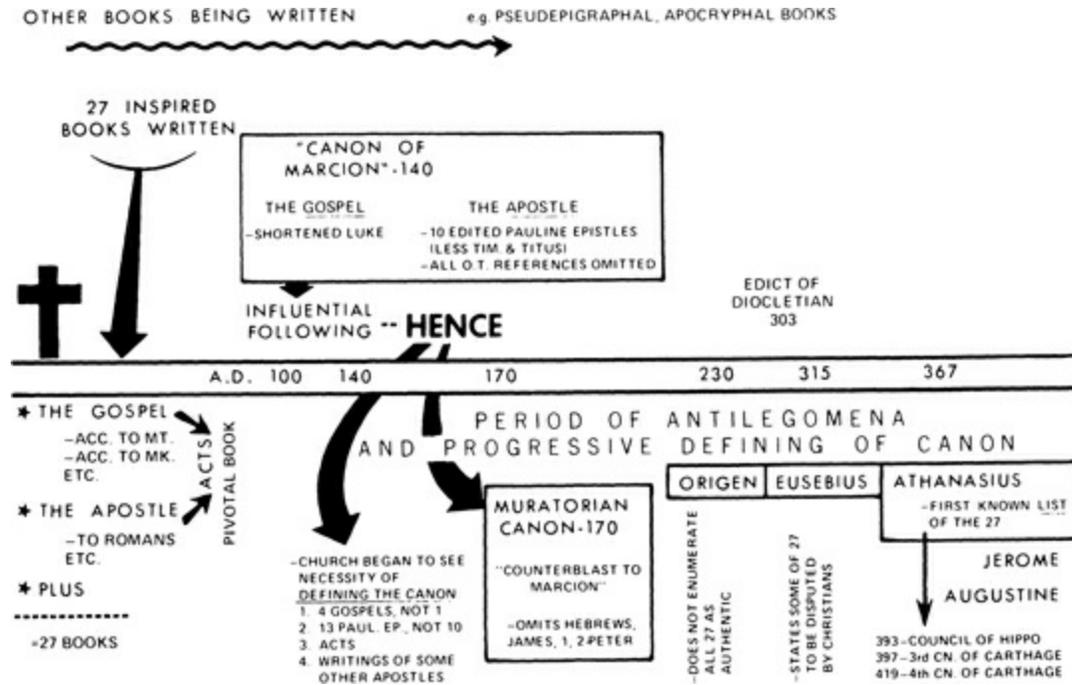
k. The last three epistles (2 John, 3 John, Jude) are short one-chapter books, which is one reason for their little exposure to the early church and hence their being placed near the end of the canon.

2. *Forming of the New Testament canon.* The

original writing (composition) of each inspired New Testament book was one thing. The way all twenty-seven were brought together into one volume (canonization) was a different work of God, but no less supernatural. The sovereign hand of God was in the canonization as much as in the composition. If that were not so, an inspired book might have been excluded from the canon, and an uninspired book might have been included in the group. In fact, both of those threats hung over the church for a couple hundred years. For example, there were strong objections by some about accepting the following books (known as antilegomena)¹⁹ as canonical: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation. At the same time, support was given by some church leaders to regard many other writings as Scripture, including books now within the Apocrypha²⁰ (e.g., 1

and 2 Maccabees, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus) and Pseudepigrapha²¹ (e.g., 1 and 2 Enoch, Martyrdom of Isaiah, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs).

# CHART 3: FORMING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON



Study carefully the accompanying Chart 3 to learn the highlights of the gradual forming of the New Testament canon. Relate the following to the chart:

a. The twenty-seven inspired books were written in the period A.D. 45-95. During and after those years noninspired books were also being written.

b. The Gospel. The four gospels were brought together after the last one (John) was written, and they were called *The*

*Gospel.*

c. The Apostle. In the same manner, the inspired writings of Paul “came together” soon after they were written, and they were identified under the one heading *The Apostle*.

d. Acts. Luke’s Acts of the Apostles was early regarded by church leaders as a pivotal book, (the one that connected *The Gospel* with *The Apostle*), because it is the sequel to the gospel narrative and gives the historical background to the life and ministry of the apostle Paul.

e. Plus. The letters of other writers (Peter, James, Jude) and the Apocalypse of John (Revelation) were also recognized to bear divine authority.

f. We do not know when all twenty-seven (no more, and no less) books of the New Testament came together *for the first time*

and were regarded by leaders of the Christian church as the completed canon of the second volume of Scripture. But whenever it was, the recognition was not once-and-for-all. Questions, objections, and disputes over the canon were to arise from within and from without the Christian communities. So the period A.D. 100-400 was one of *progressive defining* of the canon. Concerning some of the New Testament books, there were few or no questions regarding their divine authority. The antilegomena books were the major cause for the extended delay of consensus by the Christian church (Period of Antilegomena).

g. A few highlights of that period of defining the canon are shown on Chart 3.22. Answer the following questions on the basis of the chart:

(1) The heretic Marcion rejected

the Old Testament entirely and accepted what parts of the New Testament as authoritative?

(2) Marcion attracted a large group of followers to his view. His movement was stopped in the next decades in what two ways?²³

(3) Origen and Eusebius were prominent early church leaders. How did they regard the twenty-seven-book list?

(4) In A.D. 303 Emperor Diocletian issued the decree that all Christian Scriptures be destroyed. By that time there was general agreement on what constituted the New Testament canon. The persecution served to broadcast throughout the Empire just what the Christian Scriptures were.

(5) Whose is the first known list

of the twenty-seven-book New Testament? What is its date? What other two theologians and three councils accepted the twenty-seven-book list?

From the middle of the fourth century onward the list of twenty-seven New Testament books was a fixed canon in the eyes of the Christian church. As noted earlier, the canon of twenty-seven books was divinely established from the beginning.

It is fair to ask, From the human standpoint who determined the extent of the New Testament canon? It is important to observe that the list is not the product of any single person or church council. The early church and the New Testament canon grew up together under the ministry of the

Holy Spirit. F. F. Bruce writes, “We may well believe that those early Christians acted by a wisdom higher than their own in this matter, not only in what they accepted, but in what they rejected.”²⁴ The Holy Spirit inspired individual writers to compose the original Scriptures, and then He gave discernment and guidelines to the believing community to recognize which books He had inspired.

## **F. TRANSLATIONS**

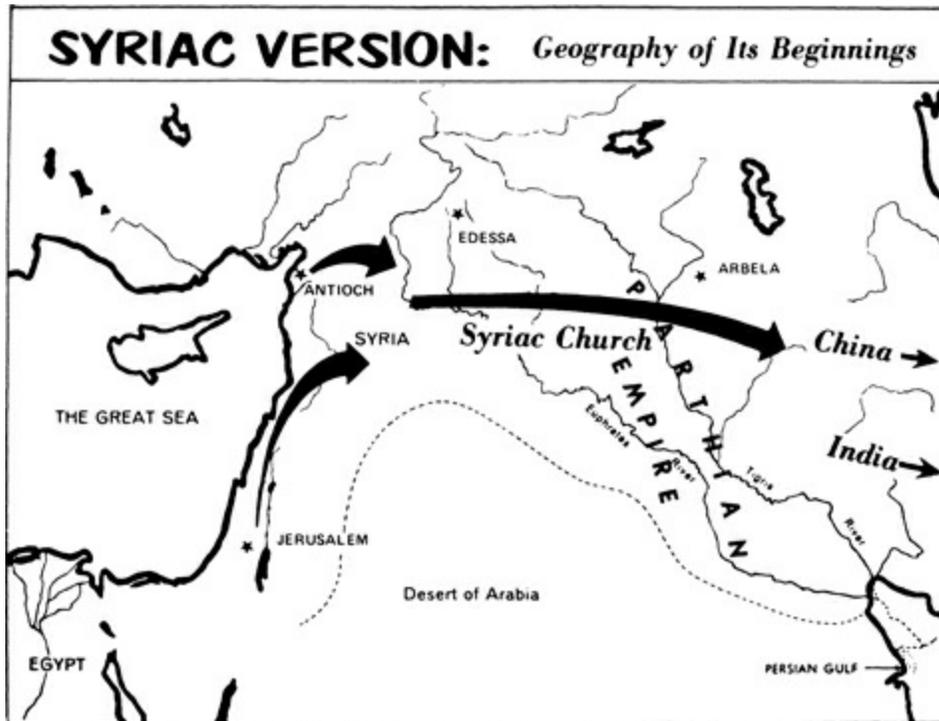
The original autographs of the New Testament were written in Koine Greek, which was the vernacular of the entire Mediterranean world. If, during the succeeding centuries, translations had not

been made into the languages of other nations of the world, converts of the evangelistic crusades would not have had Scriptures to feed upon for their Christian growth, and the prophetic command of Acts 1:8 involving the ends of the earth would have remained an enigma. But, spurred on by the need for new Christians to have the written Word in their mother tongue, many translations were made during the next centuries. It was the natural outcome of Christianity's expansion to foreign lands via the spoken word.

1. *Ancient versions.* One of the key ancient versions was the Syriac Bible, which brought the written Word to lands east of Palestine — eventually to China and India.²⁵ (See accompanying Map A, Syriac Version.) Translations of the gospels and Acts were made as early as the second century, and by A.D. 425 a standard edition of the Bible

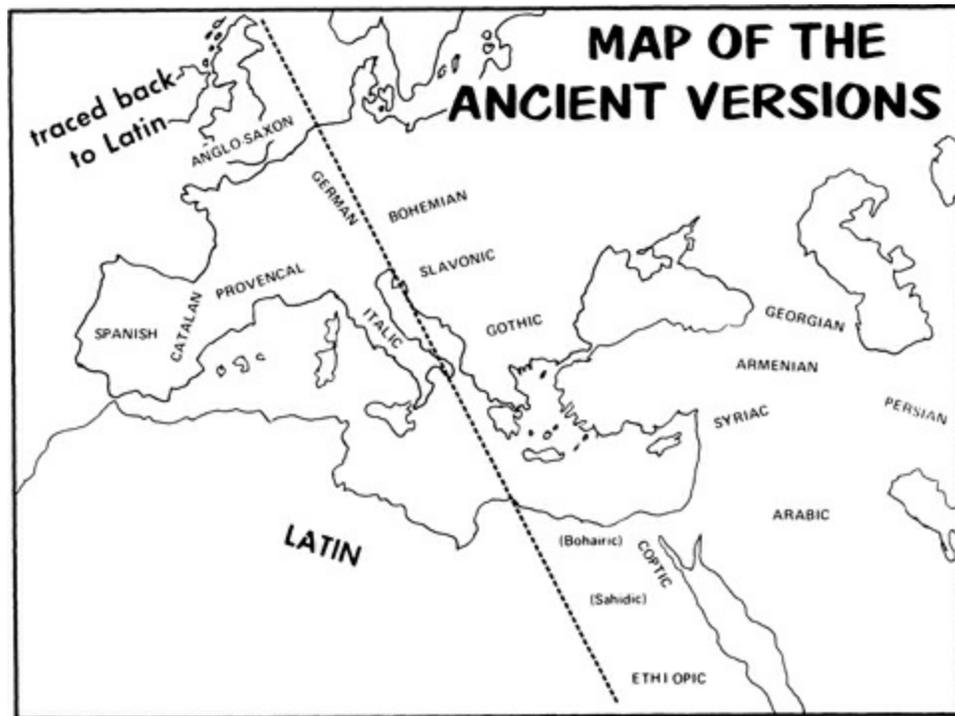
(called Peshitta, literally “simple”) was being used by the Christians.

# MAP A



The Latin Vulgate was the most prominent of the ancient versions. It was the official Bible of Christendom in Europe for a thousand years. The earliest translations appeared in North Africa in the second century (Map B), and Jerome made his standard version during the years A.D. 383-405.²⁶

## MAP B



Map B shows later European versions that are traced back to the Latin Bible. Those versions are west of the dashed line on the map. Note that the first English (Anglo-Saxon) Bible was based on the Latin version. Observe also on Map B the locations of other ancient versions of neighboring lands, which versions were not derived from the Latin. That phenomenon of active translation work in the early centuries after Christ is a testimony of the New Testament's universal attraction to the hearts of all people.

2. *English Bible.* The English Bible that you use for study has a long and fascinating history, which can be seen when the English text is traced back to its origins. You will appreciate your Bible more when you know the paths over which God has brought it to you. The next few pages are a survey of that history. Study it not just to learn facts of God's program but to enhance your regard for the large variety of English versions, past and present.

a. The earliest versions. The Christian message reached Great Britain by the beginning of the fourth century A.D., when the Latin Bible was the people's Scripture. When English became Britain's new vernacular with the arrival of Germanic-speaking Angles, Saxons, and Jutes in the course of the fifth century, the need for English Scriptures arose. Chart 4 shows some of the main partial or complete English

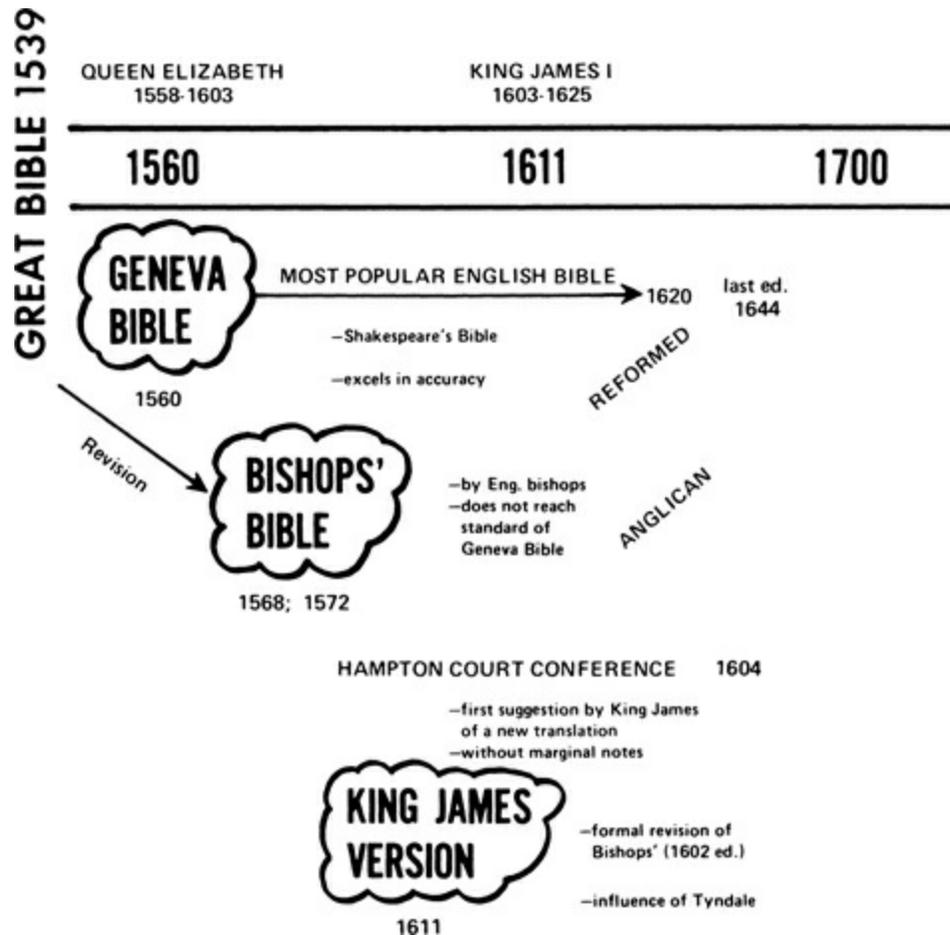
translations of the Bible that were made from about A.D. 700 to 1539. Note the three periods of the English language: *old*, *middle*, and *new*. The *new English* period extends from the time of the Reformation to the present.

# CHART 4: EARLIEST VERSIONS OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

	400	1100	1520	
	LATIN	OLD ENGLISH	MIDDLE ENGLISH	
		<b>BEDE'S</b> Bible poems c.700 John's Gospel c.735  Alfred the Great (d.901) –parts of the Bible  Abbot Aelfric (10th cent.) –parts of O. T.   Anglo Saxon Paraphrases 700-1000	<b>ROLLE'S</b> Psalter c.1300 Parts of N. T.  <b>2 WYCLIF VERSIONS</b>  1380-84 (from Latin)  1. Nicholas of Hereford –plus another? 2. John Purvey –rev. of Nicholas	<b>TYNDALE'S VERSIONS</b>  N. T. 1525 - first printed Eng. N. T. Pent. 1530 Jonah 1531 Rev. Pent. and N. T. 1535 Rev. N. T. 1535  <b>COVERDALE'S BIBLE</b> -1535 –first printed Eng. Bible  <b>MATTHEW'S BIBLE</b> 1537 –by John Rogers –mixture of Tyn. and Cov.  <b>TAVERNER'S</b> - 1539  <b>GREAT BIBLE</b> –by Coverdale 1539  Henry VIII: "In God's name, let it go abroad among our people."

Note the active program of translation during the first decades of the *new English* period, including work by William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale. It was the Reformation that brought a revival of translation activity, spurred on by renewed interest in Hebrew and Greek Bible manuscripts, and by Gutenberg's invention of movable type for the printing press.

# CHART 5: KING JAMES VERSION



b. King James Version. The King James Version (KJV), also called the Authorized Version, was the outcome of much translation activity beginning with Tyndale (Chart 4). Scan Chart 5 and observe how it continues the survey of Chart 4. Note on Chart 5 the entry of the four major versions: Great Bible, Geneva Bible, Bishops' Bible, and King James Version.

The Geneva Bible excelled in accuracy and was very popular. It contained marginal notes with an interpretation of Reformed theology. For that reason it was rejected by the Church of England, and a new revision of the Great Bible, containing marginal notes of Anglican theology, was made by English bishops. That Bishops' Bible first appeared in 1568.

The tension and unrest over the two “competing” versions (Geneva and Bishops’), in addition to arguments over other versions, led King James I to call for a new version with no marginal notes of any theological interpretation. The version was made by fifty-four scholars over a period of seven years. It soon became the most popular English Bible, and it is still the most quoted and most memorized text. F. F. Bruce writes of it, “By sheer merit the Authorized Version established itself as The

English Bible.”²⁷

Two important values of the King James Version are its literal rendering and literary style, which strongly support analytical study.

c. English versions after the King James Version. The modern missions era of translation activity began around 1800. It is aptly called “modern” because the era has not yet ended. In fact, one of the brightest aspects of the Christian witness today is the unprecedented production of new Bible translations. Portions of Scripture are reaching people of many languages and cultures in the remotest parts of the world. And in America new English versions and paraphrases, written in contemporary style, are geared to such needy mission fields as homes without a church and campuses with drifting youth. For the serious Bible student

who wants to analyze a Bible text that is virtually the same as the original (minus the translation factor), various excellent versions are available, such as the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) and the *New International Version* (NIV).

*Revision* of Bible versions is an important activity of this modern era. The first major revision, known as the English Revised Version, appeared in 1881. It was a revision of the King James Version. Chart 6 shows that and other highlights of the modern era. Use the chart to answer the following questions:



work. How many years intervened between the KJV and ASV?

(3) The Revised Standard Version (RSV) was a revision of the ASV. What was the span of time between it and the ASV?

(4) The *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) was a revision of the ASV. When was the whole Bible in this revision first published?

(5) The *New International Version* (NIV) was a new translation. When was the whole Bible published?

(6) How many of the other versions on Chart 6 are you familiar with?

Thus, the Bible has come a long way — *from God to us*. And the most thrilling part of it all is that, not counting the necessary translation difference, “we hold in our hands to-day a Bible which differs in no substantial particular from the originals of the various

books as they came from the hands of their authors.”²⁸

### III. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is the New Testament related to the Old?

2. What were the main stages of the New Testament’s coming *from God to us*, beginning with *revelation*?

3. What is divine revelation? What is the difference between general revelation and special revelation?

4. How were the original Scriptures inspired by God? Were the original autographs inerrant?

5. Do we have any portion of the original autographs? Are the existing ancient copies of the Bible inerrant in every letter and word? If not, how confident can we be that

they accurately represent what the authors originally wrote?

6. Were the four gospels the first New Testament books to be written? Which of these books was written after the other two: Ephesians, gospel according to John, Romans?

7. What is meant by canon of the New Testament? How was the extent of the canon determined?

8. Is there an order of progression in the books of the New Testament canon? If so, identify.

9. What is the approximate date of the first known twenty-seven-book canon?

10. What was the most important ancient version of the New Testament?

11. What ecclesiastical difference gave rise to the project of making the King James

Version?

12. What is the difference between a free paraphrase and a literal translation?

13. The *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) is a revision of what version? Is the *New International Version* (NIV) a revision of a version?

#### IV. SELECTED READING

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Chafer, L. S. *Systematic Theology*, 1:48-60.

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Manley, G. T. *The New Bible Handbook*, pp. 6-8.

Packer, J. I. "Revelation and Inspiration."  
In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 24-30.

Warfield, ?. B. “Revelation.” In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 3:2573-82; and *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, pp. 71-102.

## INSPIRATION

Clark, Gordon H. “How May I Know the Bible Is Inspired?” In *Can I Trust My Bible?*, edited by Howard F. Vos, pp. 9-34.

Gaussen, L. *Theopneustia: The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*.

Geisler, Norman L., and Nix, William E. *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pp. 26-124.

Hodge, C. *Systematic Theology*, pp. 151-86.

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Thiessen, Henry. *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 78-97.

Walvoord, John W., ed. *Inspiration and Interpretation*.

## **TRANSMISSION**

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Geisler, Norman L., and Nix, William E. A *General Introduction to the Bible*, pp. 211-48; 267-96; 344-93.

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Vos, pp. 155-69.

Skilton, John H. “The Transmission of the Scriptures.” In *The Infallible Word*, edited by ? B. Stonehouse and Paul Woolley.

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## CANONIZATION

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Harrison, Everett F. *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 91-128.

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Riggs, J. S. "Canon of the New Testament." In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1:563-66.

Souter, Alexander. *The Text and Canon of the New Testament*, pp. 146-54.

Stanton, V. H. "New Testament Canon." In *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, 3:529-42.

## **TRANSLATION: ANCIENT AND MODERN VERSIONS**

Bruce, F. F. *The Books and the Parchments*, pp. 194-252.

Geisler, Norman L., and Nix, William E. *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pp. 316-43; 394-446.

Kubo, Sakae, and Specht, Walter. *So Many Versions?*

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1. Read Romans 1:18-21 for an example of general revelation, and Genesis 3:8-19 for an example of special revelation.

2. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 15. Read this same source for a good discussion of the inadequacies of oral tradition as a sole transmitter of God's special revelation to man.

3. Individual New Testament books were in the process of being recognized as Scripture after their public appearances, but the timing varied from book to book. (This will be studied later under Canonization.) For example, when Paul wrote 1 Timothy (A.D.

62), the gospel according to Luke (A.D. 60) was recognized as part of Scripture. Read 1 Timothy 5:18, where Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 24:15 and Luke 10:7 under the same heading “Scripture.”

4. For example, in 1 Corinthians 5:9 Paul refers to an earlier letter written to the Corinthian church. That letter was not intended by God to be a part of inspired Scripture.

5. At about ten places in the originals the authors recorded Aramaic words or phrases and usually gave the translation in Greek. See Mark 15:34.

6. One sheet was used for short books, such as Jude.

7. These background facts will be studied in more detail as each individual book is surveyed.

8. The dates when New Testament books were written are not part of the Bible text. Most dates, however, have been accurately

determined, usually by associating the author with historical references in various books. The dates of each of the books will be studied in more detail in the survey section of this book.

9. There are differing views concerning the dates of Matthew and Mark. Some Bible students hold that Mark was the first gospel written.

10. One of God's reasons for not preserving the original autographs might have been man's proneness to worship material objects. Also, even if a genuine biblical autograph existed today, how could one *prove* that it was an original autograph?

11. Even Bibles printed in the "modern" twentieth century have printers errors!

12. Benjamin B. Warfield, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 12.

13. The canon was not determined by any one person or council, or even at any point

of time. The canon kept growing over a period of years, with God's people in *that* collective sense recognizing the signs of inspiration in the books that eventually would be grouped as one covenant (testament) of twenty-seven books.

14. Authority is the basis for canonicity. Since God sealed each book with authority, it is He who originally canonized each book.

15. One writer has proposed the view that there is an orderly progress of doctrine advanced from book to book, as reflected in the order of the New Testament canon. He writes, "As the several books gradually coalesced into unity it might be expected that ... they would on the whole tend to assume their relative places, according to the law of internal fitness ...." (Thomas D. Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in The New Testament*, p. vii).

16. Adapted from W. Graham Scroggie,

*Know Your Bible, 2:16.*

17. If Paul wrote Hebrews, then he authored fourteen books.

18. There is a descending length in Paul's epistles, with one exception (Ephesians is longer than Galatians). It is unlikely that the order of so many books would be determined by mere length, however.

19. The word *antilegomena* means literally, "spoken against."

20. Apocrypha are noninspired writings regarded as canonical by some people.

21. Pseudepigrapha (literally, "false writings") are spurious writings whose authors sought canonical status for them. (This motive explains false authorship of the books.)

22. See F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, pages 104-13, for a concise description of that period.

23. The Muratorian Canon was so named

after L. A. Muratori, who discovered the manuscript of this ancient list.

24. F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 113.

25. The book of Acts records mainly the missionary labors in the west and northwest. It is interesting to observe that it was a Syrian church (at Antioch) which led that western movement (Acts 13:1 ff.). Yet the Syriac Bible served mainly the people who lived east and north of Palestine.

26. Jerome translated the four gospels in A.D. 383, and during the next year he completed the remainder of the New Testament.

27. F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 229.

28. G. T. Manley, *The New Bible Handbook*, p. 19.

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## ***2Setting of the New Testament***

No Scripture was born in a vacuum. The New Testament books had their antecedents, and they were cradled in a contemporary setting that involved every phase of life. If we are aware of those backgrounds before we begin a study of the New Testament, the biblical message will be clearer and stronger and more real. That is why the study of the New Testament's setting is so important.

### **I. HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS SETTING**

The earthbound ingredients of history are people, places, things, actions, and time. God is the Lord of all history, and His blend of the ingredients is sovereignly exercised. That is why there was nothing accidental about the historical and religious setting of the New Testament. We may not always perceive the divine design, but it is

important that by faith we recognize its presence.

All the years before Christ, beginning with the time of Adam and Eve, looked forward to His appearance on the earthly scene. That was the pre-Christian era. Study Chart 7 and answer the following questions:

1. The pre-Christian era is of what three parts?

2. About when were the first Scriptures written?

3. Over how many years was the Old Testament written?

4. Over how many years was the New Testament written?

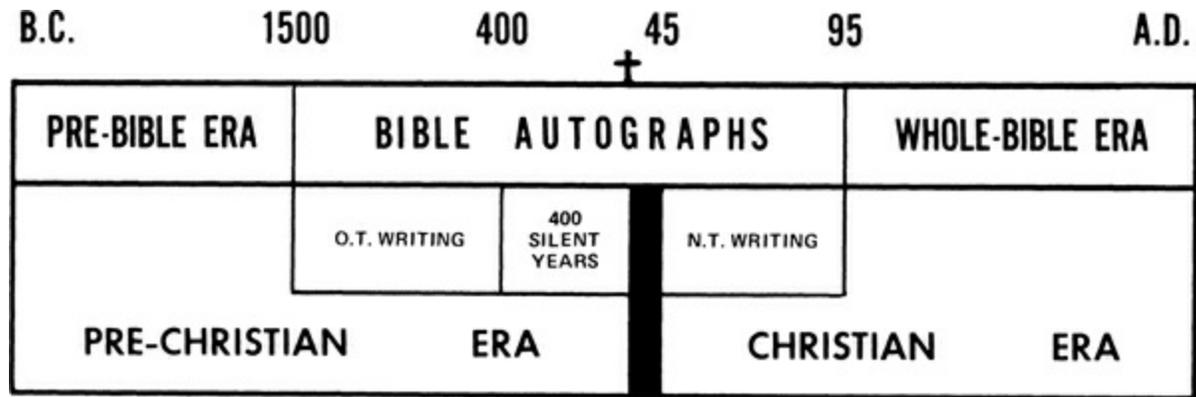
5. Does the chart suggest a meaning of the designation “silent years?” If so, what?

6. Ponder the significance of the eras labelled Pre-Bible and Whole-Bible. What

are your reflections concerning spiritual accountability of people living in the two eras?

Let us now focus on the two immediate pre-Christian settings of the New Testament, namely the Old Testament and the four hundred silent years.

# CHART 7: HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



## A. OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

Christianity did not emerge mysteriously out of a vacuum. God had been moving among the people of the world, especially Israel, for many centuries before Christ. Then, “when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:4-5). Erich Sauer connects the Old Testament with the New in these words:

The Old Testament is promise and expectation, the New is fulfillment and completion. The Old is the marshalling of the hosts to the battle of God, the new is the Triumph of the Crucified One. The Old is the twilight and dawn of morning, the New is the rising sun and the height of eternal day.¹

Even though the last book of the Old Testament was written about four hundred years before Christ's birth, our knowing the Old Testament is knowing the religious, social, geographical, and, in part, the political setting of the New. Besides, the Old Testament was the Bible of Jesus, the apostles, and New Testament writers. When they spoke or wrote, they often quoted or referred to the Old Testament's history and teaching.

The Old Testament is mainly history, but

it is *sacred* history. That is, it reveals especially how God moves in and through the lives of people and the courses of nations. We might also say that the Old Testament is *redemptive* history, for “God actively directs human history for the purpose of redeeming men to Himself.”² The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Old Testament to record what would adequately reveal that redemptive purpose. Thus, the writers have much to say about such crucial facts as these:

1. God is the sovereign Creator.
2. Man is a sinner in need of salvation.
3. God is holy, and He judges sin.
4. God is love, and He offers salvation to sinful man.
5. A savior would be born to die for the sins of man.

6. Man is saved by faith, not by works.
7. Israel was sovereignly chosen to be God's channel of the redemptive message to the world.
8. All history will culminate at the throne of the sovereign God.

Read this list again and observe, from your present acquaintance with the New Testament, how each truth is also a vital doctrine of the New Testament. Also note how the following comparisons³ are represented in the list:

**OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY      NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY**

foreshadow	fulfillment
promise	performance
problem	solution
commencement	consummation

**B. POUR HUNDRED SILENT YEARS**

Around 400 B.C. God ceased speaking to His people and the world through any new portions of the written Word. For four hundred years the prophets' pens would be dry, hence the designation "four hundred silent years." But prophets would still preach, and God would still speak by His Spirit to a continuing remnant of saints who were studying the Bible that they had (Old Testament) and watching for their Messiah's coming. And God would always remain the sovereign mover of history on the local and world-wide scene. God knew when He would be sending His Son to the world, and He used the four hundred silent years to prepare the world for that coming.

Four hundred years made a vast difference in the setting of Judaism. Compare, for example, the ending of the Old Testament and the opening of the New Testament. The last historical events of the

Old Testament are the returns, under Ezra and Nehemiah, of the exiled Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem.⁴ The first pages of the New Testament record the birth of Jesus Christ. The accompanying chart lists some other changes in that four hundred-year picture.

Many factors — historical, political, religious, cultural — brought on the changes of those four centuries. In the following pages the highlights of the changes will be surveyed, for the purpose of visualizing and feeling the setting of the New Testament.

Basically, there were three backgrounds in whose shadows Christ moved, the church was born, and the New Testament books were written. Those backgrounds are Hebrew, Greek, and Roman. As you study these, try to relate to them parts of the New Testament with which you are already

familiar.

# THE HOLY LAND, BEFORE AND AFTER THE 400 SILENT YEARS

400 B.C.			A.D.	
LEADERS, PREACHERS	<i>Ezra Nehemiah Malachi</i>	<b>400</b>  <b>Silent</b>  <b>Years</b>	✝	
WORLD RULING POWER	<i>Persia (east)</i>		<i>John the Baptist Jesus</i>	
RELIGIOUS GROUPS	<i>no major groups</i>		<i>Rome (west)</i>	
VERNACULAR	<i>Hebrew</i>		<i>Scribes, Pharisees Sadducees, Herodians Sanhedrin</i>	
PLACE OF WORSHIP	<i>Temple</i>		<i>Aramaic and Greek</i>	
			<i>Temple and synagogues</i>	

1 . *Hebrew background.* The Hebrew background of the New Testament is primarily religious because the Hebrew people, the Jews, are the ones to whom the gospel message was first sent (Rom. 1:16).⁵

a. Three centers of the life of Judaism (Jewish religion). With the Babylonian exile

in 586 B.C. the Jews entered a phase of being scattered around the world such that by the time of Christ every large city of the Roman Empire had its large colony of Jews, and towns and villages together contained them by the thousands. When the church's first missionaries (Paul and others) moved out to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), Jews were among the first contacts made (see Acts 13:5).

During the silent centuries, the greatest impressions made upon Judaism originated in the three great centers of Babylon, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. Observe on Map C the relative location of those cities.

( 1 ) *Babylon*. Changes in Judaism that originated in Babylon were carried over into Jerusalem during the silent years, because there was a continuing program of migration of Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem, which

had begun under Ezra and Nehemiah. Some of the major changes, not all good, were:

(a) Theology — The exile had eliminated idolatry and had fostered a pure monotheism (“one God”).

(b) Tradition — The Law was amplified to include other writings, mainly Mishnah and Haggada, which were together known as Talmud. Mishnah was a book of man-made rules of living; Haggada was the theology and commentary of the rabbis. Rabbis formulated their own tradition. The Jews became more and more steeped in traditionalism during those years.

(c) Worship — Synagogues were established as the local places of worship. By New Testament times synagogues were located throughout the Mediterranean world. The apostle Paul usually sought out the synagogue when he first arrived in a city

on his missionary journeys (see Acts 13:5).

(d) Culture and education — The new professions of teachers and interpreters of the Law, called rabbis and scribes, originated here. Scholarship was advanced, and culture was developed.

## MAP C: THREE CENTERS OF JUDAISM DURING THE SILENT CENTURIES



This first centre of Jewish life in Babylon was marked, then, by the creation of the traditional law and theology, and the dominance of a cultured class of scribes and rabbis who, in their zeal to preserve the laws and traditions of Israel, reduced the Jewish religion to a mass of outward ordinances and forms.⁶

*Exercise:* Refer to an exhaustive concordance⁷ and note how often the

word *scribe* appears in the New Testament. Do the same for *rabbi*; *tradition*; and *synagogue*. (Include the plural forms in this word study.)

(2) *Alexandria*. A large number of Jews migrated to Egypt a few months after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.⁸ When Alexander the Great founded Alexandria in 332 B.C., the Jews constituted an eighth of the population of Egypt — in Alexandria, almost a half. He favored them very highly and assigned them a special section of the city. Alexandria became the capital of the Jewish Dispersion (Diaspora), and the events and movements of that city affected the life of Judaism for centuries to come.

Since Alexandria was a Greek-speaking city, the Jewish population gave up its Palestinian Hebrew vernacular as it began learning Greek. Eventually the Jews were

without Scripture in their new vernacular, so the need arose for a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Such a translation (later called the Septuagint) was soon made — the Pentateuch by 280 B.C., and the whole Old Testament by 180 B.C.

The Jews prospered and multiplied in Egypt during the silent years, such that by New Testament times there were almost one million Jews residing there. Egypt was not far from Judea, and the contacts between Jews of both lands were very close. (Read Matthew 2:13-18, one of the first stories of the New Testament, which is about baby Jesus' parents' escape with Him to Egypt, to flee Herod.) The contributions of the Greek background, including the Septuagint translation, to the New Testament setting will be discussed later.

(3) *Jerusalem*. Approximately 450 B.C. Ezra

and Nehemiah had led about 50,000 Jews back to Judea from exile in Babylon. Those remained in the land, rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and trying in small measure to preserve their religious heritage. But before long the people gave up their allegiance to God and, in their vain pursuit of holiness, surrendered faith for works. The one bright note was that there always remained a faithful remnant in the land who awaited the Messiah.⁹

It was during those silent years that two ruling classes of the Jewish religion appeared: the Sadducees and the Pharisees. As rival religious sects, they became rival political parties by New Testament times.

The Sadducees were the political party of the Jewish aristocratic priesthood. They were not popular with the common people. Among their false doctrines were: (a) denial

of the resurrection of the body and future retribution, and (b) denial of the existence of angels and spirits.

The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the Jews, often identified in the New Testament with the scribes. They were the most influential leaders and were very popular with the people. The Pharisees taught such sound doctrines as divine providence, immortality of the soul, and a messianic hope. But they were rigid legalists, and by Jesus' day their sect had degenerated into an empty religion. (Read Luke 11:37-54.)

Below is a comparative summary of the two groups.

# PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES

## PHARISEES

name means “the separated ones”

largest and most influential sect

extreme legalism

little interest in politics

believed in immortality, resurrection, spirits, and angels

regarded rabbinic tradition highly

## SADDUCEES

name may be from a word meaning the “righteous ones”

the aristocratic minority

external legalism

a major concern with politics

denied these doctrines

accepted as authoritative only the written Old Testament

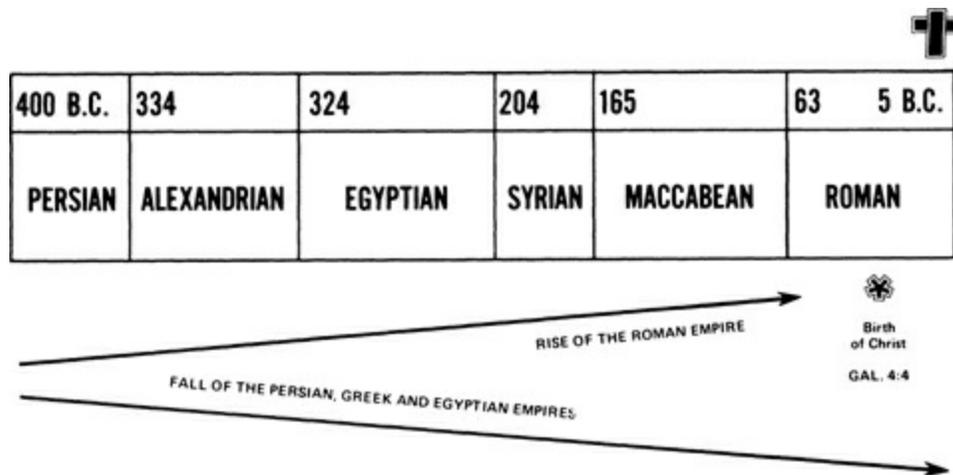
*Exercise:* Refer to an exhaustive concordance and compare the frequency of the names *Sadducees* and *Pharisees* in the New Testament.

b. Six periods of Jewish history (international politics). The interval between the Old and the New Testaments is a dark period in the history of Israel. The life and fortunes of the Jews depended on what nation was the world power at the time. That was so because, as Map C shows, the

land of Judea was located in the center of the world at that time, and it was all too easily preyed upon by the nation in power.

The interval is divided into six periods, named according to those in power.¹⁰ See Chart 8.

# CHART 8: SIX PERIODS OF JEWISH HISTORY BEFORE CHRIST



Locate on Map C the names shown on Chart 8. (The name Maccabean is not a geographical term.) Highlights of each of the periods, because each of those contributed to the background of the New Testament, will be briefly described below. Overall, the four hundred-year interval is the story of the fall of the Persian, Greek, and Egyptian empires, and the rise of the Roman Empire.¹¹

(1) *Persian Period* 400-334 B.C.¹² Palestine was under the rule of the high priests, who were responsible to the governor (satrap) of

Syria, a province of Persia. The period was mild and uneventful, for the most part, as far as the Jews were concerned.

( 2 ) *Alexandrian Period* 334-324 B.C. Alexander the Great revolutionized the world, showed much favor to the Jews, and exposed them to the process of Hellenization. The brief period of rule came to an end with Alexander's sudden death. By Jesus' day many Hellenized Jews had adopted the Greek ways, customs, and speech and had been freed from an exclusive spirit of Hebrew tradition and ancestry.

(3) *Egyptian Period* 324-204 B.C. This was the post-Alexandrian reign of the world by four Egyptian generals who were successors to Alexander. For part of the time Judea was allowed self-rule. Often the land was the battleground for wars between Syria and Egypt.

During this period the first copies of the Greek Septuagint were distributed (Pentateuch, 280 B.C.).

Some Bible students hold that the seventy-member Sanhedrin council of New Testament times originated around 250 B.C. That council performed the judicial functions of the Great Synagogue council of Ezra's day (450-400 B.C.).

*Exercise:* Refer to an exhaustive concordance and note the various appearances of the word *council* (Greek: *sunedrion*, hence "Sanhedrin") in the gospels and Acts.

(4) *Syrian Period* 204-165 B.C. "Israel now entered into the valley of the shadow of death."¹³ Uninterrupted martyrdom was the experience of the people during most of the period.

The major internal struggle of these years

was between Hellenistic Jews and Hasidim Jews. The latter resisted all forms of diluting their Hebrew heritage. The Pharisees were successors to that group.

Many noncanonical writings were beginning to appear during this period.¹⁴ The two main kinds were: 1. apocryphal (e.g., 1 and 2 Maccabees) — books recognized by the Roman Catholic Church as canonical, but rejected by Protestants; 2. pseudepigraphal (e.g., 1 Enoch) — spurious writings excluded from the canon by all.

It is interesting to observe that during this period, by 180 B.C., all the books of the Old Testament were translated into Greek by the Alexandrian translators.

(5) *Maccabean Period* 165-63 B.C. This has been called the Period of Independence. Politically, it was a time of revolt by Jewish leaders against Syrian forces. Religiously, it

was a time of restoring worship of the Lord to the re-dedicated Temple.

During this period Palestine was geographically divided into the three familiar divisions of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Also, it was during this time that the rival religious sects (Pharisees and Sadducees) became rival political enemies.

(6) *Roman Period* 63-4 B.C. In 63 B.C. the Roman general Pompey brought Palestine under Roman control. He organized the Decapolis league of ten cities southeast of the Sea of Galilee to balance the power of Judea. Antipater was appointed governor of Judea, and Herod the Great was king of Judea by Roman senatorial grant from 37 to 4 B.C.

For the most part there was little interference by Rome in the religious life of Palestine. The Jews paid taxes to Rome and

were subject to the rulers appointed over them by Rome. The conflicts and struggles of the Jews of that day were mainly of the heart, and the darkness and sin were overwhelming. This is James Stalker's description of the Jewish world to which Jesus came:

A nation enslaved; the upper classes devoting themselves to selfishness, courtiership, and skepticism; the teachers and chief professors of religion lost in mere shows of ceremonialism, and boasting themselves the favorites of God, while their souls were honeycombed with self-deception and vice; the body of the people misled by false ideals; and seething at the bottom of society, a neglected mass of unblushing and unrestrained sin.¹⁵

When Jesus was born (5 B.C.) the political situation was generally stable, but opposition to the Messiah's coming was quickly demonstrated by King Herod's reactions and decree. (Read Matthew 2:1-18.)

*Exercise:* 1. Read all of Matthew 2 and make a note of different things that are part of the New Testament setting that you have studied so far. 2. Review all you have learned about the Hebrew Background of the New Testament. In the next pages you will be studying the important Greek Background.

2 . *Greek Background.* The Greek background of the New Testament is chiefly cultural, including such things as language and philosophical perspective. Many of the influences of that Hellenistic culture were very important, because they paved the way

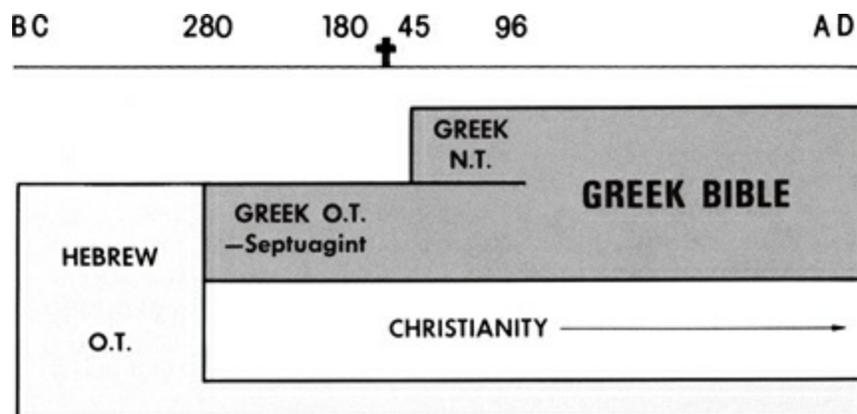
for the world-wide proclamation of God's message of salvation in New Testament times.

a. The Greek Bible. As noted earlier, the need for a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek arose because Greek had become the new vernacular of the Jews in Egypt. In fact Greek was by then the lingua franca of the world, as a result of the world conquests of Alexander the Great.

Alexandrian scholars translated the first five books of the Law (Pentateuch) by 280 B.C., and by 180 B.C. all the books had been translated. Over the next two centuries that "modern version" (later called the Septuagint) of the Old Testament was circulated around the Greek empire, so that by the time of Jesus and the apostles it was widely used.¹⁶ The Hebrew Old Testament was still cherished by Jews as God's Holy

Scriptures, and rightly so. Fix these things in your mind as you study the accompanying Chart 9.

# CHART 9: THE GREEK SEPTUAGINT AND THE CHRISTIAN GREEK BIBLE



Some of the significant contributions of the Septuagint to the New Testament setting are:

(1) The New Testament writers had a Greek theological vocabulary to work with as they wrote their books in Greek. For example, the Hebrew word *Torah*, which referred only to God's Law, had been translated *nomos* in the Septuagint, even though in those days *nomos* referred to the whole range of codified custom, not exclusively to God's Law. For almost two hundred years Jews reading *nomos* in the Septuagint gradually began seeing it as

meaning only God's Law in those passages where it should be so interpreted. So by the time the New Testament writers did their composing, the word *nomos* very adequately served the theological purpose, and their readers identified the word with God's Law, without having to make a mental adjustment to a secular word. In other words, the Greek *nomos theou* (law of God), as in Romans 7:22, was perceived precisely the same as the Hebrew *torah haElohim* (law of God), as in Nehemiah 8:8.

(2) When the New Testament canon was complete, the Septuagint Old Testament and the Greek New Testament formed a unity, the Greek Bible.

(3) The Greek Bible made God's whole written revelation accessible to the whole world, where Greek was the lingua franca.

(4) This "modern version" of Scripture

prepared the way for the Jews' acceptance of God's revelation in a language other than the revered Hebrew language. The barrier of Scripture being rejected in a so-called unholy language was not a problem during the first centuries after Christ.

b. Greek language. By New Testament times Koine Greek was the international language, an ideal channel for communication in the world-wide program of the early church. Christ, the apostles, and early disciples of Palestine spoke Greek (as well as Aramaic); the Scriptures were in Greek; and the audiences of the preached gospel throughout the Roman Empire understood and spoke Greek.

c. Greek philosophy and mystery religion. During the silent years the mind of the Greek thinkers was reaching out to discover the secrets of life and the universe. Because

of that, it might be concluded that the Greeks were a ready audience for the message of Christianity. But they were not that prepared, as G. T. Manley writes:

We must not, of course, exaggerate the preparedness of the Graeco-Roman world for the acceptance of Christianity. It needed three centuries of intensive evangelization and heroic witness-bearing to overcome the pride and self-satisfaction begotten of so mighty and dazzling a civilization. But its external order, its deep spiritual aspirations, and its groping after truth, all assured the presence in it of good soil when the Sower came with His seed which is the word of God.¹⁷

The answers to the questions of the searching Greeks were in the Hebrew

Scriptures, but the philosophers and false religionists rejected that revelation and posited their own answers. Some books of the New Testament, such as Ephesians and Colossians, were written partly with those philosophers in mind, and the appeal was to accept God's full revelation by His Son Jesus Christ (see Eph. 3:1-13; Col. 2:2-3,8).

Among the leading philosophers and religionists of the period were:

(1) *Plato* (427-347 B.C.) — This world is only a shadow of eternal realities.

(2) *Aristotle* (384-322 B.C.) — Reality resides in individual things themselves.

(3) *Zeno* (c. 300 B.C.), founder of the Stoics — Live according to nature.

(4) *Epicurus* (c. 300 B.C.), founder of the Epicureans — Pursue pleasure.

*Exercise:* Read Colossians 2:4-23 and

observe the different things Paul writes about —

- a. false philosophy
- b. false doctrines
- c. Christ, and truth about Him

3 . *Roman background.* The Roman background of the New Testament is mainly political and social. The status of the Roman Empire from its birth (eighth century B.C.) to the time of Christ can be represented by the two words *expansion* and *peace*:

EXPANSION	{	Founding of Rome — eighth century B.C. Organization of republican form of government — fifth century B.C. Wars — fourth to first century B.C.
PEACE	{	Rule of emperors — beginning with Augustus, 27 B.C. <i>Pax Romana</i> ("Roman peace") — law and order in the empire

Unity and political stability of the Roman Empire at the time of Christ's birth was one of the bright aspects of the Roman background of the New Testament. Of this

Erich Sauer writes, “Never before or since in history has there been an empire that has united in itself all the civilized peoples of its time as did the Roman.”¹⁸

The Greek influence had not died away, however. Sauer writes, “Although the Romans were the military and political masters of the world, *culturally* they were conquered by the Greeks....”¹⁹ The Roman Empire was like a reservoir of the Hellenistic culture, which had spread throughout the Mediterranean world from the time of Alexander the Great.

Some of the characteristics of the Roman background are briefly noted here:

a. World Centralization. The unifier was the emperor, the ruler of the Mediterranean world. Worship of the emperor was inevitable, and so religious clash with Christianity was unavoidable. As an

example, Paul was executed by Nero (reign: A.D. 54-68), and John was exiled on the Island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9) during Domitian's reign (A.D. 81-96).²⁰

b. World Communication. The highways and sea lanes of the Roman Empire made world traffic possible, and when the time came for the missionary journeys of the early Christians the cities were easily accessible. (See Maps N, O, and ? of Paul's missionary journeys, pp. 220, 222, 225.)

The Roman system of roads and bridges also helped expedite mail deliveries between cities.

c. World Peace. Although the reigns of some emperors were marred periodically by times of war (such as Augustus, who ruled from 30 B.C. to A.D. 14), the Roman period was a time of peace. That gave rise to the slogan *Pax Romana*. The benefit of

international peace to the church's birth and growth cannot be overstated. When you are studying in the New Testament you will not read about the kinds of wars that were so commonplace in the years of Old Testament history.

d. World Spiritual Disorder. Erich Sauer describes the spiritual disarray: "Rome became a venerator of all deities, often horribly grotesque, senselessly confused, ill-formed sickly phantasies. The entire Mediterranean world resembled a gigantic cauldron of mixture."²¹

Aristocratic society wallowed in moral depravity, idleness of wealth, pursuit of pleasure. The middle class lived on a higher plane morally and had strong religious feelings. Members were searching for the truth but never finding it. Many religions found their way into people's hearts. From

Egypt came the worship of Isis and Osiris; from Persia, the cult of Mithras; from Asia Minor, the cult of Cybele. Many gods and idols, representing secret and nature religions, were among those who moved in from the Orient. But none brought redemption of sinners, none brought eternal salvation.

“When the fulness of time came, God sent forth his Son” (Gal. 4:4). Concerning preparation, the time was right, for the law had served its disciplinary and instructive purposes. The time also was right concerning the political, religious, and social climate, because those were conducive to the ministry of the gospel; and it was right regarding need, with a spiritual vacuum waiting to be filled.

The world of Jesus' day was ruled by Gentile Rome. The particular people to

whom He primarily ministered were Jews of Palestine (see Matthew 15:24). Chart 10 is a summary tabulation intended to describe those two worlds of Jesus' day, Gentile and Jewish.

# CHART 10: WORLD OF JESUS' DAY

ROMAN EMPIRE	JEWISH PEOPLE
<b>POLITICAL SETTING</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Unification of the Mediterranean world</li> <li>—Safe and easy communication</li> <li>—Universal language</li> <li>—Universal peace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Under the yoke of Rome</li> <li>—Expectation of a Deliverer, of their own race</li> <li>—Sanhedrin (the Jewish organ of local government) had only limited power</li> </ul>
<b>MORAL SETTING</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Degradation</li> <li>—“To corrupt and be corrupt is the spirit of the times” (Tacitus)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Generally strict standards</li> <li>—Sadducees sponsored moral compromise</li> </ul>
<b>INTELLECTUAL SETTING</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Greek and Roman culture highly developed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Education a prominent part of the Jews' life</li> </ul>
<b>RELIGIOUS SETTING</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Heathen idolatry</li> <li>—Mystic religions</li> <li>—Philosophic religions</li> <li>—Spiritual vacuum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>—Generally intensely religious as to externals</li> <li>—Religious life molded by three sects:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pharisees: rigid legalists; self-righteous; middle class</li> <li>2. Sadducees: free thinkers; worldly; upper class</li> <li>3. Essenes: mystic pietists; ascetics</li> </ol> </li> <li>—Synagogues and rabbis: a thriving institution of worship which arose after the exile</li> <li>—A believing remnant: there were some who looked and prayed for the advent of the Messiah (Read Luke 2:21-39.)</li> </ul>

When you read the New Testament, try to visualize the hearts of people — Jew and Gentile — throughout the Roman Empire, hearts that are confused and guilt-ridden. As you do that, you will better understand and appreciate the words and ministry of Jesus, the preaching of the early apostles, and the letters of the New Testament writers.

*Review Questions*

1. Compare New Testament history with these four descriptions of Old Testament history: foreshadow, promise, problem, commencement.

2. What is meant by “the four hundred silent years”?

3. Compare Judaism of 400 B.C. with Judaism of Jesus’ time, concerning vernacular, places of worship, and religious groups.

4. What were the three geographical centers of Judaism during the silent centuries?

5. When did the Sadducees and Pharisees originate?

6. Name the six periods of Jewish history during the silent years. Which was the Period of Independence? What was the political state of Palestine when Jesus was born?

7. What did the Greek Septuagint version contribute to Christianity's first century? To what extent did Jesus and the apostles use that version?

8. What were the contributions of the Roman background to the early Christian church and the New Testament?

## **II. POLITICAL SETTING**

Because the New Testament writings have a historical setting, it is natural that they include references to secular rulers of the Bible lands, rulers who were governing the people at that time. This is the political setting of the New Testament.

The gospels and Acts contain most of the New Testament's references to the secular rulers. The average Bible student has difficulty identifying and associating the references, because of confusion over

different *kinds* of rulers. (There were kings, governors, procurators, emperors.) The purpose of this section of study is to distinguish between the different titles of rulers, identify the lands of their rule, and learn the names of the rulers who appear in the Bible account.

## **A. THE LANDS**

All the action of the New Testament takes place in lands of the Roman Empire. That was the “world” of such references as Acts 17:6. The territorial scope of Roman supremacy is shown on Map D, The Roman Empire.²² Observe the boundaries of the Empire when Jesus was born (5 B.C.). The capitol of the Empire was Rome, Italy. (See Map E, page 64, for its location.) Where on Map D is Palestine located (not identified by

name)? Compare its size with other lands, such as Egypt. (See Map L, page 207.)

## MAP D



The land of Palestine was a small part of the Roman Empire, but a key part, because of its strategic location. Practically all the gospels and much of Acts have Palestine as their geographical setting. When Jesus was born, Palestine was divided into various provinces and sections, as shown on Map F, Palestine During Jesus' Ministry.²³ Study the map, and observe 1. familiar provinces (e.g., Galilee); 2. less familiar areas (e.g., Trachonitis); 3. familiar cities (e.g., Jerusalem).

## **B. THE TASK OF RULE**

The ruler of the Roman Empire was the emperor. To rule effectively and peacefully so many distant lands from his throne at Rome was the burden of his government. How this was done in the case of Palestine, the homeland of the Jews, will be shown in the next pages.

## **C. THE TITLES OF RULERS**

The provincial system of government set up by Emperor Augustus involved rulers over countries and over provinces of those countries. The names and brief descriptions of their titles are given below. Before you read the descriptions, study Chart 11, Rulers of the Roman Empire. Observe the three geographical realms of rule and the three associated titles of rulers.

1. *Emperor*. The emperor was the absolute ruler of the Roman Empire. A surname of the early Roman emperors was “Caesar” (e.g., Caesar Augustus, meaning Emperor Augustus). When Paul said, “I appeal to Caesar” (Acts 25:11), he was referring to the emperor, who at that time was Nero.

The names of the emperors during New Testament times are shown on Chart 12, New Testament Time Chart. Who was emperor a. when Jesus was born?; b. when Jesus was crucified?; c. when Paul was first imprisoned in Rome?; d. when the last New Testament book (Revelation) was written?

2. *King*. Kings²⁴ were the highest local rulers of territories in the Roman Empire, subject to the central authority of the emperor at Rome. The king’s office was approved by the Roman senate. During New Testament times Palestine, in whole or in

part, was ruled by kings of the Herodian dynasty (succession of rulers from the same family). (See Appendix A, The Herodian Family.) The dynasty began with Herod the Great in 37 B.C. and ended with the death of Herod Agrippa II in A.D. 70.

Study carefully the names of kings of territories in Palestine as shown on Chart 12.25 Who was king of all Palestine when Jesus was born? What three kings succeeded him? Over what lands did each rule? Locate those lands on Map E. What two kings ruled over all Palestine at any one time, between 37 B.C. and A.D. 70?

Read the following New Testament references to the kings. As you read, associate the geography and time.

a. Herod the Great — Matthew 2:1-19;  
Luke 1:5

# CHART 11: RULERS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE— appearing in the New Testament

G E O G R A P H Y		R U L E R S
ROMAN EMPIRE	①	EMPEROR <small>(Caesars)</small>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">             ↓ ↓  <i>other lands</i> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">             ↓ ↓  <i>Palastine</i> </div> </div>	②	KINGS <small>(Herods in Palastine)</small>
<div style="text-align: center;">             ↓ ↓ ↓  <i>various provinces</i>  <small>e.g. Judea, Samaria, Galilee</small> </div>	③	GOVERNORS <small>(and Herods)</small>

b. Herod Antipas — Mark 6:14-29; Luke 3:1; 13:31-35; 23:7-12

c. Archelaus — Matthew 2:22

d. Herod Philip — Luke 3:1

e. Herod Agrippa I — Acts 12:1-24

f. Herod Agrippa II — Acts 25:13—26:32

3. *Governor*. Governors (procurators) were rulers of designated territories, appointed by the emperor and directly responsible to him. Much of their work involved finances, such as taxes. They also had supreme judicial

authority, such as Pilate used regarding Jesus. Their official residence was in Caesarea (see Map E). The area of their responsibility was usually that area not ruled by a contemporary king. For example, Herod Antipas was a tetrarch of Galilee *while* Pilate was governor of Judea, Samaria, and Old Idumea.²⁶ (See the locations of those areas on Map E.)

Most of the New Testament references to governors are to Pilate, Felix, and Festus. Observe their names on Chart 12. According to the chart, was there ever any overlapping of governors ruling? When was the first governor of Palestine appointed? Who ruled Palestine alone while there was no governor between A.D. 41-44?

*Exercises:* a. Note in an exhaustive concordance all the appearances of the word *governor(s)* in the New

Testament. Read a few of the verses, b. After Paul's arrest in Jerusalem he had contact with three rulers: King Agrippa, Governor Felix, and Governor Festus. Read Acts 23:1—26:32.

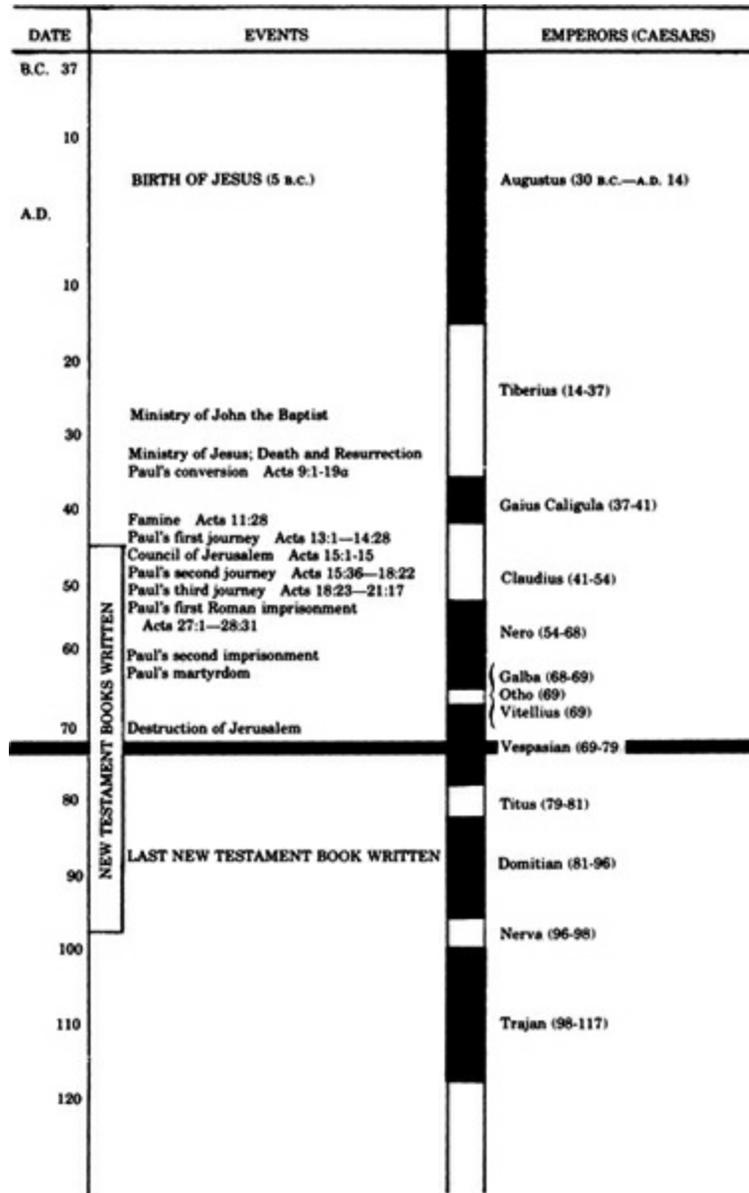
Observe all the references to the three rulers (and to the emperor ["Caesar"], 26:32). Refer to Chart 12 to see why all four rulers come into the picture of the account at the same time.

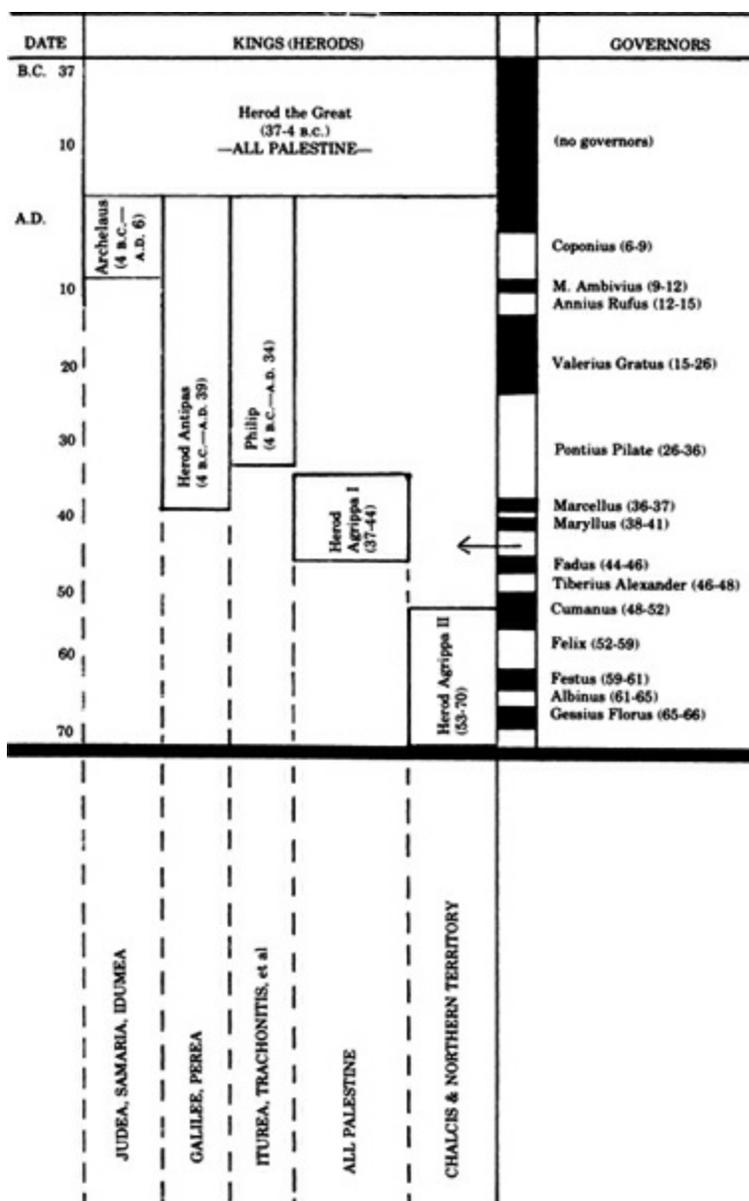
4 . *Other titles.* Proconsuls were deputy consuls serving in the Roman provinces for one year, with unlimited power in military and civil situations. Two New Testament references are Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7) and Gallio (Acts 18:12).

All the preceding discussion has been about secular rulers in Palestine. It should be kept in mind that in each local Jewish community there were also religious

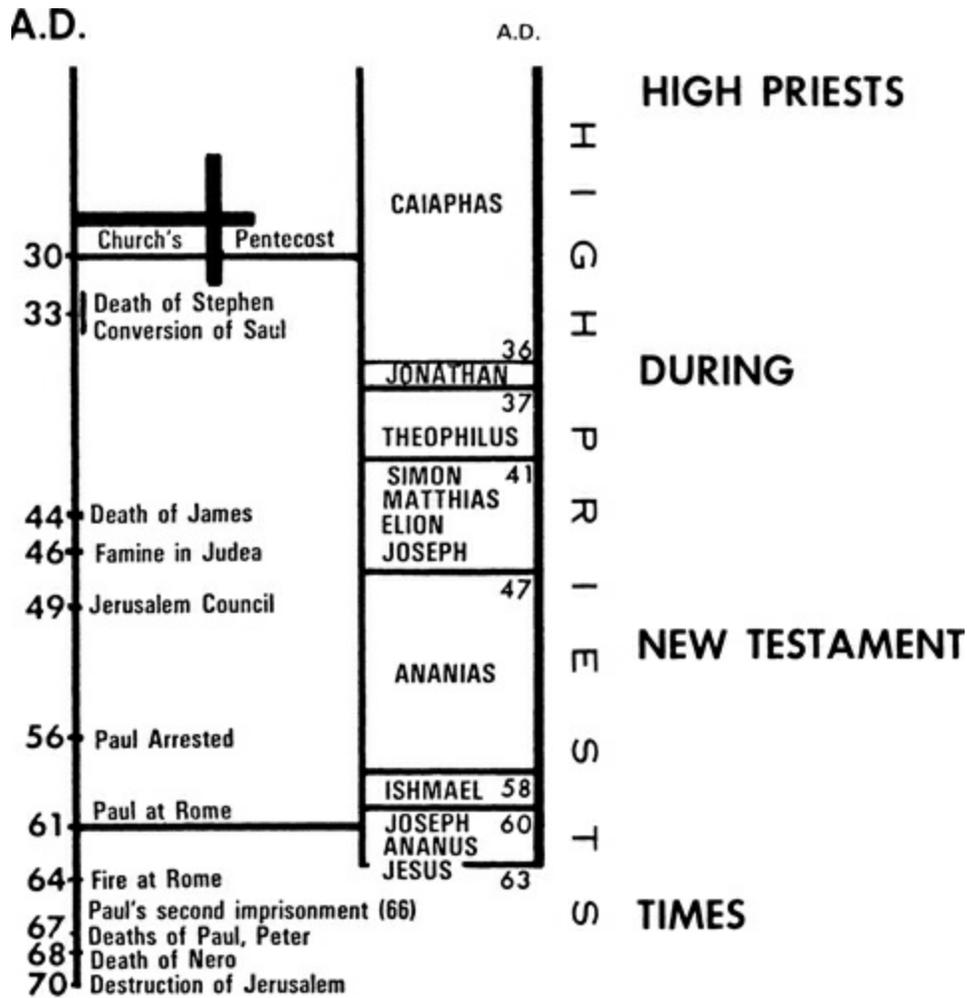
leaders, who molded and to a large extent ruled the personal and religious lives of the Jews. Those were the Jewish priests and the Sanhedrin (council), which was like a Jewish Supreme Court. More will be said about these in later studies. For now, study Chart 13, High Priests During New Testament Times.

# CHART 12: NEW TESTAMENT TIME CHART





# CHART 13



## Summary

As noted earlier, New Testament history is not a story involving international wars or many internal conflicts. The relative peace of the Empire, with its provincial form of government, was a setting that favored the beginnings of Christianity. There were times of persecution along the way, beginning

with Christ's birth, but those only served to strengthen the people of God. The century of the New Testament — the first century — was in various ways a bright era of world history.

### *Review Questions*

1. How extensive geographically was the Roman Empire when Jesus was born?
2. What is the geographical setting of practically all the gospels and much of Acts?
3. Name three provinces of Palestine in Jesus' time.
4. Fill in the correct titles of rulers: The _____ ruled over the Roman Empire; _____ ruled over lands, such as Palestine; and _____ ruled over provinces, such as Galilee.
5. Who was emperor when Jesus was born? Who was king of Palestine at that

time?

6. What was the office of Pilate, Felix, and Festus?

7. In what capacity did the high priests rule in New Testament times?

8. What was the Sanhedrin?

### **III. PHYSICAL SETTING**

The physical setting of the Bible is one of the best reminders to us that its message is about real people, just like us, living in real places in actual time. An acquaintance with and appreciation of that physical setting helps make the Bible come alive. In the following pages we will be studying the geography, climate, and everyday living of New Testament times.

#### **A. GEOGRAPHY**

Much of the New Testament is action, and action involves places. That is why geography is a key ingredient of the Bible's setting.

Someone has said, "To visualize is to empathize." If you want to help yourself *feel* the action of ancient Bible history, visualize *where it* was taking place as you read the Bible text. This should be one of the strongest motivations for you to learn the geography of the New Testament.

Three basic New Testament maps will be studied in this section. These maps show the large areas of setting. Other related and more detailed maps appear at appropriate places throughout the book. It is important to have a good grasp of the large, overall geographical setting before zeroing in on the details of the smaller areas.

1 . *The New Testament world.* Map E, The

New Testament World,²⁷ shows where most of the action of the New Testament took place. Compare the extent of this area with that of the Roman Empire (Map D, page 56).

Answer the following questions or record observations, based on Map E:

a. Is the phrase “from Jerusalem to Rome” an accurate measure of the length of the New Testament world?

b. The name *Palestine* does not appear on the map. It borders the southeastern Mediterranean Sea and extends from below Tyre to the Dead Sea and beyond, south of Jerusalem. (See Map F, p. 65.) What strikes you about Palestine’s size, compared to other lands of the Empire?

c. Most of the action of the four gospels is in Palestine. Much of the action of Acts, and the setting of the epistles, is in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia (Greece). Locate

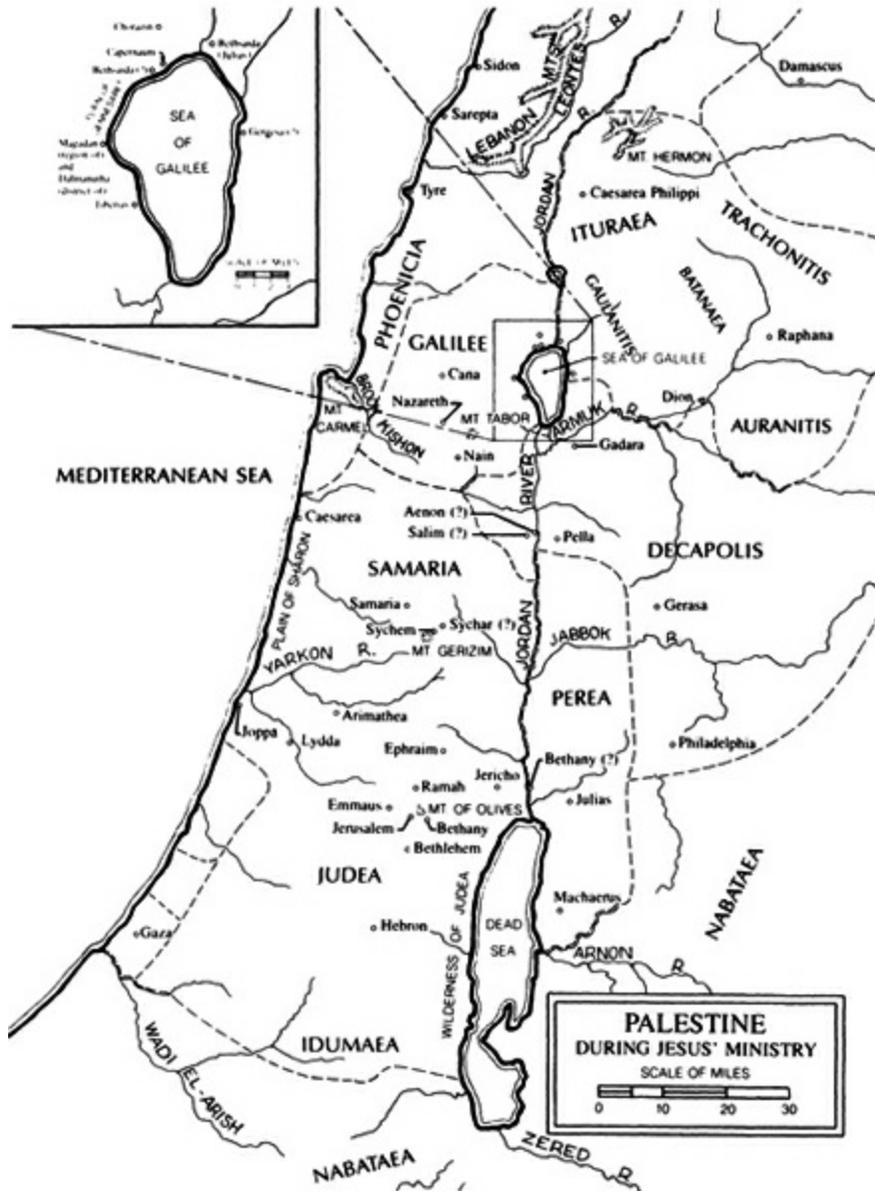
these on the map.

d. Considering Jerusalem as the geographical source of the Christian church, into what direction of the compass does the New Testament report the expansion of Christianity?²⁸

# MAP E



# MAP F



2 . *Palestine*.²⁹ As noted earlier, the geographical location of Palestine in Bible times was strategic. Of that, G. T. Manley writes, “Palestine lay on the cross-roads of ancient civilization. The highway from Egypt to Syria and beyond, which ran through Palestine, was one of the most important

roads in the ancient world both for commerce and for strategy, and its importance has not yet disappeared.”³⁰

This crossroads location may be observed on Map D.

What part Palestine plays in the New Testament books is summarized below. Refer to Map F as you study these summaries.

a. Gospels. The four gospels report the journeys and missions of Jesus in Palestine during His brief career. From the gospels we learn that Jesus spent most of His time in the three provinces of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Three surrounding areas that He visited occasionally are Perea, Decapolis, and Phoenicia. Locate the six regions on Map F.

After about a year of limited service in Judea, most of Jesus’ itinerant work was

done in and around the region of Galilee, though His trips between Galilee and Jerusalem afforded many opportunities of ministry along the way. Of the many cities and villages that He visited on His evangelistic tours, only about twenty are mentioned by name in the gospels. Most of those appear on Map F.

b. Acts. Most of Acts 1-12 takes place in Palestine. Most of the remaining chapters (13-14, 16-28) focus on the missionary journeys and other experiences of Paul in the lands beyond.

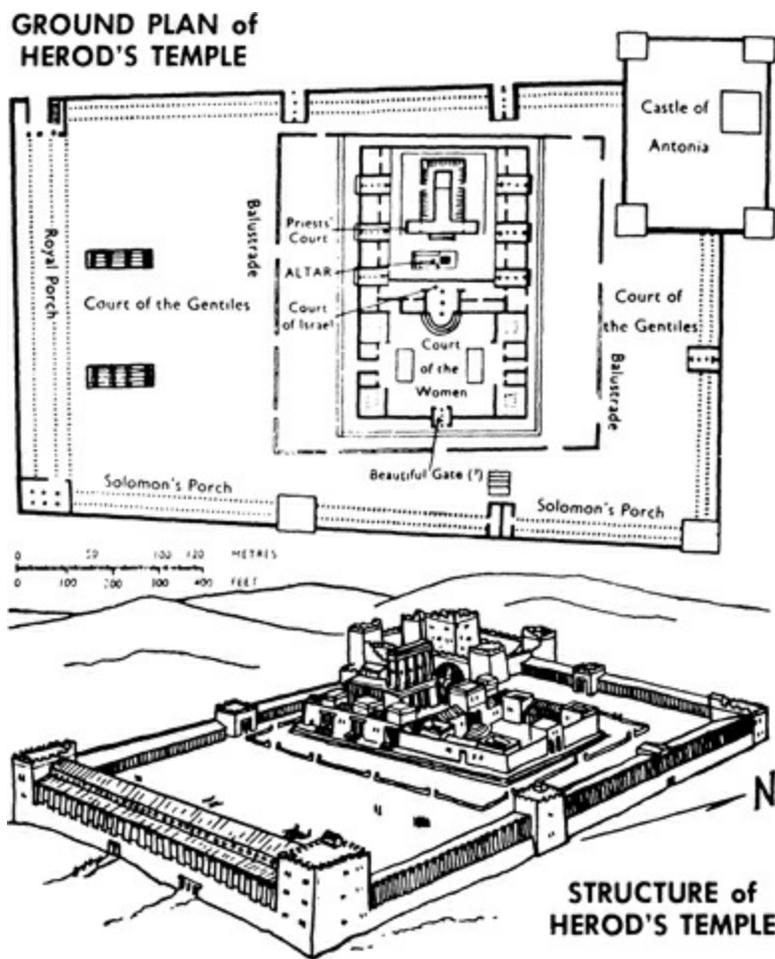
c. Epistles. Most, if not all, of the remaining twenty-two New Testament books originated outside Palestine and were written to residents mostly of non-Palestinian lands. But the messages of the epistles focused on the Holy Land, for the simple reason that Christ and the church and

Christianity were born there.

3 . *Jerusalem.* Jerusalem is the geographical heart of Christianity. It was the Holy City in both Old and New Testament times; it is a key city on the international scene today; and all world history will culminate there at the end of time, when Christ is enthroned forever (Phil. 2:9-11).

Study Map G, Jerusalem In New Testament Times,³¹ as you make the following observations:





Drawings after *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, V, ed. F. Vigouroux, (c) Letouzey et Ané, Paris. Reproduced from *The New Bible Dictionary* (Inter-Varsity Press, London, 1962), by permission of the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship.

Note the following concerning the areas of the temple:

1. Jewish laymen were admitted as far as the Court of Israel.

2. Gentiles were allowed in the large outer court, Court of the Gentiles, which was not considered sacred ground as such.
3. Jewish women might enter as far as the Court of the Women. The treasury was also located here (cf. Mark 12:41—42).
4. The Priests' Court, was reserved for the priests and Levites, and here they went about their services.

a. The original city of Jerusalem in Old Testament times covered only the ridge marked on this map as “City of David.”

b. In Jesus' time the north wall of Jerusalem was in the location of Hadrian's wall shown on the map. Soon after the crucifixion, Agrippa I commenced building the third wall in the north, which was never completed before the Roman destruction of

Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

c. Note the locations of the Temple area, Herod's palace, Pool of Bethesda, and Gordon's Calvary (traditional site of Jesus' crucifixion). Study the accompanying ground plan and drawing of Herod's Temple.

## **B. TOPOGRAPHY**

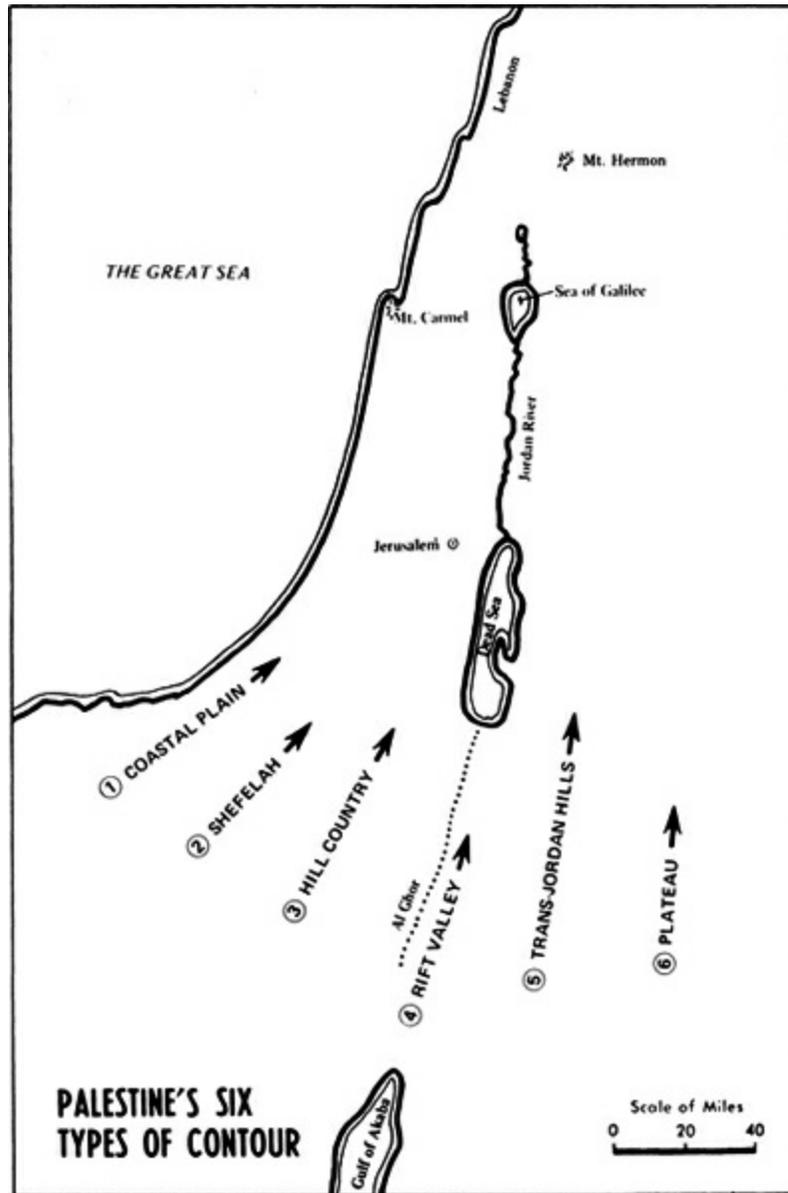
One of the best ways to recall the locations of New Testament cities is to picture the physical features of the land where they are located. This also helps you understand why a city originated where it did, and why journeys followed certain routes. Study the general features of Palestine as shown on Map H. The natural contours of the land run north-south. As you move from west to east on the map, you will observe six major kinds of contour.

Observe the following about each of these.

- ① COASTAL PLAIN This follows the coast up to the promontory of Mount Carmel. Relatively few cities were located here during Bible times, partly because of the absence of navigable harbors.
- ② SHEFELAH (also called *Lowlands*). Here the terrain begins to ascend from the low coastal plain. Many cities sprang up here, in part because of the semifertile soil.
- ③ HILL COUNTRY (also called *Judean Hills*, and *Cis-Jordan Hills*). The average elevation of these is two thousand feet. Draw on the map a slightly sweeping curve from Mt. Carmel to Jerusalem. This north-south ridge bisects the lands of Samaria and Judea. The ridge becomes prominent again north of Galilee, after the break at the Plain of

Esdraelon, just southwest of the Sea of Galilee. The two major north-south travel routes were along the Cis-Jordan Range and the Jordan Valley. Most of the cities of Christ's ministry lie along the Judean Hills and around the Sea of Galilee. Many cities were built along this ridge, especially because of the natural fortifications that were needed in Old Testament times.

# MAP H



- ④ **RIFT VALLEY** This is the most consistent feature of the north-south contour. Its average width is about ten miles. For the entire length of Palestine, the depression is below the level of the Great Sea (Mediterranean). Follow this depression from north to south on Map

? as you read the descriptions given below.

*Valley west of Mount Hermon.* The Jordan River originates here, north of the Sea of Galilee. Between the Lebanon and Hermon ranges, the rift valley is very prominent.

*Sea of Galilee.* The sea is 685 feet below the level of the Great Sea. This beautiful area was inhabited by many people in New Testament times.

*Jordan River.* The river is entirely below sea level, from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. The hot and humid climate of this valley discouraged the building of cities. Jericho was an exception (see Map F).

*Salt Sea (Dead Sea).* This is 1,286 feet below sea level. What main river flows

into it? The sea has no outlet, hence its dense and rich mineral content. A few cities were located on its shores in Old Testament times.

*Al Ghor (Araba).* A hot, dry valley. No cities were located here.

*Gulf of Aqaba.* Solomon built a fleet of ships at the north end of this gulf (1 Kings 9:26).

- ⑤ TRANS-JORDAN HILLS The rugged hills rise sharply from the low rift valley to the high plateau. Few cities were located here.
- ⑥ PLATEAU From the fertile tableland of the north to the semidesert south, this plateau was the scene of relatively little New Testament history. Its rolling land was used mostly for grazing livestock. Jesus ministered at

times in the cities of Decapolis and Perea (see Map F, page 65).

As you proceed with your survey of the New Testament, especially the four gospels and Acts, visualize the topography that you have just studied. For example, when you read that “a certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho” (Luke 10:30), you should be able to visualize a *descending* road, one moving down off the ridge.

## **C. WEATHER AND CLIMATE**

Palestine is in the same latitudes as the southern United States. Its climate is controlled generally by the prevailing westerly winds from the Mediterranean Sea. However, because

of the diversity of topography, the climate varies considerably from place to place. Overall, there are two seasons: warm, dry summers, and cool, wet winters. The rainy season lasts from November to March, the rains being unusually heavy at the beginning and end of the season (from which come the terms “early” and “latter” rains).³² Average temperature ranges for Jerusalem, representing recent records, are forty-one to fifty-four degrees Fahrenheit in January and sixty-five to eighty-five degrees in August. The moderating effect is caused by the more constant temperatures of the Mediterranean Sea.

The climate of Galilee, where Jesus lived most of His life and accomplished most of His public ministry, was more pleasant in

the summer months than that of Judea and the south Jordan Valley. Hot desert winds (sirocco) plagued the plateau lands east of the Jordan. This was one of the main reasons for sparse population there in biblical times.³³

Climate is distinguished from weather in that climate is the prevailing atmospheric condition over a period of time, whereas weather is the condition at a particular time. The accompanying weather map (Map I) of the Bible lands shows the weather pattern that prevailed there on the last of the Passover (Pesah) week, April 22, 1978. The weather on that day in the environs of Jerusalem was typical for the date and place: partly cloudy, mild (around 70° F.), light wind. A high pressure ridge extended from Egypt to Syria and blocked the frontal systems (North Africa to Asia Minor) from moving into Palestine. The Passover week is

in the transition between the cool, wet winter and warm, dry summer seasons, and so extreme weather is not the rule during those weeks. The weather was very supportive of the hundreds of thousands of Jews who traveled to Jerusalem to worship on Passover, the most important festival of the year.

#### **D. EVERYDAY LIFE IN PALESTINE**

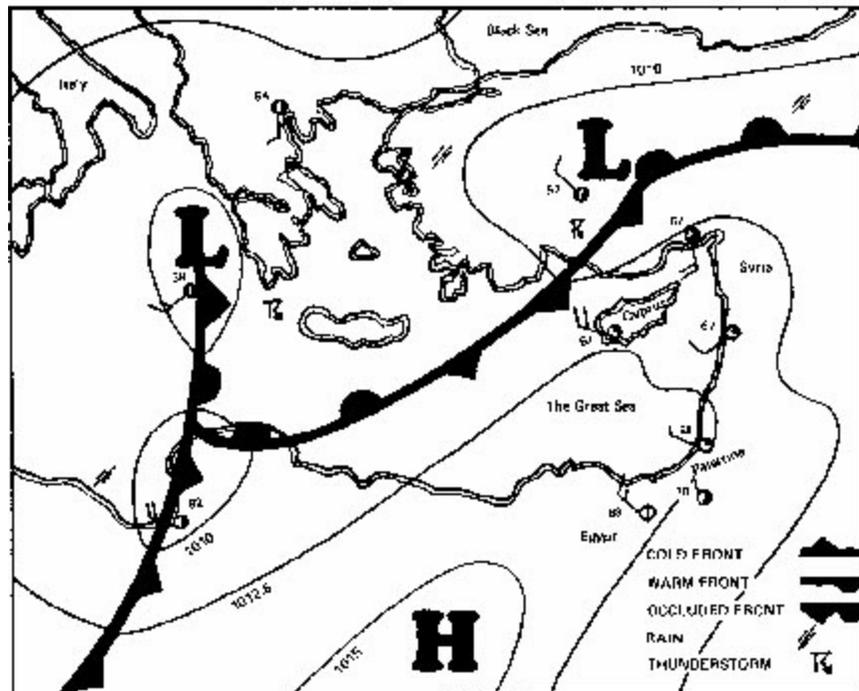
The New Testament was written by Orientals about Orientals. People of Western cultures need to keep that in mind to better appreciate the Bible stories and testimonies coming out of those ancient times. Fortunately, the foundational doctrines, such as man's sinfulness and God's holiness, which are taught in that Oriental setting are timeless and universal. So the Bible is not a

closed book to those not acquainted with the everyday life of the inhabitants of Palestine. But it can be sharper and clearer if that setting at least is mentally visualized and felt.

# MAP I

WEATHER MAP OF THE BIBLE LANDS

April 22 1978 1200 GMT



Bible dictionaries and commentaries are among the best sources for learning the local settings of the New Testament text. Also, there are books that specifically discuss this subject, such as A. C. Bouquet, *Everyday Life in New Testament Times*; and Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*.³⁴ It is beyond the scope of this introductory chapter to describe in detail the typical, everyday life in Palestine during New Testament times. The following list is

included, however, to suggest a thumbnail sketch of such a setting.³⁵ No attempt has been made to show how life in New Testament times had advanced beyond the patterns of the centuries before Christ. By and large, the basic patterns and traditional ways had remained the same. The descriptions are of Jewish life in Palestine. For the Greek setting of cities throughout the Roman Empire, consult Charles F. Pfeiffer and Howard F. Vos, *The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands*.

As you read the list, use a little imagination and let a picture gradually emerge, a picture that will be etched upon your memory for later studies in the New Testament. The most fruitful outcome of this short exercise may not be so much the learning of new facts but rather the becoming alert to the Oriental flavor of the New Testament.

*A Palestinian town or city* — walls, gates, towers, narrow streets, and busy marketplaces; location of a city, preferably on an elevated site, such as Jerusalem on Mount Zion; fields and grazing plots outside the city limits.

*Water supply* — wells, cisterns, streams, and reservoirs.

*Houses*³⁶ — average size of houses of the common people: one room;³⁷ roofs constructed of beams overlaid with reeds, bushes, and grass; earthen floors; mud-brick walls; few windows on the street side; fireplace on the floor in the middle of the room; furnishings: mats and cushions, chairs and stools, storage chest, lampstand, handmill for grinding grain, cooking utensils, goatskin bottles, broom.

*Domestic animals* — dogs, donkeys,

mules, horses, camels, sheep, goats.

*Foods* — barley and wheat bread, oil, buttermilk, cheese, fruits (olives, figs, grapes, raisins, pomegranates), vegetables, grain, honey; eggs, meat, and poultry were eaten, but not regularly; fish was a major food in the cities around the Sea of Galilee; generally, the people ate two meals a day: breakfast, and late dinner (about 5 p.m.).

*Dress* — both men and women: inner garment (tunic); girdle for the tunic; outer garment (mantle) used as shelter from wind, rain, cold, heat, and as a blanket at night; turban (head); sandals; women only: longer tunics and larger mantles, veil (entirely covering the head in public), elaborate ornamentations (earrings, bracelets).

*Education* — Jewish children educated mainly by their parents: Hebrew religion and Scripture, reading and writing, practical skills; advanced training for leaders: such as in schools of the prophets, and by tutors.

*Worship* — worship by the Jewish family in each home; called worship meetings in public areas;³⁸ Temple worship in Jerusalem: regular participation by residents of the vicinity; participation at the annual religious feasts by Israelites from far and near.

*Trades and professions* — agriculture (grain, grapes, olives, figs), sheep-raising, fishing, hunting, pottery, carpentry, masonry, metal work, tentmaking, merchants, physicians.

*Women's tasks* — grinding grain; weaving; making clothes; washing;

care of flocks; carrying water; cooking; housecleaning; rearing and educating the children; children of the home, especially girls, helped in these daily chores.

*Taxes* — poll (income tax), tributum (property tax), duties (food, transfer of property, sale of slaves), land tax, customs (on exports), purchase tax.

*Travel* — usually in groups, for the sake of safety; mode: most often by animals, sometimes by foot; meals: lunch brought along, as the main source; overnight lodging: at homes, sometimes inns.

The following two paragraphs illustrate how one writer has used his imagination, based on known facts, to describe the everyday life of the average Israelite. Do the same in your own thinking as you study the

stories of the New Testament.

Tucked away along the winding streets of the town of Ramah, five miles north of Jerusalem, you will find the tiny one-roomed dwelling where Benaiah lives with his family. He lives much the same sort of life as the people around about him, never far from starvation level, cooped up in the city through the cold rainy months of winter and longing for the springtime when he can get out into the fields and work his ground.

For beds the family shared two straw mats which were laid on the bare, earthen floor; for blankets they used the cloaks which were their normal outdoor garb. The little oil lamp burned dimly on a ledge in the corner. It was never

allowed to go out except when the fire was alight in the daytime. It was the only box of matches they had! However, it gave very little light and so once you had settled down for the night it was impossible to get up without waking the whole household (farmyard and all!) and a caller late at night was never welcome.³⁹

## **E. THE HEAVEN-EARTH SETTING**

As much as the Bible concerns people and nations, with all their frailties and sins, it is unique because the dimension of miracle controls its story. In its pages, heaven touches earth, God comes down and works through man. This heaven-earth setting pervades the entire Book. He who wants to know what God is communicating in the

temporal, local setting must accept and believe the supernatural dimension, for the message is meaningless without it. More will be said about that below, as we think about how to approach the New Testament and what to look for in our study of its pages.

### *Review Questions*

1. What was strategic about the geographic location of Palestine?
2. In what provinces did Jesus minister mostly?
3. The epistles were written to Christians residing where?
4. In what ways is Jerusalem the geographical heart of Christianity?
5. Moving from west to east, name Palestine's six kinds of contour.
6. What are the two seasons in Palestine?

7. What wind orientation controls Palestine's weather?

8. What is Jerusalem's average weather around the time of Passover (late part of April)?

9. Describe the setting of a typical house and family in a small town of Galilee during the adolescent days of Jesus.

10. What was the average education of Hebrew children?

#### **IV. HOW TO APPROACH THE NEW TESTAMENT**

It is very helpful in New Testament studies to be acquainted with the setting, which has been discussed in the preceding pages. It is also helpful and even necessary to have the right approach in studying the New Testament. Without the right approach and clear guideposts, valuable time can be

lost when studying the testament's many historical facts, theological doctrines, and end-time prophecies. Also, one might become discouraged and confused over difficult or obscure portions of the text. But those pitfalls can be avoided in various ways, some of which are discussed below. As guideposts, they help the Bible student keep on track whenever he makes detailed, analytical studies of the Bible text. Those guideposts will reappear in the later survey studies of the individual books of the New Testament.

## **A. VIEW THE NEW TESTAMENT AS THE FULFILLMENT AND INTERPRETER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

The Old Testament pointed forward to the New Testament, and so when passages in the

latter look “Old” (e.g., lamb sacrifice, Sabbath, Temple), it should not surprise or confuse us. Every New Testament reference to the Old is natural, sound, and necessary. If you are convinced of that, you will feel at home in all passages that refer back to the pre-Christian era. Such passages include (1) prophesied events of Christ’s life and His ministries; (2) applications of the Old Testament’s doctrines of sin and salvation (e.g., in the book of Hebrews); and (3) prophesied events of end-times (e.g., about Israel).

This approach to the New Testament rests on the foundation that both testaments are the one Book, the Bible. In that Book is the story of God revealing more and more of Himself and His redemptive work to men. Norman Geisler writes of this:

Christ at once sums up in Himself

the perfection of the Old Testament precepts, the substance of Old Testament shadows, and types, and the fulfillment of Old Testament forecasts. Those truths about Him which bud forth in the Old Testament come into full bloom in the New Testament; the flashlight of prophetic truth turns into the floodlight of divine revelation.⁴⁰

Such an approach supports the principle that a knowledge of the Old Testament is one of the best preparations for a study of the New Testament.

How does the accompanying diagram illustrate the relationship of the New Testament to the Old?

## **B. SURVEY THE NEW TESTAMENT**

## **BEFORE ANALYZING IT**

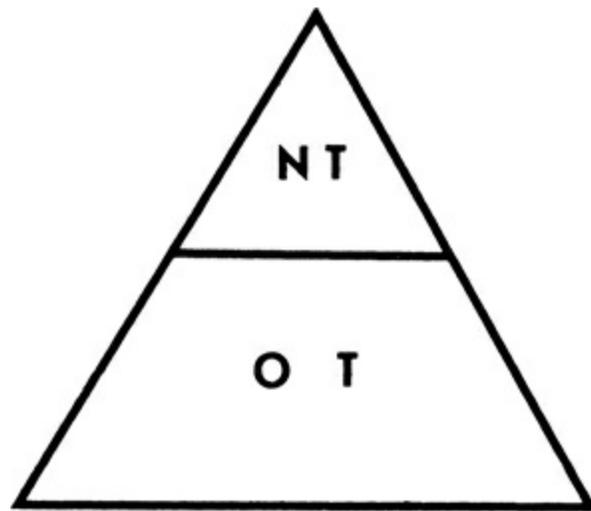
It is important to “image the whole, then execute the parts.” That is because a general survey study gives perspective and setting for the analysis of the small detailed parts. The main purpose of this book is to lead the student in such a survey of the New Testament. Values and procedures of survey study will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **C. RECOGNIZE THE KEY REVEALED TRUTHS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Key revealed truths underlie all the details of the whole New Testament text.⁴¹ You are on firm ground when you recognize those truths as you study a Bible passage. Some of the main ones are discussed below.⁴²

- 1. Redemption is the prominent subject of the*

*New Testament revelation.* From beginning to end the whole Bible is the story of redemption — God’s work of bringing sinners back into fellowship with Him, through the death of His Son. Christ is the Redeemer, and because He is the central figure of the New Testament, the prominence of redemption in its pages is natural.



The price of the sinner’s redemption was Christ’s death on the cross. So the cross is prominent throughout the New Testament. Of that cross Erich Sauer writes,

The cross is ... the central event of His work on earth. It is the central act of God in the whole history of the universe. It is the most marvellous revelation of the will of God to save, “so that each that believes in Him should not be lost but have eternal life” (John 3:16).⁴³

Because redemption is the prominent subject of the New Testament, we may expect that each of its twenty-seven books contributes to this theme, in varying degrees, depending on the individual purpose of each book. This also is saying that we are not to read into every passage the doctrine of redemption, when the doctrine is *not* there.

2 . *Sin is man's basic, desperate problem.* Redemption is prominent in the New Testament because it is God's merciful

response to man's basic problem, sin, whose wages are eternal death (Rom. 6:23). So, just as we may expect to read much in the New Testament about salvation, we may expect to observe equivalent emphasis about sin. For example, Romans 1:18—3:20 is about *sin*; the following section, Romans 3:21—5:21 is about *salvation*.

It is because sin estranges man from God that He judges it as the arch-enemy it really is. And that is why He gave His Son to die on the cross. His death is the exact measure of the sins of mankind: "He died for all" (2 Cor. 5:15).

3 . *The human race has no hope outside God's grace.* This truth is taught throughout the New Testament, just as it is prominent in the Old Testament. Paul writes that sinners, because they are separate from Christ, have no hope and are "without God in the world"

(Eph. 2:12). But God's grace is the shining ray of hope. In the New Testament the word *grace* appears about one hundred thirty times, thus bathing the passages with the bright hope of salvation through the gift⁴⁴ of God's love.

What are your answers to the following: (a) Reconcile how God can forgive a murderer. (b) What makes God so longsuffering in His dealings with sinful man? (c) If a sinner cannot be saved by doing good works, where is there hope? (d) How can God let redeemed sinners into heaven? All these questions are answered by the one word *grace*.

Sinners who refuse the gift of God's grace — being clothed in Christ's righteousness — will spend eternity in the pain and agony of separation from Him. God's grace does not contradict or cancel His holiness. That is

why we may expect to read much about judgment in the New Testament (e.g., the book of Revelation, which is mostly judgment). All the divine attributes are absolutely perfect and eternally concurrent. When God sends awful judgment for sin, because He is a holy God, He does not thereby nullify His grace.

4. *The gospel is a universal message.* Jesus and His disciples preached the gospel (“good news”) first to the Jews, because they were of the favored nation whose roots were in Abraham, to whom was given the promise of eternal blessing (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:1-8). In this connection it should be observed that the story of the gospels is a transition between the Old Testament law and the post-Pentecost church era. Israel rejected the Messianic message, and with that rejection came the extension of the call to the Gentile world. Of that John F. Walvoord writes,

The fulfillment of the promise of God to David was postponed, and into the foreground came the undeclared purpose of God to call out from every nation a new company, composed of both Jew and Gentile, independent of all His promises to Israel, having its own calling and destiny.⁴⁵

So Israel was not the exclusive audience of gospel preaching — the priority of the divine program was only with regard to time: “first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Rom. 1:16, NIV). Before long in the historical books (gospels-Acts) the gospel is preached to Gentiles as well as to Jews. That universal audience of the gospel is what Jesus had in mind when He gave the commission to His disciples, “You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the

remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Throughout the New Testament the gospel is seen as the power of God for salvation to *every one* who believes (Rom. 1:16).

5. *The work of Christ is wholly dependent on the person of Christ.* Jesus could do what He did only because of who He was, the true God-man. For example, He could perform miracles because He was God. He was a *genuine* substitute for mankind on the cross because He was genuinely human. And He was an *acceptable* sacrifice because He was sinless and perfect. Because of His humanity, He could identify with those being tempted — He Himself suffered when He was tempted (Heb. 2:18).

The problem with those who reject the works of Jesus (such as His performing of miracles) is that those persons do not believe Him to be who He truly is.⁴⁶

Throughout the New Testament the vital relationship of Jesus' person and His works constantly is brought before us. The life and ministry of Christ is an enigma if His divine-human nature is denied.

*6. Miracles are signs of revelation from God.* The New Testament abounds with miracles, most of them performed by Christ. Their basic purpose was to be signs, or revealing truths. For example, John writes that the miracles of Jesus were signs attesting who He was, "the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31; cf. Mark 8:27-29). There are secondary purposes in the New Testament miracles, such as alleviation of pain in healing a disease, or infliction of judgment for sin, but the primary purpose is to reveal truth about the miracle worker, Christ.

*7. The Holy Spirit is an active worker in this age.* All Persons of the Trinity are always

ministering in behalf of every creature. Their ministries are equally important, though of different character. The Old Testament records many of the Holy Spirit's ministries for the non-elect, and the New Testament teaches His manifold work mainly in the experience of Christians. Walvoord compares the two eras (Old and New Testament) concerning the Holy Spirit's work: "... the age of grace shines with all the more brilliant luster, the exceeding abundance of all the ministries of the Spirit to all saints constituting a display of the grace of God such as the world has never seen before."⁴⁷

You will find in your study of the New Testament many extended passages about the person and work of the Holy Spirit (e.g., Romans 8).

*8. All world history moves onward to the last*

*days.* All world history is in God's sovereign control. He directs or permits the course of events in a person's or nation's career according to His sovereign and perfect will. And all will culminate at the climactic event of the enthronement of Jesus Christ. (Read Philippians 2:9-11.)

The historical periods of New Testament history are these:

**HISTORY**

**N. T. COVERAGE**

the life of Christ

4 Gospels

the birth and first years of the church

Acts 1-12

the church's early years of expansion Acts 13-28; Epistles; Revelation 1-3

world history of end times

Revelation 4-21

A quick scanning of the New Testament shows that very few details of world history are prophesied concerning the two millennia before end times. But grand truths, which give deep and wide and far-reaching perspective, appear in the Bible text from time to time. For example, "all things ...

whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities ... have been created through Him and for Him” (Col. 1:16). It is important for the Bible student not to demand (and so invent) detailed descriptions of history, whether predicted or reported. He should embrace the grand truths, and interpret and apply them as they were intended by God. When he does that, the full sufficiency of New Testament history and prophecy will be apparent.

#### **D. ACCEPT THE NEW TESTAMENT AS GOD’S FINAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR LIVING**

It is possible for Christians to live lives pleasing to God.⁴⁸ If that were not so, all the New Testament’s commands, exhortations, promises, and helps would be one vast fraud.

The New Testament contains God's final instructions for living. It was written almost two thousand years ago, when it joined the corpus of Scripture that had been the Bible of Jesus (Old Testament). It remains timeless in its application. That is why the apostle Paul, writing to his friend Timothy about their ancient Bible, asserted dogmatically, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In the same context, Paul had reminded Timothy that it was the sacred writings that had given Timothy "the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). So it is correct to say that all spiritual lessons derived from passages in the New Testament have something to say, directly or indirectly,

about these two timeless, vital life truths: *way to* God, or *walk with* God. The Bible is that contemporary. And so we must open our hearts to its message. In the words of Edward J. Young,

In approaching the Bible ... we need to remember that it is sacred ground. We must approach it with humble hearts, ready to hear what the Lord God says. The kaleidoscopic history of negative criticism is but further evidence that unless we do approach the Bible in a receptive attitude, we shall fail to understand it. Nor need we be ashamed to acknowledge that the words of Scripture are of God. ... The attempt to explain them as anything less than Divine is one of the greatest failures that has ever appeared in the history of human

thought.⁴⁹

## **V. REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Write a list of four relationships between the New Testament and the Old Testament.
2. Why is it important to survey the New Testament as a whole before analyzing its individual parts (e.g., chapter study)?
3. Write out (as many as you can recall) a list of New Testament key truths discussed in the chapter.
4. In your own words, what are the divine practical purposes of the New Testament?

## **VI. SELECTED READING**

**HISTORICAL, RELIGIOUS, AND POLITICAL  
SETTING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Bruce, F. F. "Between the Testaments." In *The New Bible Commentary*. Rev. ed. Edited by D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer, pp. 59-63.

Dosker, Henry E. "Between the Testaments." In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1:455-58.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*, pp. 3-20; 33-55.

Harrison, Everett F. *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 3-56; 91-128.

Lace, O. Jessie, ed. *Understanding the New Testament*, pp. 11-63.

Manley, G. T. *The New Bible Handbook*, pp. 276-97.

Metzger, Bruce M. *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth and Content*.

Mounce, Robert H. "Is the New

Testament Historically Accurate?” In *Can I Trust My Bible?* Edited by Howard Vos, pp. 173-90.

Pfeiffer, Charles. *Between the Testaments*.

Pfeiffer, R. H. *History of New Testament Times*.

Russell, D. S. *Between the Testaments*.

Snaith, Norman H. *The Jews from Cyrus to Herod*.

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*, pp. 1-58; 65-120.

_____. *New Testament Times*.

## **GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING**

Adams, J. McKee. *Biblical Backgrounds*, pp. 52-85; 136-214.

Aharoni, Yohanan. *The Land of the Bible*.

Baly, Dennis, *The Geography of the Bible*,  
pp. 125-266.

Jeremias, Joachim, *Jerusalem in the Time  
of Jesus*.

Orni, Efraim, and Efrat, Elisha. *Geography  
of Israel*. An excellent, large map of  
Palestine appears in a flap under the  
back cover.

Pfeiffer, Charles F. *Baker's Bible Atlas*.

Pfeiffer, Charles F., and Vos, Howard F.  
*The Wycliffe Historical Geography of  
Bible Lands*.

*The Sacred Land*. Excellent topographical  
maps.

Smith, George Adam. *The Historical  
Geography of the Holy Land*.

# EVERYDAY LIFE IN BIBLE TIMES

Bailey, A. E. *Daily Life in Bible Times.*

Bouquet, A. C. *Everyday Life in New Testament Times.*

Corswant, W. A. *A Dictionary of Life in Bible Times.*

Freeman, James M. *Manners and Customs of the Bible.*

Grosvenor, Gilbert, ed. *Everyday Life in Ancient Times.*

Heaton, E. W. *Everyday Life in Old Testament Times.*

La Sor, William Sanford. *Daily Life in Bible Times.*

Manley, G. T. *The New Bible Handbook,*  
pp. 428-38.

Miller, M. S., and Miller, J. L.

*Encyclopedia of Bible Life.*

Moldenke, Harold N., and Moldenke, Alma L. *Plants of the Bible.*

National Geographic Society. *Everyday Life in Bible Times.*

Prichard, James B. *The Ancient Near East in Pictures.*

Wight, Fred H. *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands.*

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1. Erich Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, p. 186.

2. J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament*, p. 3.

3. Comparisons are from W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 2:15-16.

4. Ezra and Nehemiah are the last history books of the Old Testament. The book of Malachi, listed last in the canon, is the last

prophetic message of the Old Testament.

5. The first book in the New Testament canon is Matthew, a gospel directed to the immediate audience of first-century Jews.

6. Henry Kendall Booth. *The Background of the Bible*, p. 130.

7. The *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* is recommended for word studies of this book.

8. The story is told in Jeremiah 41-44.

9. The book of Malachi, though written around 400 B.C., prophetically describes the evil generations of Jews during the intertestamental period. Read Luke 2:25-38 for two examples of believers of this period.

10. The dates of some periods are not firmly fixed for classification because there are different views concerning precisely when a new period began. The dividing dates as such are not that crucial. The date of 5 B.C. is the date of Jesus' birth. The apparent

discrepancy of the number 5 is explained by an error in calculations when the calendar of the Christian era was formed in A.D. 525. (See Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, pp. 324-28.)

11. The Syriac nation was not a major power.

12. Transparency charts showing all the details of the intertestamental period are in Moody Press's *New Testament Time Line*, Charts 1-3 (artist Bill Hovey).

13. Henry E. Dosker, "Between the Testaments," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1:456.

14. Persecution is often the backdrop of writing activity, especially apocalyptic writing, which concerns judgment for the oppressor and deliverance for the oppressed.

15. James Stalker, *The Life of Jesus Christ*, pp. 35-36.

16. Very many of Jesus' quotes of Old Testament passages are from the Septuagint version. This is true also of the New Testament authors.

17. G. T. Manley, ed., *The New Bible Handbook*, p. 293.

18. Erich Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, p. 177.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

20. See Chart 12 for a list of the Roman emperors.

21. Erich Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, p. 181.

22. This map is from *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, 2:1480.

23. More about the geography of Palestine will be said later in this chapter.

24. Some kings are referred to as ethnarchs. A tetrarch (e. g., Herod Antipas) was a ruler of a fourth part of a kingdom or province.

25. The lists of kings and governors on

Chart 12 go as far as A.D. 70, which was the critical date of the destruction of Jerusalem.

26. The geographical domains of the governors are not shown on Chart 12. Refer to a Bible dictionary for identification of a governor's territory.

27. This is from *Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 728.

28. Christianity did expand into other directions in the early centuries. That story is described in non-canonical but accurate historical documents.

29. The name *Palestine* is derived from the Hebrew *eres Pelistim*, meaning "land of the Philistines." Philistia was a small region in the southwest, but by the fifth century B.C. the name was applied to the entire land of Canaan.

30. G. T. Manley, *The New Bible Handbook*, p. 425.

31. This map is from Merrill F. Unger,

*Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 488. For a helpful description of the geography of Jerusalem, see the article "Jerusalem" in *The New Bible Dictionary*, J. D. Douglas, ed., pp. 614-20.

32. The early rain softened the ground for ploughing; the latter rain watered the seed.

33. The above observations are based on the reasonable assumption that Palestine's climate has not changed much since New Testament times.

34. An interesting chapter on this subject, written in narrative style, is "Israel at Home," by John B. Taylor, in his book *A Christian's Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 12-20. This is highly recommended reading.

35. All of these items are described, at least briefly, in Fred H. Wight's *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*, from which this list is constructed. It should be understood that all the items are not necessarily part of every setting.

36. The average Israelite spent less time in his abode than does the average person of Western culture.

37. Houses with more than one room were built around an open courtyard. For further descriptions of this and other related subjects consult the excellent book by A. C. Bouquet, *Everyday Life in New Testament Times*.

38. As noted earlier, during the Babylonian Captivity the Jews began worshiping regularly in meeting places, later called synagogues (from the Greek *synagoge*, “place of assembly”). They probably continued that tradition upon returning to their homeland, though there is no specific reference to it in the postexilic books of the Old Testament. By New Testament times the synagogue was a well-established institution.

39. Taylor, *A Christian's Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 12,17.

40. Norman Geisler, *Christ: The Theme of the Bible*, p. 68.
41. The Bible itself is the revelatory source of those key truths. That will become more apparent to you as you survey the various books of the New Testament.
42. Actually, the list of key New Testament truths is extensive. After you have studied this selected list, add others that come to your mind. And also keep in mind that *all* Bible truths are important.
43. Erich Sauer, *From Eternity to Eternity*, p.56.
44. The Greek word (*charis*), which is translated *grace*, is sometimes translated *gift* (e.g., Rom. 6:23).
45. John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 81.
46. Cf. Mark 8:27-31.
47. John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, p.77.
48. Cf. Hebrews 11:6.
49. Edward J. Young, *Introduction to the Old*



### ***3The Survey Method of Study***

The fruits of Bible study are largely determined by *how* the Bible is studied, that is, by the method used. Of the various methods of Bible study, survey and analysis are primary. Survey is more than just reading a book. It is important to know what is involved in this method so we can use it to fullest advantage in our study of the New Testament books. The next few pages discuss especially the purposes and procedures of survey study. Further directions and suggestions for survey are given throughout the remainder of this manual in connection with each New Testament book. In the latter half of this chapter we shall see how to use this manual as a guide to our own survey studies.

#### **I. PURPOSES AND PROCEDURES OF SURVEY STUDY**

# A. THE FULL SCOPE OF BIBLE STUDY

Bible study is of three phases, in the following order:¹

*Observation* — seeing what the text says

*Interpretation* — determining what the text means

*Application* — applying the text to life

In survey study we are especially engaged in the observation phase, though the other two phases are also involved.

Survey, as applied to the study of a book of the Bible, is an overall view of the book, made from various perspectives. Other names given to this method are synthesis, overview, panoramic study, skyscraper view, bird's eye view.

Picture the whole (survey); then analyze

the parts (analysis). This is the correct procedure for in-depth Bible study. To scrutinize isolated verses without having seen the complete context is to forfeit the richer experiences of Bible study. Survey should always precede analysis, in order to obtain an overall perspective, a general idea of the major emphases of the biblical book, and an orientation to the surrounding texts that subsequently will be analyzed.

This study manual does not involve analysis; hence, we will always be in the survey process for all twenty-seven books of the New Testament. At times we will tarry over details, but only in connection with the survey at hand.

## **B. PURPOSES AND AIMS OF SURVEY STUDY**

Survey should be made before analysis because of two main purposes of survey study.

(1) *To see each part in its intended emphasis.* Making a survey of the highlights of a book before analyzing the details is a guard against the two extremes of overemphasizing *or* minimizing the point of any one part of Scripture.

(2) *To see each part in its relation to the other parts.* Knowing one's bearing in the forest of many facts is a tremendous help in Bible study. An individual verse studied in isolation could be both obscure and difficult. A major rule of interpretation is to interpret a verse in light of its context. This points to a value of survey study — it helps to keep you aware of

context, both near and far.

Related to the above purposes are some other important things that survey study aims to accomplish.

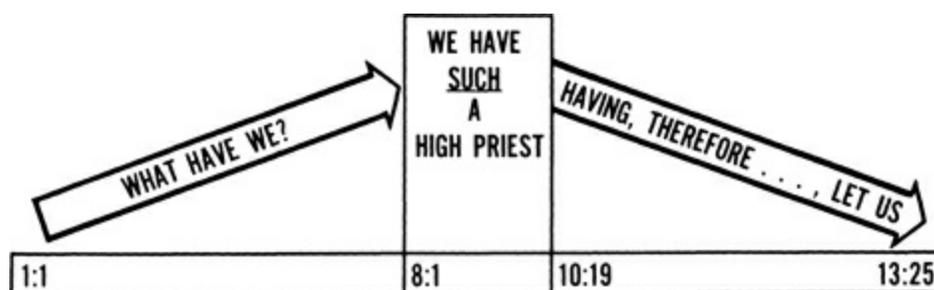
1. *Observing the total structure of the book.* A book of the Bible is not just a mass of words. The words are meaningful because their writer, inspired by the Spirit, organized them around themes in such a way as to express the intended truths and impress the inquiring reader. For example, what impresses you about the overall structure of Hebrews, shown in the accompanying diagram?

The apostle Paul was aware of structure in the text of his Scriptures, as evidenced by such comments as Ephesians 6:2. Read this verse. What was Paul observing about the structure of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1-17) when he said, “which is the first

commandment with a promise”? Was he suggesting a meaning in the structure? If so, what?

2 . *Observing the content of the book.* In survey study we are interested in *what* the Bible says (content) as well as *how* the Bible says it (structure). Of course, in surveying the content we do not tarry over details, as we would do later in analyzing the text. Here we keep our eyes open to highlights such as key events, prominent persons, emphasized truths. Those are the best clues for us in determining the book’s main theme.

## THE BOOK OF HEBREWS



3. *Getting the feel of the book's atmosphere.* Your personal involvement in the Bible text will greatly help to make your study effective. Survey study helps you catch the tone of the book you are studying, as though "you were there."

4. *Relating each book to the others and to the New Testament as a whole.* This is best and most easily done after a survey of the books has been made.

5. *Deriving spiritual lessons from the book's overall thrust.* In survey study we see especially what the important issues of life are, because we constantly are observing *emphasized* truths. We should never lose sight of this practical goal as we proceed with our survey studies.

## **C. PROCEDURES OF SURVEY STUDY**

After you have studied the background of the writing of a particular book of the New Testament (e.g., date and authorship), you are ready to survey the Bible text itself. There are various possible procedures to follow in survey study. Basically, however, three main stages are involved: (1) making the initial acquaintance of the book; (2) working with the individual segments; and (3) seeing how the book holds together. The progression within each stage, and from stage to stage, is *from obscurity to sight*. Stated in other ways, the progression is from first impressions, to repeated impressions, to enduring impressions; or, from the random and indefinite, to the organized and defined.

Your attitude in the initial stages of survey should be one of expectancy and patience. With expectancy, your vision will be keen, and you will discover golden nuggets of truth that otherwise would be

hidden. With patience you will not give in to such enemies as discouragement and weariness.

A fresh approach is important in Bible study. In survey, read the book as though you have never read it before, in order to awaken your heart and mind from the dangerous sleep of letting the fantastic, earth-shaking story of the evangel become commonplace, trite, and ordinary.

Some of the things that you will be doing in the three stages of survey study are described below.²

1 . *Stage One: Getting acquainted with the book.*

- a. Scanning. Scan the book in one sitting if possible. This is the cursory reading, intended to break the ice, launch you on your project, and give you a taste of good things to come. It is not

necessary to read every word or line at this time, especially of long books. If your Bible has paragraph divisions, reading the first sentence of each paragraph will suffice. If your Bible has chapter or paragraph headings, note those as you scan the book.

- b. **First Impressions.** Write down your first impressions of the book. First impressions are not always enduring, nevertheless, they are necessary. You should always seek to be impressed, although you do not need to ask yourself in machine-like regularity, “How does this impress me?” The question is pertinent at the close of your reading; during the course of reading, maintain a spirit of openness and pliability so that you can be impressed.

- c. Atmosphere. Try to identify the atmosphere of the book as a whole. This is not always detectable at an early stage. Atmosphere words are tone words, such as *love*, *conflict*.
- d. Keys. List any key words and phrases that stand out as of this first reading. You may not find many of these in this first reading. But you will notice some.

## 2. *Stage Two: Working with the individual segments.*

- a. Using the set of segment divisions supplied by this manual,³ scan each of the segments and determine the main subject of each. (A segment is a group of paragraphs that represents a unit of thought. A segment may be longer or shorter than a chapter.⁴)

## NOMENCLATURE OF BOOK UNITS

BOOK OF THE NEW TESTAMENT					
DIVISION				DIVISION	
SECTION			SECTION		
SEGMENT	SEGMENT	SEGMENT			
para-graph					
para-graph					
para-graph					

- b. Assign a segment title to each unit and record these on paper. (A segment title is a strong or picturesque word or short phrase, preferably taken from the text, intended to serve as a clue to at least one main part of the segment. For example, a segment title for Hebrews 1:1—2:4 could be *Angels*.) The value of this step of survey is not only in the segment title itself, but also in the mental process of beginning to identify parts and movements of the book.
- c. Now that you have begun to look at

smaller parts, record any new observations and impressions of the book. Throughout this manual, suggestions of areas of study are given to help you in your survey process. But it is important for you to develop and use your own ingenuity and originality regarding what to look for (observations) in Bible study.

*3. Stage Three: Seeing how the book holds together.*

Up to this point most of your observations have been about individual items. In this last stage you should be especially interested to observe how those individual items blend together into a pattern. This will help you see the theme more clearly and in more depth in its full scope. Again, remember that it is important to learn not only *what* God said (content) but *how* He said it (structure).

- a. Look for groups of material. Such groupings might be about places, people, things, doctrines, speeches, events, and so forth. For example, Matthew 5-7 appears to be a long sermon by Jesus.
- b. Compare the beginning and end of the book. This comparison will tell you much about the book, especially if it is narrative.
- c. Look for a key turning point in the book. Not every book has such a pivotal point. The example of Hebrews, cited earlier, illustrates the principle of pivot.
- d. Look for a climax. If the book has a climax, try to observe a progression leading up to that point.
- e. Read your list of segment titles a few

times, and see if you can detect any movement in the action, if the book is historical; or in doctrine, if the book is nonhistorical. Read again your listing of the main subject of each segment. Keep working on this until you can formulate a simple outline of the book. Use paper and pencil freely. The observations you made earlier in this stage will be of great help here.

- f. Try to state the book's theme in your own words. Assign your own title to the book, a title that will reflect that theme.
- g. After you have completed your survey of the Bible text, refer to the survey chart included in the study guide, and compare it with your own studies.

## **II. USING THIS MANUAL AS A GUIDE FOR SURVEY**

## STUDY

The main purpose of this study guide is to help you see for yourself much of what each book of the New Testament says. This independent kind of study is aptly represented by the word *discovery*. When your personal experience is discovery, the New Testament will come alive to you in many ways. Dr. James M. Gray, who excelled in developing and teaching the survey method of study, rightly maintained that one's own original and independent study of the broad pattern of a Bible book, imperfect as the conclusions may be, is of far more value to the student than the most perfect outline obtained from someone else. This is not to minimize the work of others, but to emphasize that recourse to outside aids should be made only *after* the student has taken his own skyscraper view.

In serving as a guide, however, this book also includes instructive material to support and supplement your own independent study. The book is neither a commentary nor a so-called introduction to the New Testament; yet it includes a little of the kind of material found in both of those resources.

The various guides and supporting materials contained in this book are described below.

## **A. GUIDES**

The suggestions for survey study vary throughout the book, depending on which New Testament book is being studied. The kinds of guides remain constant, however, from book to book.

1 . *Directions*. Specific directions about such things as what to look for, and where,

constitute the major part of your survey. You will constantly be urged to record your observations, of whatever kind they are, on paper. Your faithfulness in doing this may make the difference between mediocre and excellent study. As someone has well said, "The pencil is one of the best eyes."

2 . *Questions.* Answering questions is an effective learning experience. Whenever possible, write out your answers. If you faithfully answer the questions and follow all the directions, you will subconsciously be establishing habits and methods of effective Bible study.

3 . *Uncompleted charts.* Occasionally you will have the opportunity to record observations on an uncompleted chart that appears in the manual. If you prefer to record these on paper instead, be sure to refer to the chart as you record. Charts as

visual aids are effective in representing a panoramic view of Scripture, which is what survey is all about.

4 . *Applications.* Ways to apply the messages of the New Testament books are suggested at the end of each survey. For example, biblical commands will be seen as defining God's timeless standards; history as furnishing "example ... written for our instruction" (1 Cor. 10:11); testimonies and prayers as inspiring and challenging; and prophecy as warning and comforting the reader. Also, it is highly recommended that you spend time meditating over key words and phrases, which you underline in your Bible during the course of your survey. This meditation is one of the best fruits of marking your Bible.

5 . *Further study.* Some readers using this study manual will want to look further into

the subjects suggested at the end of each chapter. The continuity of the book will not be jeopardized, however, if these optional studies are passed over.

## **B. SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

Along with suggestions for your own survey of the New Testament books, various kinds of instructive material are given to support your study.

1 . *Background.* The background and setting of each New Testament book is given at the beginning of each study unit. Much of this information (e.g., date written, authorship) is not always provided in the Bible text; thus its inclusion here. The treatment can only be brief, because of limitations of space. You might want to refer to supplementary sources for more extensive

research.

2 . *Comments.* Comments and descriptive notes appear in each study unit to furnish substantive positions from which you may launch your surveys.

3 . *Maps.* Much of the New Testament is history, or with historical background, so it is important to visualize the historical setting. Maps will appear from time to time to help you in the mental focusing.

4 . *Historical charts.* Historical charts similar to Chart 12 show the settings of Bible passages and books. You will find this visual aid valuable for survey study.

5. *Completed survey charts.* Near the end of the survey of each New Testament book, a completed survey chart appears. Unless you are instructed otherwise, postpone looking at each chart until after you have completed your own survey of the particular book. This

will keep the door open for you personally to experience the joys of discovery. Actually, the survey charts that are shown are not exhaustive. You may want to add your own observations and outlines to them.

6 . *Outline.* A brief outline of the Bible book is given here for quick reference. Most of the points of the outline will have emerged in the course of your survey studies.

7 . *Bibliography.* For each book of the New Testament a few selected works, such as commentaries, are cited as recommended reading, especially for extended studies.

## **C. TOOLS FOR SURVEY STUDY**

Here is a basic list of recommended study tools:

1 . *A good study version of the Bible.* This

should have easy-to-read print and should include cross-references. An edition without commentaries and outlines is best for independent study. Having such an edition will encourage you to focus on the Bible text itself. Unless otherwise cited, all Scripture quotations in this book are from the *New American Standard Bible*. The *New International Version* (NIV) is also recommended for survey study.

2. *An exhaustive concordance.*⁵ Often you will want to see how many times (and where) a particular word appears in a New Testament book. Such a concordance shows the pattern with one glance.

3. *A one-volume commentary.*⁶ You may use this occasionally, mainly in connection with difficult passages or such things as customs, geography, and history. Actually most of your independent study is

accomplished without this kind of outside aid.

4. *Pencil and paper.* Always keep a pencil in your hand while studying, either to mark your Bible or to jot down observations on paper. This advice cannot be overemphasized. Some students like to use a notebook in addition to separate sheets of paper. Recording not only provides a permanent record of what has been observed in Bible study, it also initiates other lines of inquiry.

5. *Colored pencils.* Here is an illustration of how valuable a colored pencil can be. As you survey a book, you might underline in blue every reference to the mercy of God. You would do the same for a few other subjects, using other colors.⁷ A comparative study of these underlined references can then be very revealing.

### **III. A CONCLUDING THOUGHT**

Solid Bible study, whether survey or analysis, is a thrilling challenge to all believers. If you are in earnest about making your own personal study of the New Testament fruitful, you can identify with the following four words: thirst, toil, time, teachableness. Think about those as you launch on your survey of the New Testament.

### **IV. REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What are the three phases of Bible study, in the correct order? Justify the order.
2. What basically is survey study? How does it differ from analysis?
3. Why should survey be made before analysis?

4. What are the three general stages of survey study discussed in this chapter? Can you recall some of the things that are done in each stage?

5. What are the values of firsthand, independent Bible study?

6. In what ways does this book serve as a guide to your firsthand study of the Bible? What supporting materials does it furnish to supplement your own personal study?

7. What basic study tools are recommended for your survey studies?

8. Why is the habit of recording observations so important?

## **V. SELECTED READING**

Further descriptions of this survey method of study by the author are found in the following:

Jensen, Irving L. *Acts: An Independent Study*, pages 41-54.

_____. *Enjoy your Bible*, 44-56.

_____. *Independent Bible Study*, pp. 106-13.

- 
1. The order is very important. For example, one is not prepared to interpret a Bible text (*interpretation*) until he has first seen what the text really says (*observation*).
  2. The stages, as such, will not be identified in the survey studies of the succeeding chapters. Basically, however, the procedures will be followed as described here.
  3. Most of the segment divisions appear on the survey charts.
  4. The terminology used in this book is as follows: a segment is a group of paragraphs; a section is a group of segments; and a division is a group of sections. This breakdown is shown in the accompanying

diagram on book units.

5. The *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* is recommended for survey study using the NASB text, and James Strong's *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* for the KJV text.

6. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* and *The New Bible Commentary*, revised edition, are two excellent sources.

7. The use of color loses its effectiveness whenever it is overdone. Hence, the advice here is to use this particular method of underlining for only a few major subjects.

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**Part 1**  
**THE EVENT**  
*The Life of Christ*

Christianity is built upon the foundations of divinely controlled historical fact. Christian doctrine, Christian conversion, Christian living, and Christian service would not exist, or at the most would be false, if such great events as Christ's birth, death, and resurrection were not historical facts, sovereignly planned and accomplished by God.

It is not by accident that the first books of the New Testament canon (the four gospels and Acts) are historical narratives. God first establishes the factual evidence of Christ's career and the church's origins, for upon this is built the whole structure of Christian doctrine and life as revealed in Scripture.

The historical books are more than

narrative, however. They throb with key doctrines, sure commands, warm exhortations, and promises. They are truly a volume of Scripture by themselves.

The first four historical books, the gospels, focus on one person: Jesus Christ. So the theme of Part 1 is THE EVENT: The Life of Christ.

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

## *4The Life of Christ*

The opening verse of the New Testament introduces the reader to Jesus Christ, whose life is infinite in dimension and one-of-its-kind. So the natural starting point for an overview of the New Testament is to survey the earthly life of Christ, as reported by the four gospels.

Each gospel is selective in what it reports of Jesus' life, and so the fullest biography is in the composite picture given by the *combination* of all four gospels.¹ This chapter surveys the composite picture. Focus on the individual parts of that picture will be made later when each gospel is surveyed separately.

Your study approach in this chapter is mainly deductive, that is, you will confirm the points made, by checking them with the Bible texts furnished. In the following

surveys of each gospel (Chapters 5-8), your approach will be mainly inductive, as you engage in more of the independent, discovery kind of study.

## **I. BEFORE THE EVENT OF BETHLEHEM**

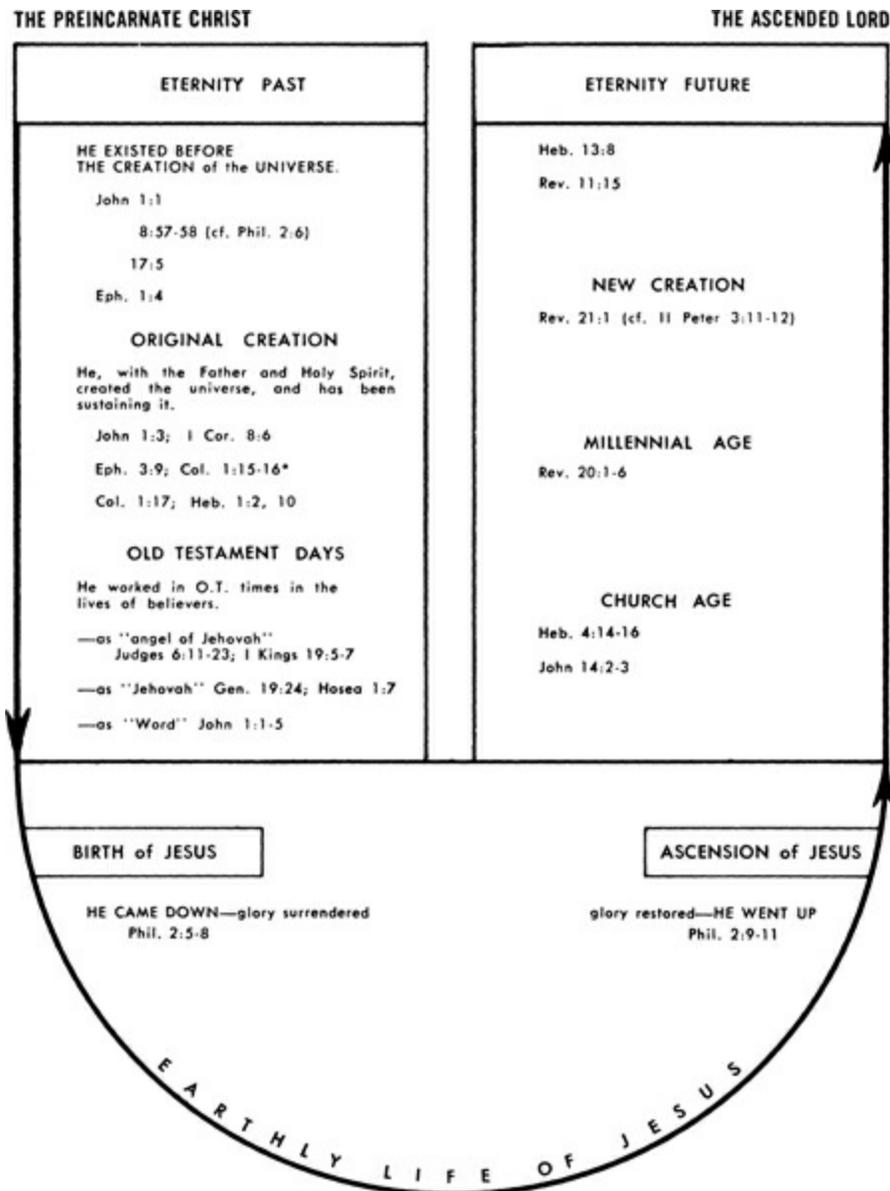
The thirty-three-year span of Christ's earthly career is small as compared to His eternal existence. There were antecedents leading up to His birth in Bethlehem; and sequels since His death and resurrection are still shaping world history. Before we survey the periods of Jesus' earthly career, it would be enlightening to consider some subjects that are related to His life in an anticipatory way.

### **A. THE PREINCARNATE CHRIST**

The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem was the

first event of His earthly career as the incarnate (“in the flesh”) Son of God. He had been existing before that time, as the preincarnate Christ. Like the Father and the Spirit, He did not have a beginning — He has always existed, from eternity past. When John says (referring to Jesus) that the Word was “in the beginning” (John 1:1), he is simply declaring that when creation’s time began its course (Gen. 1:1), the Word, or Jesus, was already existing.

# CHART 14: CHRIST FROM ETERNITY TO ETERNITY



* Some translators translate "primeval Creator" instead of "firstborn."

The Bible does not furnish many specific details about the preincarnate Christ or, for that matter, about the ascended Lord. That which it does tell us is vital for us to know. Study Chart 14. Then read each Bible

reference shown and record in a few words the essence of each verse.

Note especially Christ's humiliation (from throne to cross) in Philippians 2:5-8 and Christ's exaltation (from cross to throne) in Philippians 2:9-11.

## **B. THE ANCESTORS OF JESUS**

Divine design in the ancestral line of a person is supremely manifested in the ancestry of Jesus. All the prophetic words concerning Him, uttered in the centuries before He was born, were spoken according to a perfect, divine plan and fulfilled with the same accuracy. Of the things prophesied of Him, four were very prominent:

1. He was to be of the human race (Isa. 9:6a).
2. He was to be of the Messianic covenant

line (Gen. 22:18; 49:10).

3. He was to be of the royal line of David (2 Sam. 7:14, 16; Isa. 11:1).

4. He was to be “The mighty God” (Isa. 9:6).

The two New Testament genealogies of Jesus (Matt. 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38) bring out the above four fulfillments. To acquaint yourself with these genealogies, read the two lists and note the likenesses and differences. It might help you compare the two lists if you record them in parallel columns. (Record both in advancing order, like Matthew’s.)

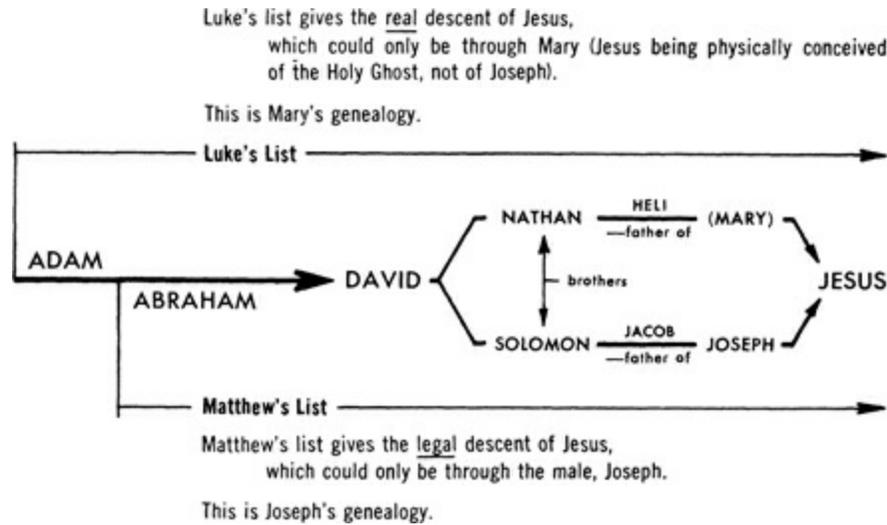
Chart 15 shows the prominent features of the two lists. Both genealogies are of Jesus: Luke gives the ancestors of Jesus’ mother, Mary; and Matthew gives the ancestors of Jesus’ legal father, Joseph.

## Notes on Chart 15

1. How far back in the human race does each genealogy go? Account for the difference, keeping in mind that Matthew wrote especially with the Jew in mind.

2. Note that the brothers Nathan and Solomon were the forefathers, respectively, of Heli (father of Mary) and Jacob (father of Joseph). Which brother succeeded David on the throne? (See 1 Kings 1:13.)

# CHART 15: GENEALOGIES OF CHRIST



3. Matthew divides his list into three groups (rounded off to fourteen generations each, for convenience): Abraham to David (theocracy); David to Babylon (monarchy); Babylon to Christ (hierarchy). A survey of the Old Testament reveals that Israel's history was generally dark and tragic during those periods.

4. Matthew uses the word *egennesen* ("begat," KJV; "born," NASB; "father," NIV), which in Jewish genealogies usually referred to a son but sometimes referred to even more distant offspring, such as a grandson.

For example, Matthew 1:8 says “Joram *egennesen* Osias,” but 1 Chronicles 3:11-12 indicates that there were three descendants of Joram before Osias was born. Such genealogical “gaps” are not errors in the Bible, but rather word usage that gives the appearance of error.

Now let us see how the genealogy of Jesus fulfilled the four prophecies listed earlier in this section.

1 . *Son of Man*. Jesus was identified literally with the human race, born in real human flesh (cf. Gal. 4:4). Luke emphasizes His identity with the entire human race by going back to the first man, Adam. Matthew brings out the “human” aspect of this race (though Jesus was not bound by any limitations of humanity) by citing names with moral blots (e.g., Rahab) and by singling out the captivity of Judah in

Babylon.

2. *Messiah*. Four times in the first eighteen verses of Matthew Jesus is identified as the Christ (the word is from the Greek *chrío*, “anoint”), a title equivalent to Messiah. Matthew also emphasizes this Messianic aspect in the opening statement, in which he identifies Jesus as the “son of Abraham” (1:1). Also, Matthew’s list of names begins with Abraham. It was with Abraham that God first made His covenant with Israel, promising her everlasting blessing (see Gen. 12:2-3; 17:3-8). Jesus came not only to be the hope of the world, but also the Deliverer of Israel.

3. *King*. Matthew calls Jesus “the son of David” (1:1). He repeats the phrase “David the king” twice in 1:6. The royal line of David, continued through Solomon his heir, is recorded by Matthew. It is noteworthy

that the bloodline of Jesus (Mary's descent), recorded by Luke, also reaches back to David.

4. *Son of God*. Both genealogies are careful to guard the truth of Jesus' deity, because His birth was of supernatural conception by the Holy Spirit (see Matt. 1:20). Joseph was Jesus' *legal* father only. Matthew says that Joseph was "the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus" (1:16). The phrase "of whom" is in the feminine form in Greek and refers *only* to Mary. Note how, a few verses later (v. 23), Matthew explicitly identifies Jesus as God.

The reading of Luke 3:23 also guards the truth that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, not of Joseph. The verse literally reads "And Jesus ... being (as was supposed, son of Joseph),² of Heli." Heli was Mary's father, and thus Jesus' grandfather. So

Luke's list begins with the recognition of a supernatural virgin birth of the Son of God. (Observe that Luke ends the list with a reference to the divine creation of the father of the human race, Adam, "of God" Luke 3:38.)

It is interesting to observe that the other two gospels, Mark and John, identify Jesus as God in the very first verses. Mark 1:1 records the grand genealogical fact: "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." John 1:1 says clearly, "The Word was God."

### **C. JESUS THE GOD-MAN**

When Jesus walked this earth He could not have done what He did unless He was who He was. In fact, He did what He did to show people who He really was. When Jesus came to the peak and turning point of His

preaching and sign-working ministry, the great question He asked was a question of identification: “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” (Matt. 16:13). The words “Son of Man” refer to His human nature. When Peter told Jesus who *he* believed Jesus to be, he recognized Jesus’ deity: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16).

The gospels do not present Jesus as two persons, that is, God *and* man. He is always one Person, but with two natures. He is of real and true divine nature, and He is of real and true human nature. The two natures are indissolubly united in the one Person. Jesus is no less God because of His humanity, and no less human because of His deity. Each nature resides with the other, and both make up His true personality. Jesus is not God *and* man: Jesus is *God-man*.

## II. SETTING OF JESUS' EARTHLY LIFE

The Palestinian setting of New Testament times has been discussed briefly in [Chapter 2](#). A few aspects of the setting as related to Jesus' earthly career are noted below.

### A. CITIES AND VILLAGES

The cities and villages named in the gospels were located mainly in the three provinces of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. Three surrounding areas were Perea, Decapolis, and Phoenicia. Locate these sections on Map F, p. 65.

### NEW TESTAMENT CITIES

JUDEA	SAMARIA* AND GALILEE	OTHER
1. Jerusalem	7. Sychar	16. Bethsaida (Julias) (Luke 9:10)
2. Bethlehem	8. Samaria	17. Gergesa
3. Bethany	9. Nain	18. Caesarea Philippi
4. Ephraim	10. Nazareth	19. Tyre
5. Jericho	11. Cana	20. Sidon
6. Emmaus	12. Magdala	21. Bethabara (Bethany beyond Jordan)
	13. Capernaum	
	14. Chorazin	
	15. Bethsaida (west side of Sea of Galilee) (Mark 6:45)	

After about a year of limited public ministry in Judea, Jesus carried on most of His itinerant work in and around the region of Galilee, though His trips from Jerusalem to Galilee afforded many opportunities of ministry along the way. Of the many cities and villages that He visited on His evangelistic tours, only about twenty are mentioned by name in the gospels. See the accompanying lists. How many of these places can you visualize on a map of Palestine? Refer to Map F to check your locations.

## **B. POLITICAL REGIONS**

During Jesus' life the governing of Palestine was parcelled among various rulers, all of them directly or indirectly responsible to Rome. Chart 16 lists the rulers, their domain, and dates.

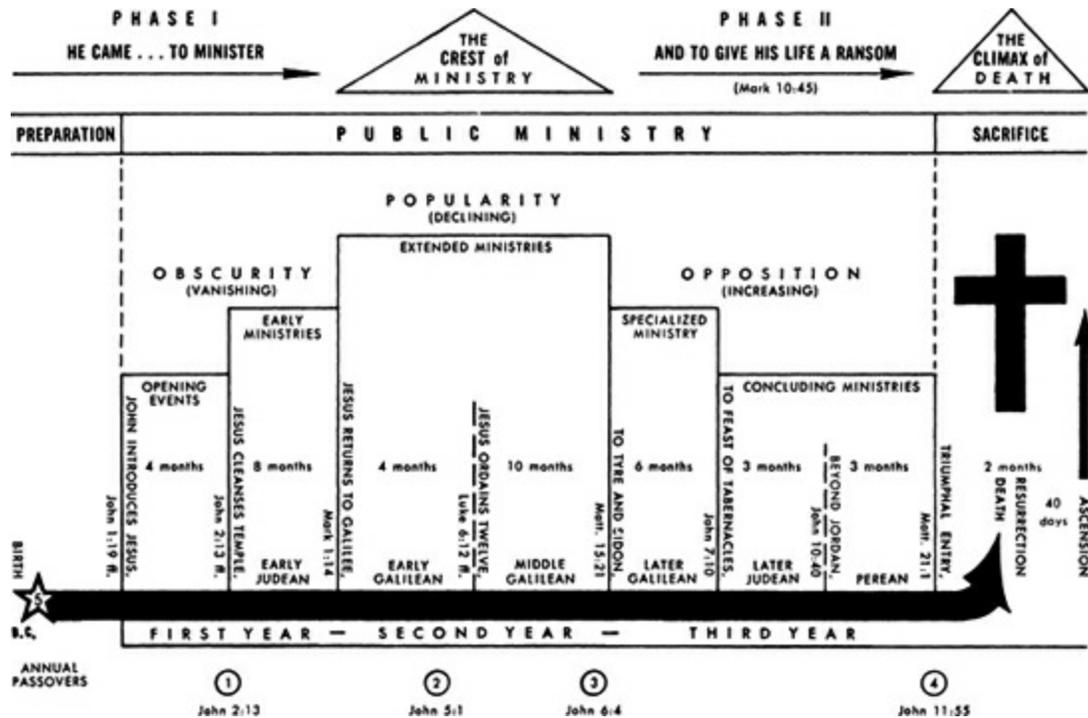
# CHART 16: RULERS OF PALESTINE DURING JESUS' LIFE

TERRITORIES	R U L E R S		
JUDEA AND SAMARIA	HEROD the GREAT (43-4 B.C.)	ARCHE- LAUS (4 B.C.-A.D. 6)	P R O C U R A T O R S
			Coponius Ambibulus Rufus Gratus
GALILEE AND PEREA	HEROD ANTIPAS (4 B.C.-A.D. 39) (Killed John the Baptist)		
ITUREA AND TRACHONITIS (northeast of Sea of Galilee)	P H I L I P (4 B.C.-A.D. 34)		

## Notes on Chart 16

1. Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., not long after Jesus was born.⁴ (See Matt. 2:1, 19.)
2. Archelaus was the ruler whom Joseph avoided on arriving in Palestine from Egypt (Matt. 2:22).

# CHART 17: THE EARTHLY LIFE OF CHRIST



3. Pontius Pilate was the Roman procurator of Judea during Jesus' public ministry (Luke 3:1), who officially condemned Jesus to death.

## III. JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY

When the stories of the four gospels are brought together into one narrative or harmony, a picture of Christ's life emerges that shows all the important aspects of His redemptive career.

As recorded by the gospels, the life of Jesus was of three different and quantitatively unequal parts:

1 . *Preparation years*, relatively obscure, about thirty years in all.

2. *Public ministry*, the highlights recorded in detail, about three and one-half years.

3 . *Sacrifice*, the crucial events of Jesus' ministry, transpiring over a period of only a few weeks.

Chart 17 shows the periods and movements of Jesus' career. First study the chart very carefully. Then read the observations to which special attention is called.

## **Notes on Chart 17**

1. Mention was made above of *three*

periods of Jesus' life: preparation, public ministry, sacrifice. Notice on Chart 17 the two phases of Jesus' life: to minister (serve), and to die. Observe that the peak of His public ministry (measured by public acclaim) was reached at least a year before His death. His death was *the* crucial event.

2. Jesus' public ministry lasted for about three and one-half years. The annual Passovers mentioned in John⁵ are datelines that indicate that duration. Without John's gospel, which alone records Jesus' early Judean ministry, the public ministry of Christ would appear to be much shorter.

3. Each year of Jesus' ministry was of a different sort:

a. First Year: OBSCURITY. No public fanfare attended Jesus' opening ministries, but gradually He moved

from the shades of obscurity to the spotlight of public attention.

b. Second Year: POPULARITY. The peak of Jesus' popularity was reached rather quickly, but from then on His acceptance by the multitudes declined just as rapidly.

c. Third Year: OPPOSITION. Open opposition already having been manifested, it was only a matter of time and divine schedule before the hour of the cross would arrive.

4. The highest box on the chart represents the main core of Jesus' ministries — His *extended* ministries. Before that, there were the opening events (four months); then the ministries of the early Judean period (eight months). When Jesus had completed His extended ministries, He turned His face and His footsteps toward Jerusalem, engaging in

specialized and concluding ministries on His way to the cross.

5. The extended ministries of Jesus were performed in Galilee. Most of His services were rendered in this northern province, the land of His youth and young manhood. Observe the other geographical regions of ministry, including the short one in Perea just before His death.

6. As an exercise, read the references that are cited on Chart 17 at the beginning of each new period of Jesus' ministry. Try to keep those events in your mind as you proceed in your study of Jesus' career, for they are signposts of junctions in that career.

The purpose of the above survey of Jesus' public ministry is to give you a perspective of the *total* earthly career of Jesus before you survey the *partial* coverage of each of

the four gospels. For example, when you study Luke's account you should be aware that Luke skips over most of the first year of Jesus' public ministry. See Chart 35, p. 163, which shows the coverage by Luke as compared to Jesus' total career.

The full Bible text of all four gospels is brought together in one chronological sequence, using four parallel columns, in sourcebooks that are commonly referred to as harmonies of the gospels.⁶ Whenever you analyze the comparative text of the four gospels in such a sourcebook, use Chart 17 as a reference point to keep the general perspective in mind.

As you survey each of the four gospels in the succeeding chapters, you occasionally will want to refer to the charts of Christ's earthly life (17, 21, 29, 35, or 44), in order to locate the particular passage or section in

the sweep of the total public ministry of Christ. The importance of such a chart in a survey of the four gospels cannot be overemphasized.

#### **IV. WHY FOUR GOSPELS?**

The biography of Jesus is written in four separate books in the Bible, composed by four different authors at different times. The natural question is, Why the multiple reporting? — especially since much content is duplicated in the books.⁷ It is clear that God had good reasons for His design of four separate gospel records, rather than one, in the Bible's canon.

The Bible does not tell us explicitly what those reasons were, though one suggestion is made by Luke in Luke 1:1-4. But a comparison of the gospels reveals at least five purposes for the multiple format, as

noted below.

*Note:* Chart 18 identifies Matthew, Mark, and Luke as synoptic (literally, “with” + “seeing”) gospels. This is because of the many similarities of the three records. John’s gospel, written many years later, has fewer parallel passages and includes much doctrinal content, involving more interpretation. So John is set off from the other three as the “Fourth Gospel.”

## **A. CONTENT**

A varied view of the content is the prime reason for four gospels. For example, four different portraits of Jesus, taken from different angles, with different background and lighting, are shown. That would not be possible with just one biography. Other subjects concerning the life of Christ, such

as the message He preached and the works He performed, can also be treated by the book's author in the same way. "We spend more time, and ... feel more at home, in the four successive chambers than we should have done in one long gallery."⁸

## **B. COMMUNICATION**

Communication with different audiences is another important reason for four gospels. In the first century the three main cultural groups to be reached were the Jews, Romans, and Greeks. Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote their gospels with those people, respectively, in mind. John's gospel crosses all cultural lines and has the universal church in mind. Even today the communication distinctive holds true, though for other situations.

## **C. CLARITY**

Each gospel is a complement to the other three, so that which may appear unclear or incomplete in one gospel is clarified and brought into focus by consulting the others.

# CHART 18: COMPARISONS OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Luke</i>	<i>John</i>
PORTRAITS OF JESUS	The Prophesied King	The Obedient Servant	The Perfect Man	The Divine Son
PROMINENT WORDS	"fulfilled"	"straightway"	"Son of man"	"believe"
CULTURES OF THE ORIGINAL READERS	Jews (Jesus, Son of Abraham)	Romans (Action: no genealogy)	Greeks (Jesus, Son of Adam)	Church (Jesus, Son of God)
OUTLOOK AND STYLE OF THE WRITERS	Teacher	Preacher	Litterateur	Theologian
OUTSTANDING SECTIONS	Sermons	Miracles	Parables	Doctrines
PROMINENT IDEAS	Law	Power	Grace	Glory
BROAD DIVISION	"SYNOPTIC GOSPELS" —stressing the humanity of Christ, from the outward, earthly side			"FOURTH GOSPEL" —stressing the deity of Christ

## D. CONFIRMATION

The impact of four independent witnesses to the same facts is impressive, especially in view of the different yet noncontradictory reports that are given of the same events.

## E. QUANTITY

If one account had been written to include the material of the four gospels, without duplication, that single gospel would have been considerably shorter than the present four gospels. The gospels make up about half the bulk of the New Testament. The intended emphasis of the gospel story is reiterated by the very space devoted to it.

## **V. A CONCLUDING EXERCISE**

Here is an interesting comparative study that will give you a first-hand feel of some of the composition differences of the four gospels. Use Chart 19 as your worksheet. Compare the four pictures of Christ as He is portrayed in the concluding words of each gospel. (The passage of John shown on the chart is the last part of the gospel, before the epilogue.) Record key words and phrases of the biblical text in the boxes and record

your own outlines in the margins. A title for each passage is suggested as a starter. The passage of Matthew is completed as an example.

# CHART 19: FOUR PICTURES OF CHRIST

	MATT. 28:18-20 <b>ROYAL LAWGIVER</b>		MARK 16:16-20 <b>MIGHTY WORKER</b>
AUTHORITY	18 Jesus said: ALL AUTHORITY in heaven } to on earth } me	JESUS' ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY	16
ORDINANCE	Go therefore MAKE DISCIPLES BAPTIZING in name { Father of { Son Holy Spirit		
LAWS	TEACHING . . . all that I have COMMANDED YOU		
	I am with you ALWAYS 20	JESUS' CONTINUING PRESENCE	20
	LUKE 24:50-53 <b>FRIEND OF MAN</b>		JOHN 20:28-31 <b>SON OF GOD</b>
	50		28
	52		31
	53		

## VI. APPLICATIONS

Important spiritual lessons can be learned from the larger aspects of Jesus' earthly career, which we have just surveyed. Consider the following facts, and see what practical applications you can derive from them:

1. Most of the years of Jesus' life were

*preparatory* to His public ministry.

2. Jesus was not popular for very long.

3. Jesus continued to minister, even under intense fire of hatred and jealousy.

4. The severest opposition could not bring on Jesus' death prematurely. The hour of the cross was according to divine schedule.

5. Jesus' ministry was in life *and* in death.

6. Jesus came to give, not to take away.

## VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the phrase "preincarnate Christ"?

2. Identify some Bible references to Christ's living and ministering before His birth at Bethlehem.

3. Identify four prominent things prophesied of Jesus in the Old Testament.

4. Compare Luke's and Matthew's genealogies of Jesus.

5. Who was king of Judea when Jesus was born? Who was governor (procurator) there when Jesus was crucified?

6. Name the three periods of Christ's public ministry.

7. In what period did Jesus minister mostly in Galilee?

8. How long did Jesus' public ministry last?

9. Name five reasons for the multiple gospels.

10. Compare the four gospels regarding: portraits of Jesus; prominent words; cultures of the original readers.

## **VIII. SELECTED READING**

Andrews, Samuel J. *The Life of Our Lord*

*upon Earth.*

Edersheim, Alfred. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.*

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*, pp. 63-77.

Guthrie, Donald. *A Shorter Life of Christ.*

Harrison, Everett F. *A Short Life of Christ.*

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1:160-90. The chapter is a survey of the Synoptic Problem.

Jensen, Irving L. *The Life of Christ.*

Morgan, G. Campbell, *The Crises of the Christ.*

Robertson, A. T. *Epochs in the Life of Jesus.*

Stalker, James. *The Life of Jesus Christ.*

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*, pp. 199-225.

Thomas, Robert L. and Gundry, Stanley N. *A Harmony of the Gospels*, pp. 265-68; 302-8; 313-37. Charts appear on pages 347-49.

Vos, Howard F. *The Life of Our Lord*.

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1. Even the combination of all four gospels contains only a relatively small portion of Jesus' career (see John 21:25). But all has been recorded that faithfully and fully composes the divinely designed, biblical portrait of Christ.

2. The closing parenthesis placed here can be justified by the original Greek, and also makes more sense. See A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ*, p. 261. Compare the *Berkeley Version*, and the *New International Version* of

this verse.

3. Travel in Samaria was usually avoided by Jews because of the religious antagonism between the Jews and the Samaritans. Jesus, however, freely moved about and ministered in Samaria (e.g., John 4:4-42.)

4. Jesus was born around 5 or 6 B.C. It is an acknowledged fact that our present calendars are in error by a few years. See A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ*, pp. 262-67, for a discussion of this.

5. This survey manual takes the position that the unnamed feast of John 5:1 was a Passover feast.

6. A recommended sourcebook that uses the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) text is Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels*. A harmony using the *American Standard Version* (ASV) is A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ*.

7. See D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1:160-90, for a discussion of the Synoptic Problem, which is How does one account for the likenesses and differences among the first three gospels?

8. Thomas D. Bernard, *The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*, p. 59.

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## ***5Matthew: Jesus and His Promised Kingdom***

The Person of Jesus Christ is the key to all history, its grand miracle, and humankind's only hope. Who is Jesus, and what did He do while on earth to make all history revolve around Him? Is He the Messiah — the Christ — foretold in the Old Testament? Is He really the King of kings and Lord of lords? Those are some of the questions that Matthew wanted to answer as he wrote his record and reflections of the life of Christ. The opening sentence of the gospel, which in the original Greek text has but eight words, includes four personal names: Jesus, Christ, David, Abraham. This is a strong clue as to what we may expect to find as we survey this first of the four gospels.

### **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

In Bible study it is always helpful to

prepare the mind and heart for the task and journey that lie ahead, which in our case will be surveys of each of the New Testament books. The preparation for surveying an individual book may be of various kinds, such as orientation, comparison with other Scripture, reflection on a problem, anticipation of instruction. For each survey of a New Testament book, brief activities of preparation will be suggested by the manual, and your diligence here will greatly enhance the survey study itself.

1. Review your study of the survey method ([Chapter 3](#)), especially the purposes and procedures of survey, and how to use the manual in that way.

2. Review your study of the geography of Palestine in New Testament times (Map F, page 65), including the cities and villages

that are cited in the four gospels ([Chapter 4](#)).

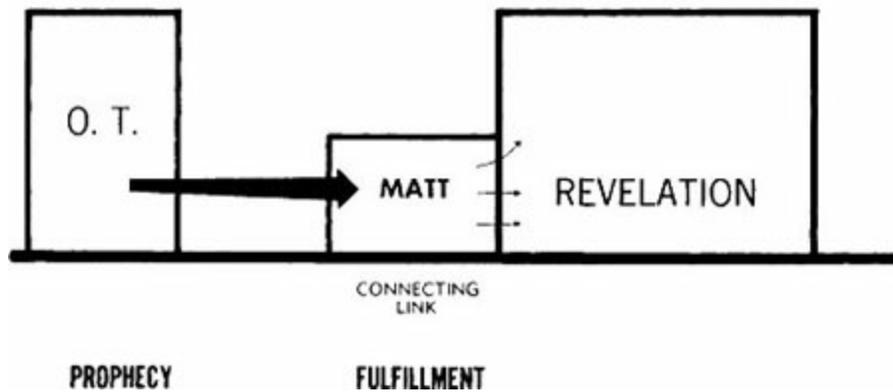
3. Think Matthew. You are about to survey Matthew, and so it is important to concentrate just on that book. If thoughts of passages of other books come to mind as you study, try to set those aside until you have completed your survey at hand. Follow this suggestion for all twenty-seven books of the New Testament. (From time to time there will be occasions when this survey guide will suggest that you *do* refer to other books, for designated reasons.)

4. Think of Matthew's gospel as the historical connecting link between the Old and New Testaments. This is shown on Chart 20. Matthew is preeminently the gospel of fulfillment.

Where on the chart do you place the "four hundred silent years"?

## CHART 20: Matthew as a Link

### Matthew as a link



5. When Matthew's gospel was written and first distributed in the A.D. 50s, the early church was in its third decade of existence. (See Survey of Acts, Chart 52, p. 214.) Hebrew Christians of the local churches knew from Jesus' preaching and from the church's experiences, such as with the Gentile Cornelius,¹ that Jesus' message of salvation was for Gentiles as well as Jews. Alert students of Scripture also knew that such passages as Genesis 12:1-3 taught them that the Lord's covenant with their spiritual father Abraham had included Gentiles in the total scope of His redemptive plan. (Read

the passage.) Visualize a meeting of the members of a local church in Antioch of Syria (Map E, p. 64) when a copy of Matthew's gospel is first read in their presence. Most of the members are Hebrew-Christians. Do you suppose that one thing they are attuned to is how Matthew might show that the gospel message is for both Jew and Gentile?

## **II. BACKGROUND**

In the first decades of the early church the book of Matthew was the most highly revered and widely read of the four gospels. Before we survey the text of such a book, let us first become acquainted with its background.

### **A. THE MAN MATTHEW**

As with the other three gospels, authorship of this first gospel account is not identified by name in the text itself. Tradition is unanimous in ascribing the writing to Matthew, son of Alphaeus.

Very little is known of the personal life of Matthew. Read the following verses, which are our only source of information about him: Matthew 9:9-13; 10:3; Mark 2:14-17; 3:18; Luke 5:27-32; Acts 1:13-14.

What was the last activity of the disciple Matthew in the New Testament story, according to Acts 1:13-14? That meeting took place at least twenty years before Matthew wrote his gospel account.

1. *Name.* The name Matthew means “the gift of Yahweh.” His Jewish name was Levi (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27), which may have been changed to Matthew when he became a disciple of Jesus.

2. *Family*. Matthew's father was Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). This Alphaeus was probably not the one mentioned in Mark 3:18 and Luke 6:15, who was father of another disciple, James.

3. *Profession*. Matthew was employed by the Roman government as a tax collector ("publican," Matt. 10:3 [KJV]), a profession bitterly hated by the people because of the personal profit and political corruption involved with the job.

4. *Wealth*. Matthew probably was wealthy (tax collectors usually were), and that is illustrated by the big banquet that he hosted in his house (Luke 5:29).

5. *Call to discipleship*. Matthew's name is not connected with any incident in the New Testament other than his call (Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16). He no doubt had heard Jesus' preaching on different occasions before the

day of the original call. Do you think it is possible that one reason he was chosen was that Jesus saw in him the potential of authoring the important gospel account?

6. *Death.* Matthew probably died a natural death, though some traditional sources say he died as a martyr.

## **B. TITLE**

The title assigned to this gospel by the early church was “The Gospel According to Matthew.” The word *gospel* means “good news.” Why, then, are the words “according to” more accurate than “of”?

## **C. ORIGINAL READERS**

It is very clear from the content of this Bible book that it was written especially for

the immediate audience of Jews.² Inasmuch as the first hearers of the *spoken* gospel were mainly Jews,³ it does not surprise us that one of the four gospels was directed especially to them and answered questions uppermost in their minds about Jesus, such as: Was Jesus truly descended from David? What was Jesus' attitude toward the Old Testament law? Did He come to establish the kingdom promised in the Old Testament? Curiosity about these questions is why Matthew was so widely read in the first decades of the early church.

This gospel is not exclusively Jewish, however. Throughout the account, Jesus' ministry is related to all the people of the world, such as in the Great Commission of 28:19-20, and in Jesus' identification with the human race by calling Himself the Son of man (e. g., 16:13). So Matthew's account was intended also for Gentile readers of the

first century, and increasingly so in the centuries that followed.

## **D. DATE AND PLACE WRITTEN**

A possible date for the writing of Matthew is A.D. 58.⁴ That was before the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) and shortly before Luke wrote his gospel account. (See Chart 1, p. 20.) There is strong reason to believe that Matthew was the first of the four gospels to be written.

Matthew might have written this gospel from Jerusalem or Antioch of Syria. The history of the manuscript's circulation from place to place, and of copies made from it, is not known to us today. "Each of the four Gospels, with its distinctive picture of Christ, seems to have circulated at first in the churches of a particular area, but shortly

after the appearance of the fourth the four appear to have been bound up together and acknowledged by the churches at large as the authoritative fourfold Gospel of Christ.”⁵

## **E. PURPOSE AND THEME**

One of the main reasons for studying each gospel *separately* is that each author’s purpose can thereby be discovered. The divine purpose of four gospel records was to give four perspectives of the one message of glad tidings. Henry Thiessen writes, “We emphasize, then, that each writer was confronted with a definite need; that he formed a definite purpose for his Gospel; and that he selected his materials, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with that object in view.”⁶

The main purpose of Matthew in writing this account was to show Jesus as King of the promised kingdom. He sought “to connect the memories of his readers with their hopes; to show that the Lord of the Christian was the Messiah of the Jew,” the King of the promised kingdom.⁷

There is much in this gospel about the great Jewish themes of law, prophecy, Messiah, kingdom, Israel. And there are many references to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. All of this points to the grand theme noted above, that Jesus is the King of the promised kingdom.

However, as noted earlier, the gospel of Matthew is not solely Jewish oriented. There are many parts of it, as we shall see in our survey study, that present the gospel as a message to the whole world. That is why from the very beginning it was read by

Gentiles as well as by Jews. The large ministry of this gospel in the early decades of the church is described by Tasker:

It provided the Church with an indispensable tool in its threefold task of defending its beliefs against attacks from Jewish opponents, of instructing converts from paganism in the ethical implications of their newly-accepted religion, and of helping its own members to live a disciplined life of fellowship based on the record of the deeds and words of their Lord and Master, which they heard read week by week in the orderly and systematic form provided by this evangelist.⁸

In order to fulfill his purposes of writing, Matthew, under the Spirit's guidance, selected certain parts of Christ's life and ministry for recording. How much he used

of the four-gospel composite picture is shown on Chart 21. Note the Matthew chapter and verse references at the bottom of the chart. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is recorded in Matthew 5-7. During what period of His ministry was that preached?



survey study is all about — seeing the layout of the book as a whole and getting the feel of its content.

## **B. FIRST READING**

Your first reading of Matthew should be a mere scanning. Spend two or three minutes per chapter to view only the prominent features of each chapter.⁹ Do not try to be exhaustive in this stage of your study. The main purpose of this scanning is to make a first acquaintance by identifying things that stand out.

1. What are your first impressions of the book?

2. Did you feel any tone or atmosphere as you scanned the book?

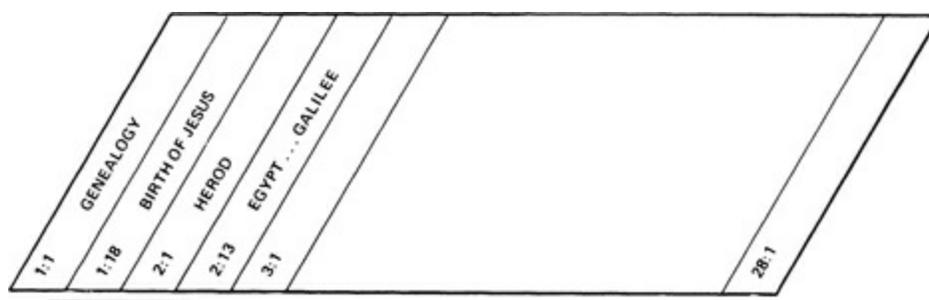
3. Did any key words or phrases stand out?

## C. WORKING WITH INDIVIDUAL SEGMENTS

Now you will want to scan the book a little more slowly, segment by segment. Recall from your earlier study of the survey method that a segment is a unit of study, sometimes the length of a chapter, sometimes longer or shorter. Refer to Chart 22 (p. 120) and observe that Matthew is divided here into thirty-three segments. How many begin with verse 1?

Mark the beginning of each segment on the pages of your Bible at this time. Then scan each segment and record on paper a segment title for each.¹⁰ One suggested way to record these titles is on an oblique chart, as shown here.

### SEGMENT TITLES OF MATTHEW



What are some of your new impressions of Matthew's gospel after this scanning?

Did you observe any of the following: main characters; main events; discourses of Jesus; opposition to Jesus?

## **D. SEEING HOW THE BOOK HOLDS TOGETHER**

1. Compare the opening verse (1:1) with the concluding verses (28:19-20). For example, compare what is suggested by "son of David" and "all authority." Also, compare the first two chapters with the last two.

2. Read the first two verses of each chapter.¹¹ Write a list of Matthew's

contents, just based on these verses. Do you observe any groups of chapters, for example, *actions*, *discourses*, *events*, and so forth? A clue to a group of chapters is when a new chapter shows that it is continuing what went before. For example, the prominent quotation marks in NASB at 6:1 and 7:1 show that these spoken words follow what went before, in the preceding chapters.

3. Compare 4:17 and 16:21. Note the phrase, “from that time.” These are key clues to the structure of Matthew’s account. What does each verse suggest concerning what follows in the gospel account? Does this support observations you have already made of the content of chapters 4-16 and 16-28? If not, scan these two divisions again until you have seen this. Justify the words *proclamation* and *passion* in this outline of Matthew 4:12—28:20:[12](#)

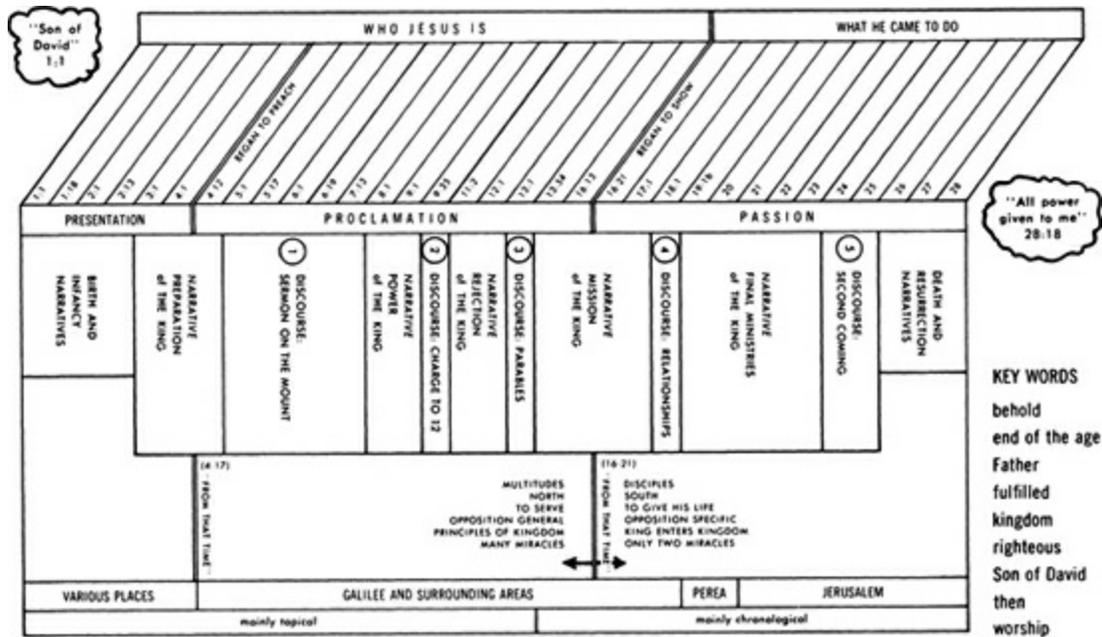
4. Note the discourses or sermons that are recorded in 4:12— 16:20. Mark these in your Bible.

5. Scan the *passion* division (16:21—28:20) again. What parts of the account are about, or related to, Jesus' death?

6. Scan 1:1—4:11 again. Review your segment titles for the six segments, and identify the general contents of this division of the account. Relate this division to the two that follow it, namely, *proclamation* and *passion*.

7. Have you observed any more key words in Matthew? Consult an exhaustive concordance and note how frequently these words appear in Matthew: king, kingdom, fulfilled. How does this support the earlier discussion of Matthew's theme?

# CHART 22: MATTHEW: JESUS AND HIS PROMISED KINGDOM



8. Does Matthew's account have a climax?  
 If so, what is it?

## E. SURVEY CHART

The organization of Matthew's writing is shown on the survey chart, Chart 22.

## Notes on Chart 22

1. Matthew is divided into three major

divisions. What are they? Compare the word *presentation* with your observation of the content of 1:1—4:11, which you made earlier.

2. A two-part outline is shown at the top of the chart. Those two phrases of the message about Christ appear in all four gospels, most prominently in Mark. What is significant about the *order* of the two parts?
3. Note the study of contrasts made at the pivotal point of 16:21. For example, before 16:21, Jesus' ministry was mainly to the multitudes; after 16:21, to the disciples; and so forth.
4. Observe at the bottom of the chart what part of Matthew is mainly topical in arrangement, and what part is mainly chronological. Note also the geographical settings.

5. Note how many chapters are devoted to the birth and infancy narratives, and how many to the death and resurrection narratives.
6. In between the two narrative sections noted in point 5. is a series of five discourses, each discourse being introduced by a narrative section. Study this alternating arrangement on the chart very carefully. It represents the core of Matthew's gospel.¹³ Note the subjects of the five numbered discourses, and the outline about Jesus as King in the narrative sections.
7. The conclusion of each discourse is identified in the Bible text with words such as these: "when Jesus had finished these words" (7:28). Read in your Bible the five conclusions.
8. Observe that the book opens with a

reference to Jesus' kingship ("Son of David," 1:1), and closes on the same note ("all authority has been given to me," 28:18). What comparison had you noted earlier?

## **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

The purpose of these studies is to focus on selected, prominent subjects of the New Testament book, without making any detailed analysis. Again, in keeping with the survey method, our interest is mainly in the highlights of the passages involved.

### **A. OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES**

Listed below are major subjects, appearing throughout this gospel, which would be of special interest to Jews with Old Testament background. Read the verses cited.

- “Holy city;” “holy place” — 4:5; 24:15; 27:53.
- “Son of David” — 1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:42, 45.
- Fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy — 1:22; 2:5, 15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4, 42; 26:31, 54, 56; 27:9-10.
- Jewish customs — 15:1-2; 27:62.
- Law of Moses — 5:17-19, 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43; 7:12; 11:13; 12:5; 15:6; 22:36, 40; 23:23.
- “Kingdom of heaven” — (more than thirty references: consult a concordance).
- Old Testament prophets — (thirty-nine references: e. g., 3:3).

The preceding references illustrate the

classic couplet:

The New Testament is in the Old  
concealed;

The Old Testament is in the New  
revealed.

Everything about the Old Testament points to the New, so that when we read the opening chapters of this “link” book, Matthew, it is very clear that “the coming of Jesus was no afterthought, no isolated event, but rather the actual realization in history of the age-long plan and purpose of God.”¹⁴

## **B. MATTHEW’S GENEALOGY (1:1-17)**

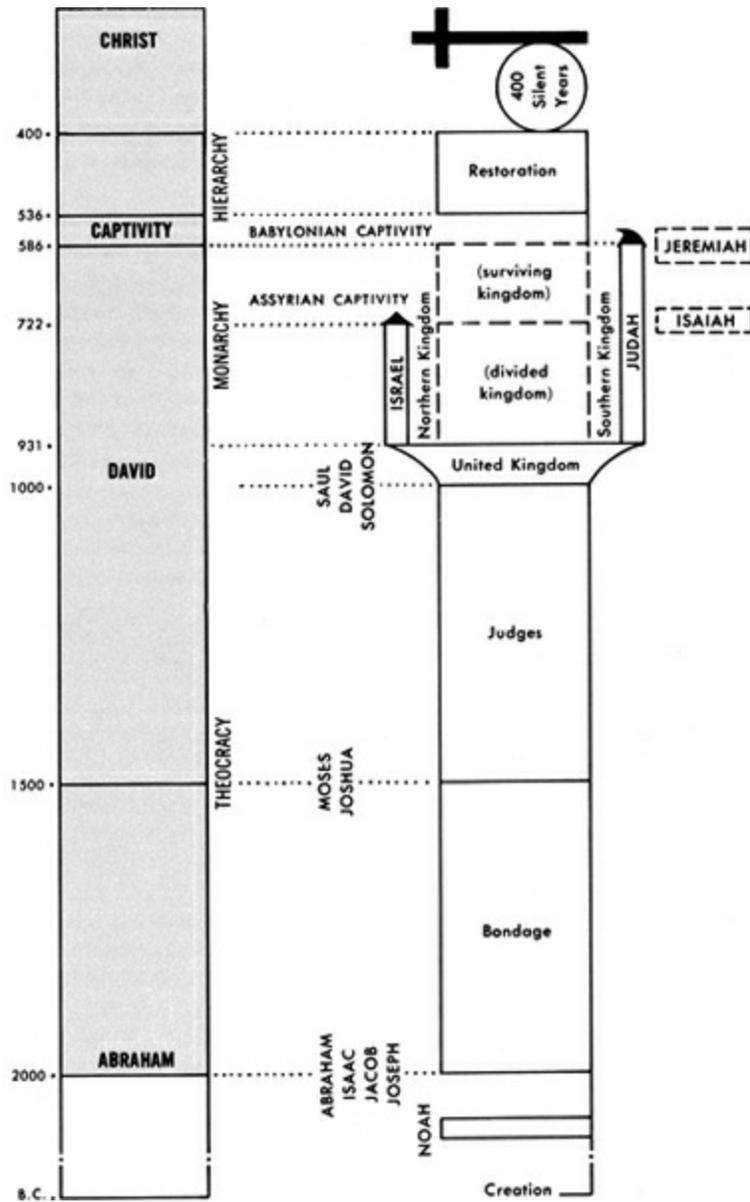
There are two New Testament genealogies of Jesus. (They were briefly discussed in [Chapter 3](#).) Matthew organizes his listing into three groups, as he states in 1:17. What

are the time periods of those groups? Identify them on Chart 23.

Jewish readers of Matthew's gospel knew Old Testament history, the key events and periods of which are shown on Chart 23. They could very easily visualize those things as they read 1:17. Why do you think Matthew emphasized those three periods of ancestral roots?

Observe in 1:1-2 that Matthew traces Jesus' genealogy only as far back as Abraham, whereas Luke goes to Adam (Luke 3:38). What does Matthew have in mind?

# CHART 23: OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY AND MATTHEW'S GENEALOGY MATTHEW'S GENEALOGY (SHADED AREA)



## C. PRESENTATION (1:1—4:11)

This first short division of the gospel covers the first thirty years of Jesus' earthly

life. Only a few experiences are reported. Record them, for the following passages:

1:1-17—genealogy

1:18—2:23—

3:1-12—

3:13-17—

4:1-11—

## **D. SERMON ON THE MOUNT (5:3—7:27)**

Jesus preached this sermon on a mountain, probably near Capernaum. It was mainly for the benefit of His disciples. Did the multitudes hear the sermon? To answer this, read Matthew 7:28 and Luke 6:17.

Read Jesus' sermon in one sitting, if possible. Try reading it in a modern paraphrase. Picture yourself sitting on the ground with others, and hearing these words

for the first time. What are your impressions? Did Jesus preach the sermon to tell how a person can become a Christian, or how a person who is already a believer should live the Christian life?

# CHART 24: JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT MATTHEW 5:3-7:27

## What the Kingdom Is all About

5:3		5:17		5:48		6:1		7:13		7:27	
KINGDOM CITIZENS			KINGDOM LAWS			KINGDOM ATTITUDES AND DEEDS			CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS		
Their Character	5:13 Their Influence	The Law's Fulfillment	5:21 The Old and the New	WORSHIP —giving —praying —fasting	6:19 WALK	Citizenship Tested					

This sermon may be outlined in various ways. Chart 24 suggests an arrangement of thought.

Note the title given to the sermon. Early in His ministry, Jesus wanted to make clear to His disciples and to the multitudes just what kind of a kingdom He had come to establish.

Scan the three chapters of Matthew and observe how the outlines of Chart 24 grow out of the text. This exercise will give you a good general grasp of the passage.

Where is the familiar “Lord’s Prayer” quoted in the text?

## **E. PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM (13.1-53)**

This group of parables, spoken on one particular occasion, is the third main discourse of Matthew’s account. (What are the first two?)

Jesus’ favorite method of teaching was by parables (nearly forty are recorded in the gospels, in addition to many parabolic illustrations).¹⁵ The master teacher well knew that a strong witness of the gospel is the positive proclamation of its truth. While He took time out to defend the gospel from the verbal attacks of His opponents, He spent most of His time teaching the doctrines of the kingdom.

A biblical parable has been described as

“an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” It is a comparison of two things to convey a spiritual truth. It is revelation by illustration, given to aid understanding. Jesus did not teach the mysteries of the kingdom to the crowds, because they were not ready for deep truths (13:10-15; cf. Col. 1:26). G. Campbell Morgan illustrates this veiling aspect of parables by the following contemporary parable: “There is a sense in which the sun is hidden by the piece of smoked glass which the boy holds before his eyes, and yet without such an instrument he could not look upon the sun at all. Essential light unveiled, blinds. Its veiling is the opportunity of vision.”¹⁶

Make a list of all the parables of this discourse. Observe that they teach about the kingdom of heaven. Their perspective is not of the ultimate millennial reign of Christ on earth, but of the present formation of His

spiritual kingdom, between His first and second advents.¹⁷

Record a main teaching of each of the parables.

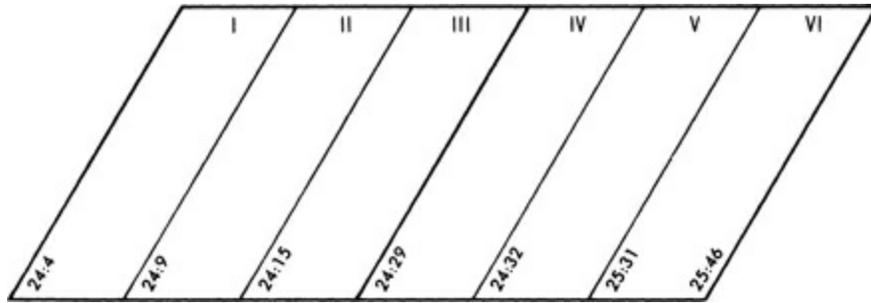
## **F. SECOND COMING (OLIVET DISCOURSE) (24:1—25:46)**

The last discourse of Jesus recorded in Matthew is the Olivet discourse¹⁸ of chapters 24-25. It is a prophetic message of Jesus' second coming, which He delivered on Tuesday of Passion Week, a few days before His crucifixion. Here are Christ's descriptions of the end of this age, prior to the establishment of His kingdom on earth, *especially as the kingdom relates to Israel and Israel's program.*

Matthew's recording of the Olivet discourse may be divided into six parts,

shown on Chart 25.

## CHART 25: SIX SECTIONS OF THE OLIVET DISCOURSE MATTHEW 24:4-25:46



Scan the entire passage and try to account for the dividing points.

The underlying prophecy of this discourse is, *tribulation first, then Christ's return to earth*. In what sections of Chart 25 is this sequence emphasized?

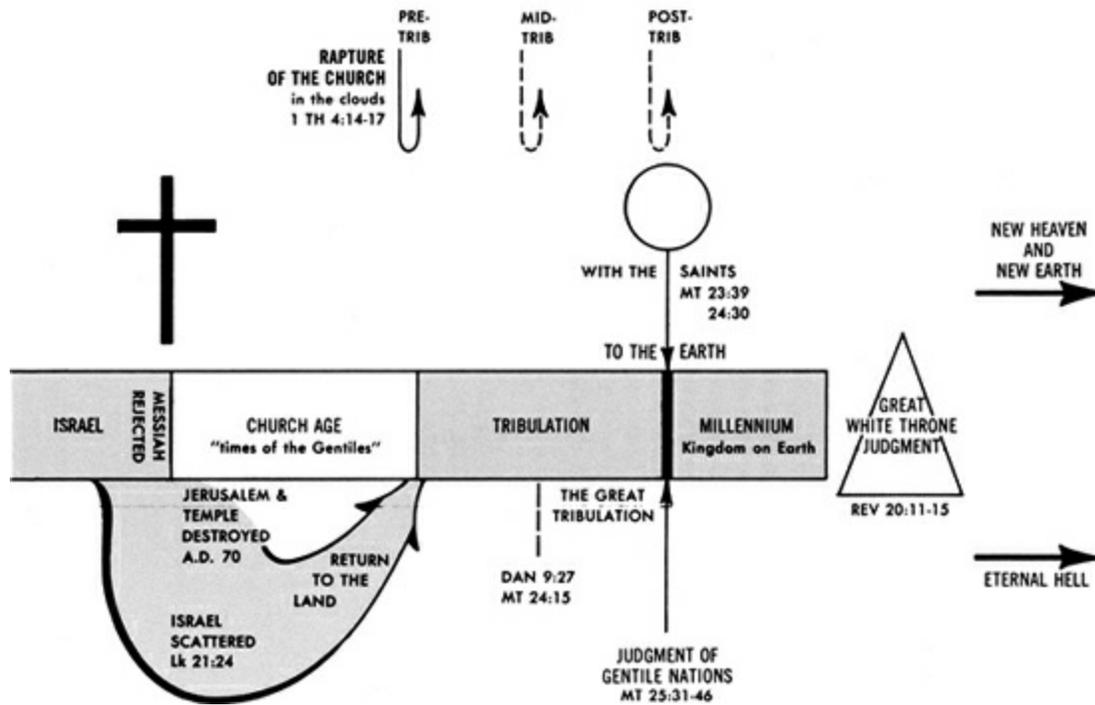
How you interpret this discourse is determined largely by how you view prophecies of the Bible concerning the Millennium. Chart 26 shows the course of Israel's history in the premillennial scheme of world events. Read Acts 1:6-8 and observe that just before Jesus' ascension to heaven, the disciples were still asking when the kingdom would be restored.¹⁹ Jesus'

answer did not deny the fact of a restored kingdom. What did He correct, however? It may be observed here that premillennialists view the millennial kingdom on earth as a fulfillment of Old Testament promises, which were preeminently to Israel as a nation. The zenith of Christ's glorious reign will be in heaven for eternity.

The key event on Chart 26 is Christ's second coming to the earth. It is also the key event of the Olivet discourse. Read Matthew 24:3, 27, 30, 37, 42, 44, 46; 25:13, 31. In the Olivet discourse this coming of Christ is not the *rapture* phase, when He shall come only to the clouds (1 Thess. 4:14-17). Rather, it is the *revelation* phase, when He shall come to earth.²⁰

# CHART 26: ISRAEL IN THE PREMILLENNIAL SCHEME OF WORLD EVENTS

Israel shown in shaded areas



A survey of a difficult passage, such as the Olivet discourse, cannot delve into the small details of the prophecy. The key of survey is to see the highlights. (A project is suggested later in Further Study.)

## G. OTHER DISCOURSES

You have now finished surveying three

discourses of Matthew's gospel. What are the other two, as shown on Chart 22 (p. 120)? Read the passages in your Bible and record the main teachings of each.

## **H. NARRATIVE UNITS OF MATTHEW**

As noted earlier, a narrative passage precedes each of Matthew's five discourses. Here are suggested steps of survey for these sections:

# CHART 27: PASSION WEEK

KING EXTOLLED					KING MOCKED
MINISTRY TO PUBLIC			MINISTRY TO DISCIPLES		SOLITARY MINISTRY
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
ACTIVE DAYS			QUIET DAYS		VIOLENT DAY
authority			compassion		submission
Jesus speaks much					Jesus speaks little
RIDING INTO THE CITY ON A COLT (Mt 21:1-11)			DRIVEN OUT OF THE CITY BEARING A CROSS (Jn 19:17)		

List the narrative units, including the chapter and verse locations. Secure the information from Chart 22.

Read the narratives and record such things as main persons and events of each. Construct an outline of each section.

Observe how each narrative leads into each discourse. This will show the togetherness of Matthew's composition and also will explain

why Jesus chose the particular subjects of the discourses He gave.

## **I. DEATH AND BURIAL OF THE KING (26:1—27:66)**

Jesus' last week before His death is known as Passion Week. Chart 27 shows Jesus' general involvements during that week. He was crucified on Friday.

Jesus not only prophesied His death and resurrection; He also knew the exact days of their fulfillment. Read Matthew 26:1-2. Then read Exodus 12, which describes the origin of Israel's Passover memorial. What was the Passover a type of, in Old Testament days? How significant was it that Jesus was slain on the very holiday that pointed to Him?

Chart 28 shows how much of Passion Week was reported by Matthew. Compare

the outline with that of Chart 27.

# CHART 28: EVENTS LEADING TO THE CROSS MATTHEW 26:1-27:66

	26:1	6	14	17	26	31	36	47	57	69	27:1	3	11	27	32	45	57	62
	AFTER 2 DAYS																	
	PRECIOUS OINTMENT																	
INTRO. DUNCTION	Tuesday		Thursday			Friday												
	BETRAYER		WITH THE DISCIPLES			ARREST & TRIALS					THE CROSS		THE TOMB					

Read the full passage of 26:1—27:66, paragraph by paragraph, for major impressions. Record paragraph titles on the chart. (Examples are shown.) This will help you get an overall view of Jesus' experiences during those days.

Record what this account of Matthew teaches you about: Jesus; the disciples; the rulers; the multitudes.

## J. RESURRECTION AND GREAT COMMISSION OF THE KING (28:1-20)

The resurrection was the supreme authentication of the kingship of Jesus. Only the King of kings could say truly, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). Ponder the uniqueness of Christianity among the religions of the world because of its claim of a living Savior who has been resurrected from the grave.

As you read this concluding chapter of Matthew, try to imagine how the events must have impressed all the people, especially the Jews. For example, a distinctive element of Matthew’s report, not found in the other gospels, is that of the earthquake. “And, behold, a severe earthquake had occurred” (28:2). Read 1 Corinthians 1:22, and observe that Jews looked to supernatural signs as divine credentials of the true Messiah. Might this have prompted Matthew, writing especially

for the Jews, to include this event in his report?

Read the last paragraph of Matthew again (28:16-20). In what ways does it serve as a conclusion to Matthew's account?

## **V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

1. Think back over your survey studies of Matthew. Recall the theme of Matthew's account. State it in your own words. Did any verses stand out as representing elements of this theme? Two key verses are shown on Chart 22. There are others, which you may have found.

2. Write a list of key words and phrases of Matthew. Compare your list with that shown on Chart 22 (p. 120).

## **VI. APPLICATIONS**

Applications of the text of Matthew have been suggested from time to time in the previous studies. Here are a few more of the prominent ones:

1. The fulfillments of Old Testament prophecy teach important truths about God. What are some of these, and how do they affect Christian living?

2. God “made” the nation of Israel (Gen. 12:2) and has blessed it even as He promised (Gen. 12:2-3). What spiritual lessons can you, whether Gentile or Jew, apply to your life from this?

3. Write a list of spiritual applications that Christians can make from the truth of the kingship of Jesus Christ.

4. Why is the Lord so concerned how Christians conduct their lives (e.g., Sermon on the Mount)?

5. What important truths and applications

does the Olivet discourse teach concerning Christ's second coming?

6. Is Matthew a message for Jew and non-Jew today? Support your answer.

## **VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What are the opening verses (1:1-17) of Matthew about?

2. In what sense is Matthew a link in the Bible?

3. What title did the early church assign to this account?

4. Who were the original readers of Matthew?

5. When and where might it have been written?

6. What is the theme of Matthew?

7. Did Matthew report much of the first

year of Jesus' public ministry?

8. What are the three main divisions of the account? Identify the chapter and verse locations.

9. How many major discourse sections are there in Matthew? How does each conclude in the Bible text?

10. Identify by subject: chapters 5-7; [chapter 13](#); chapters 24-25.

11. List various items and characteristics of Matthew's account that were of special interest to Jews.

12. Name five key words of Matthew and quote a key verse.

13. How does this gospel conclude?

## **VIII. FURTHER STUDY**

Subjects suggested for extended study, which are beyond the scope of survey, are

the following:

1. Of the thirty passages in Matthew that are peculiar to that gospel (that is, not found in Mark, Luke, or John), most have a bearing on the theme of Christ as King. Refer to a harmony of the gospels²¹ and observe in general the parts of Jesus' life that are reported only by Matthew. Look for direct or indirect references to kingdom.

2. Make a comparative study of the New Testament phrases "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God."²²

3. Make a detailed study of the Olivet discourse. Compare the other two New Testament end times passages: Mark 13 and Luke 21. Refer to commentaries for help.

4. Study the various views held concerning the date of Matthew's writing. Learn the reasons offered for the differing positions (a) that Mark was the first gospel

written, and (b) that Matthew was the first gospel.

5. What do you think would be the feelings of the Jewish-Christian members of a local church upon reading Matthew's account for the first time: (a) if *Matthew* was the first gospel written and distributed; (b) if *Mark* already had been written and distributed?

## IX. OUTLINE

Here is a brief outline of Matthew, to be used as an additional reference point in your surveys.

MATTHEW: Jesus and His Promised Kingdom	
PRESENTATION	1:1—4:11
Birth and Infancy Narratives	1:1—2:23
Preparation of the King	3:1—4:11
PROCLAMATION	4:12—16:20
First Ministries	4:12-25
Discourse: Sermon on the Mount	5:1—7:29
Power of the King	8:1—9:34
Discourse: Charge of the Twelve	9:35—11:1
Rejection of the King	11:2—12:50
Discourse: Parables	13:1-53
Mission of the King	13:54—16:20
PASSION	16:21—28:20
Death Foretold	16:21—17:27
Discourse: Relationships	18:1—19:1a
Final Ministries of the King	19:1b—23:39
Discourse: Second Coming	24:1—25:46
Death and Resurrection of the King	26:1—28:20

## X. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*, pp. 83-90.

Tasker, R. V. G. "Gospel of Matthew." In *The New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 794-97.

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*, pp. 141-52.

Wessel, Walter W. "Gospel of Matthew." In *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, pp. 516-18.

# COMMENTARIES

Atkinson, ?. F. C. “The Gospel According to Matthew.” In *The New Bible Commentary*.

Kent, Homer A. “The Gospel According to Matthew.” In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

Lange, John Peter. *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Rev. ed.

Lenski, R. C. H. *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel*.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Gospel According to Matthew*.

Robertson, A. T. *Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*.

Walvoord, John F. *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come*.

## OTHER RELATED SOURCES

Dunnett, Walter M. *An Outline of New Testament Survey.*

Edersheim, Alfred. *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services.*

Jensen, Irving L. *Jensen's Bible Study Charts.*

_____. *The Life of Christ.*

McClain, Alva J. *The Greatness of the Kingdom.*

Robertson, A. T. *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ.*

Scroggie, W. Graham. *A Guide to the Gospels.*

_____. *Know Your Bible*, vol. 2.

Stalker, James. *The Life of Jesus Christ.*  
Rev. ed.

Strong, James. *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*

Thomas, Robert L., ed. *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*

Vine, W. E. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.*

- 
1. This was reported later by Luke in Acts 9-12.
  2. You will observe this later when you survey the book.
  3. Jesus and the disciples were the first to preach and teach the gospel, according to the four gospels and Acts.
  4. Bible students differ in assigning a date to Matthew. It could have been written as early as A.D. 44. Most date it in the A.D. 50s. The date depends largely on whether Mark or Matthew was the first gospel written.

5. F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, p. 93.
6. Henry C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 135.
7. See W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 2:37.
8. R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, in Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, pp. 17-18.
9. The original Bible autographs did not have chapter divisions, or for that matter, paragraph and verse divisions. Such divisions are helps to us today for reference and for identification of small units of thought.
10. A segment title is a strong word or phrase, preferably taken from the text, intended to serve as a clue to at least one main part of the segment. The sum total of segment titles is *not* intended to be a comprehensive outline of contents.

11. For quick scannings like this you need not adhere strictly to the segment divisions, hence the chapter designation.

The new division in Matthew begins at 4:12, even though the clue verse, cited earlier, is 4:17. In the context, 4:17 refers back to the starting point, 4:12.

13. The importance of Jesus' spoken words is seen in the fact that of Matthew's 1,071 verses, 644 contain spoken words of Jesus.

14. "Introduction to Matthew," in *The Westminster Study Edition of the Holy Bible*, p. 21.

15. Lists and brief descriptions of all the parables appear in W. Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels*, pp. 278-86; 549-51; 663-64.

16. G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 141.

17. See John F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come*, pp. 95-97.

18. So named because Jesus and His disciples were on the Mount of Olives at this time. The panorama of Jerusalem and its Temple from this spot was beautiful and awe-inspiring (Mark 13:1).

19. The story of Israel's kingdom in Old Testament times was tragedy. The promised messianic kingdom was to be a glorious, miraculous restoration.

20. These descriptions represent the pretribulation view of premillennialism. These will be discussed later, in surveys of such books as the Thessalonian letters and Revelation.

21. For example, Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels*.

22. The former is Matthew's usual designation. The English word *kingdom* is a contraction of the phrase "king's domain." Consult W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 2:294-96, for a

discussion of the two phrases noted above.

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## ***6Mark: The Servant Jesus***

For a few decades after Christ's ascension, the world did not have the full written gospel record. During those years the redemptive message of the gospel was being proclaimed mainly by word of mouth (read Acts 15:7), based on trustworthy recollections of eyewitnesses. And at least some of those recollections were being written out on scrolls for a more permanent record. We do not know the exact circumstances of the writing of each of the four gospels, but we are confident that each appeared on schedule according to a divine plan. Mark was one of the four.

### **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

First, recall things you learned about Matthew's gospel, such as: how many chapters; its purpose and emphasis; key

words; three-part structural outline; major discourses.

From this point on, *think only Mark*. Occasionally you will make comparisons with Matthew, but your concentration during this survey of Mark should always be on Mark. In order to help you shift gears from Matthew to Mark, the following biographical material on the man Mark is included.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. THE MAN MARK**

1. *Birth and early life*. Mark was born some ten to fifteen years after Jesus of Nazareth and Saul of Tarsus, so he may have been in his late teens at the time of the crucial events of Jesus' public ministry. His parents

gave him the Hebrew name of John (*Johanan*, “Jehovah is gracious”), and his Roman surname of Mark¹ may have been adopted at a later time in his life (see Acts 15:37). Concerning his having two names, D. Edmond Hiebert writes: “Either name might be used according to circumstances. In Jewish circles he would appropriately be known as John, but in a Gentile environment he would be called by his Latin name. The fact that his Hebrew name is never used in the epistles shows that the Gentile world was his main sphere of activity.”²

Colossians 4:10 indicates that Mark was a cousin of Barnabas, a key person in Acts 4-15. Mark’s mother Mary was a devout woman of prosperous means. Her home, which may have been located in the Valley of Kidron very near the Garden of Gethsemane, was dedicated to God. Her dedication is confirmed by Luke, who

records in Acts 12:12-17 that in the early days of the Christian church, after James the Elder had been slain by Herod Agrippa, and while Peter was in prison for the testimony of the gospel, she was courageous and faithful to the extent of letting her house be the meeting place for the local band of believers. It is possible that Jesus visited that home during His lifetime and even partook of the Last Supper there.

Many feel that the unnamed “young man” of Mark 14:51 was Mark himself. (Read Mark 14:43-52.) ?. M. Blaiklock suggests this imagined (though not impossible) story behind the Mark account:

In the long room on the roof of the house of Mary, the rich widow lady of Jerusalem, the Lord and His band meet for what was to be the Last Supper. In his room below,

awake and alert, for he sensed the danger which lurked about the house, lay Mary's son, John Mark. He heard the hurried steps of Judas on the stairway without, and listened with sharper care. And then the noise of feet, and the rest depart.

On a sudden impulse the boy seizes a linen sheet from his bed, wraps it round his body and follows. He watches under the olive trees, sure that some crisis is at hand. A flare of torches, and the betrayer is there. With a boy's reckless loyalty he shouts some protest, and angry hands lay hold of him. Slipping out of his sheet Mark escapes. Perhaps he bore a cruel and mutilating sword-slash across his fingers, for an old tradition says that in the early Church Mark was called "the

Stumpfingered.”³

Indelible were the impressions being made as young John Mark grew up in the environs of a professing holy city and in the shelter of a genuinely devout home. He must have been an eyewitness of some events of Jesus’ life. He could not escape crossing the trail of the Son of God. And all the while he was being prepared for a later work in the service of the gospel, studying the Scriptures and learning the current languages of the metropolis — Aramaic, Greek, and Latin.

Mary had a house and a family, and they were given to God. And God had a Son and a gospel, and they were given to the world. Mary’s Mark and God’s gospel were brought together, and millions of souls since then have cherished the possession of that union, the gospel according to Mark.

2. *Conversion.* Though the devout Judaistic

heritage formulated the recollections of Mark's earlier life, there came the day in his life when, like his mother, he was confronted with the claims of the man of Galilee, and was compelled to answer the question, "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29). Peter may have been the disciple used of God to lead Mark to Christ, and this may be why Peter speaks of Mark as "Mark my son" (1 Pet. 5:13). Details of Mark's conversion experience, however, are not given in the New Testament record.

3. *Christian ministry.* Two gospel writers, Matthew and John, were apostles of Jesus. The other two, Mark and Luke, were not of the chosen twelve. The New Testament verses where Mark's name appears reveal some of the highlights of Mark's experience in Christian service. Read each passage, the context surrounding it, and record biographical notes about Mark in each case.

Passage	Date A.D.	Place' and Ministry	Colaborers
Acts 12:12,25	46		
13:5	47		
13:13	47		
15:37-39	49		
Col. 4:10	61		
Philem. 23-24	61		
2 Tim. 4:11	67		
1 Pet. 5:13	68		

Observe among other things the variety of colaborers, and the fact of Paul's and Mark's reconciliation after the separation of Acts 13:13. What do you think helped Mark to mature spiritually between his turning back at Perga (Acts 13:13) and his writing of the gospel at Rome some twenty years later? Blaiklock comments on this, "He was taking up the task he abandoned at Perga. ... In Mark's Gospel ... we meet the man who failed and tried again, the man who, by a friend's help, rebuilt a testimony, and left that testimony in a deathless book."⁵

As noted earlier, the Gentile world was Mark's main sphere of activity, throughout his Christian ministry. One support of this observation is that his Hebrew name John

(Johanan) is never used in the epistles, but only his Roman name Mark.

4. *Mark's character.* A character sketch of Mark based on the Bible is at best only partial. But from the verses about him and the gospel written by him, there emerges a portrait of an energetic servant of Christ — a servant who was impulsive, hasty, alert, zealous, friendly, cooperative, humble, and honest. Mark matured over the years, just as his spiritual father Peter did. At the peak of that divine maturing process he had the intense joy of penning the “unadorned and unpretentious, but quite overpowering”⁶ gospel according to Mark.

5. *Death.* Mark died not long after Peter's A.D. 67 martyrdom, according to tradition.

## **B. TITLE**

A common title appearing in ancient Greek manuscripts of Mark is *Euaggelion kata Markon* (Gospel according to Mark). The account is the “gospel of⁷ Jesus Christ” (1:1), *according to* the divinely inspired writer, Mark.

### **C. AUTHORSHIP**

Although the human author is not identified in the gospel, internal evidence from the text itself agrees with the external witness of the early church Fathers that John Mark was the author.⁸

It is generally held that Peter was Mark’s informant of eyewitness stories about Jesus. It is possible that Peter was referring to this forthcoming manuscript by Mark when he wrote 2 Peter 1:15. (Read the verse in the context of its two preceding verses.)

Here is a possible reconstruction of that Mark-Peter relationship: Some time near the close of the earthly lives of Peter and Paul, a gospel record of the ministry of Jesus was taking shape in the mind and heart of Mark, by the moving of the Holy Spirit. At the time, both Mark and Peter were living in Rome. Mark's gospel was to be a brief eyewitness account of Jesus' life. But Mark, not being one of the twelve apostles of Jesus, obviously did not see or hear firsthand very much of Jesus' ministry. This is where Peter came into the picture. Peter's close relationship with Jesus, as one of His apostles, fitted him superbly for sharing with Mark the eyewitness data for writing. We may wonder why Peter, a gifted writer, was not chosen to write the gospel. We are satisfied that God knew what kind of gospel record He wanted written, and that Mark was the person so fitted for the task. So it

was Peter the informant, Mark the writer, and God the inspirer.

## **D. PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING**

Mark wrote his book while living in Rome. There are two main views as to the date of writing: early and late.⁹ This survey guide follows the latter view, that the gospel was finished around A.D. 68, soon after Peter's death and before the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70).¹⁰ According to this view, Matthew, Luke, and Luke's other book Acts, had already been written. (See Chart 1, p. 20.) Matthew was the account that would have spread the gospel to the Jews scattered around the Mediterranean world. How Mark's gospel met the needs of Romans is described by Henry Thiessen:

The Book of Acts records the

onward march of Christianity through Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and to Italy. No doubt a good many of the Gentiles who were saved during this time were Romans. Acts shows in various ways how the Roman officials were friendly to Paul. *Finally the time came when a Gospel was needed that was designed especially for the Romans* [italics added].¹¹

## **E. ORIGINAL READERS**

Mark's gospel was written especially for Gentile readers in general and Roman laymen in particular.¹² The Roman mind was impressed more by action and power than by discourse and dialogue. (See Chart 18, p. 108.) W. Graham Scroggie writes:

Reason and philosophy, so convincing to the Greek would mean little to the Roman, who was a man of action rather than contemplation. “The Gospel for him must present the character and career of Jesus from the Roman ... point of view, as answering to the idea of Divine power, work, law, conquest, and universal sway. To the Roman these are the credentials of Jesus, no less essential than prophecy to the Jew, and philosophy to the Greek.”¹³

This accounts for the style and content of the writing, as will be noted below. If Mark wrote the book in Rome, the first readers were no doubt residents of that city. They might even have asked him to compose such a gospel.

## **F. STYLE**

Three characteristics of this gospel identify its style: rapid action, vivid detail, picturesque description. These will be observed in your survey study.

## **G. PURPOSE AND THEME**

With the Roman outlook in mind Mark stressed the *actions*, not so much the words, of Jesus in his reporting the life of Christ and recording the claims of the gospel.

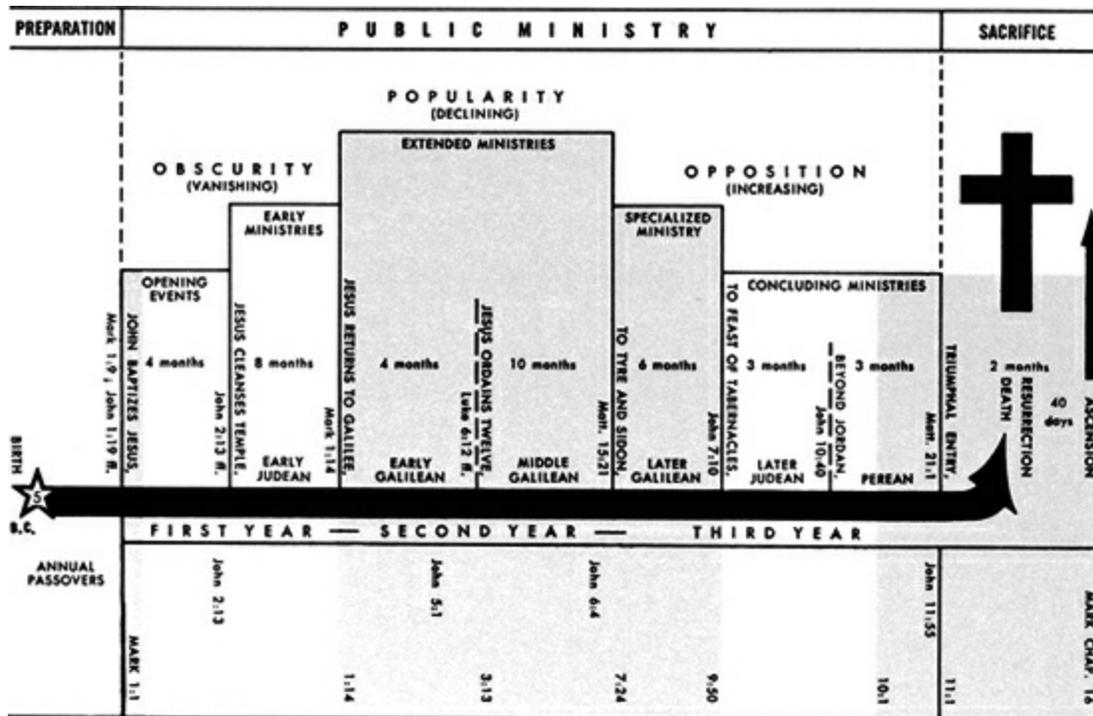
The opening verse (1:1) identifies Mark's evangelistic purpose: to record the historical facts of Christ's earthly life, which were the foundations of the glad tidings of salvation. The apostles and other saints were continuing to proclaim that gospel, which originated in the historical facts. Mark was

inspired to show Christ as the ever-active servant, “living and working among men, in the fulness of His energy, the Servant Who stooped to conquer ...”¹⁴; “for even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”(10:45). This *servant portrait* of Jesus is drawn naturally by such a man as Mark. Everett Harrison writes of this, “As one who ministered to Barnabas and Paul and also to Peter, Mark was a suitable figure to relate the ministry to Jesus in such a way as to emphasize his mission in terms of humble service.”¹⁵

Just a few years before Mark wrote his gospel, Nero had burned Rome (A.D. 64) and blamed the Christians for it, in order to launch open persecution against them. Mark might have written his account to encourage the persecuted saints. (See 10:30, the only synoptic reference to persecutions.)

Chart 29 shows the coverage that Mark gives to the public ministry of Christ (the shaded areas represent Mark's coverage). Such selectivity is always divinely inspired. What are your observations of Mark's coverage, from this chart? How far into Christ's public ministry do chapters 1-9 go? What is the reporting of chapters 10-16? How much of Jesus' first year does Mark report?

# CHART 29: LIFE OF CHRIST SHOWING COVERAGE BY MARK (SHADED AREA)



## III. SURVEY

### A. PREPARING TO SURVEY

It is important in survey study to know *what* you are looking for. Recall from your earlier studies that among the main activities that constitute the *what* of survey study are (not necessarily in this order):

1. Discovering the book's overall *theme*

2. Observing *patterns* and *movements* in the literary structure, or organization, of the book

3. Noting *highlights* of the book, and finding *clues* for the study of its various parts

4. Getting a *feel* of the book's atmosphere and approach.

Keep these goals always before you as you make your survey study of Mark.

As a starter, to get a little feel of the book, do these three things: (a) turn the pages of the book, noting the number of chapters and their length; (b) observe the length of each verse of Chapter 1, and note the first word of each verse; (c) read aloud 1:1-13.

## **B. FIRST READING**

1. Scan the book of Mark in one sitting if possible. It is not necessary to read every word or line at this time. If your Bible has paragraph divisions, reading the first sentence of each paragraph will suffice for now. If your Bible has chapter or paragraph headings, note them as you scan the book.

2. Write down your first impressions of the book.

3. What is the atmosphere of the book as a whole?

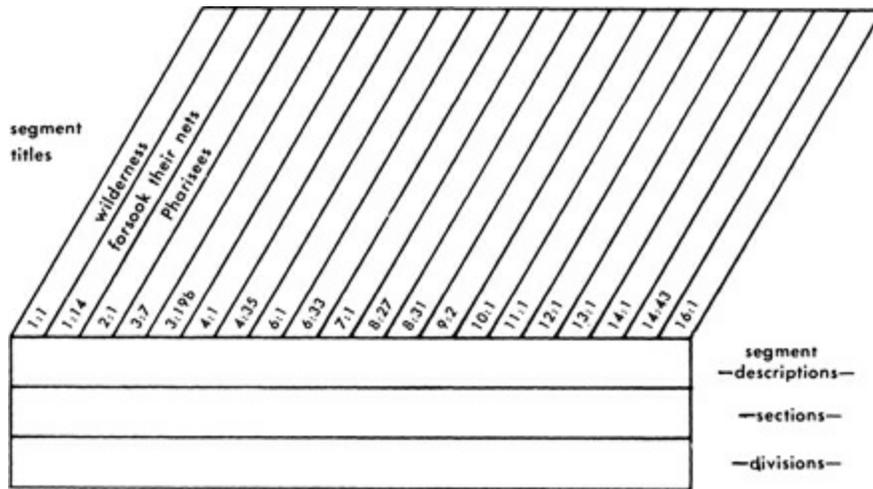
4. List any key words and phrases that stand out after the first reading.

5. Compare the opening verse (1:1) with the concluding verses (16:19-20) of the gospel.

## **C. SURVEYING INDIVIDUAL SEGMENTS**

1. First identify the sequence of twenty segments in Mark, as these are laid out on Chart 30. As an aid for the studies that follow, mark in your Bible the beginning of each segment. (Reasons for the segment dimensions will be seen later.)

## CHART 30: SEGMENT TITLES OF MARK



2. Now scan the book of Mark again, segment by segment. Assign a segment title to each unit. Record these on Chart 30 (examples are given).

3. Go through the segments again and record the main subject of each segment, in as few words as possible. (A main subject may not be similar to a segment title, because segment titles are not intended necessarily to represent main subjects.)

4. What other things have you observed about the book of Mark, in addition to your first impressions? Make a list of those.

Compare your observations with the following partial list:

a. Most of the different actions in Mark are very short, like candid snapshots. Recall your earlier observations of the length of verses in chapter 1 and of the repeated first word of each verse.

b. Most of the text reports events, with little comment. Mark is a book of continuous action. “It moves at a breathless pace, portraying Jesus as incessantly active.”¹⁶ One writer says that “Mark’s words are little pictures.”

c. Some of the most awesome and soul-shaking events are recorded in what appears to be calm, matter-of-fact fashion. Look for some of those in chapter 1.

d. The word *immediately* appears often.

e. The narrative does not report the birth and infancy of Jesus.

F. Although most of the gospel is narrative, two long teaching sections appear in 4:1-34 (parables) and chapter 13 (prophecy).¹⁷

G. Mark frequently reports personal gestures of Jesus (3:5; 5:41; 7:33; 8:23; 9:27; 10:16); emotions of Jesus (3:5; 6:6, 34; 8:12; 10:14, 21); and people's reactions to Jesus' ministries (1:27; 2:7; 4:41; 6:14; 7:37; 14:1). Read the verses cited, and add others to the list from your own observations.

5. The writing style of Mark can be described as graphic, vigorous, concise, clear, orderly, and dynamic. Can you think of different examples from the text that illustrate those descriptions?

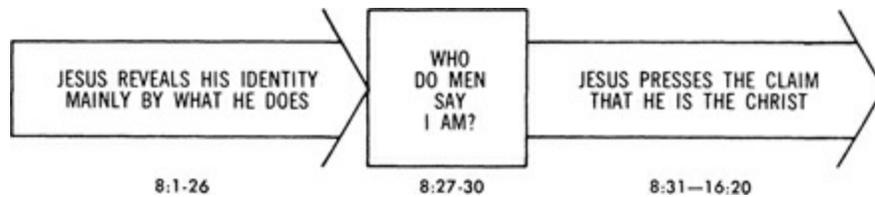
## **D. SEEING HOW THE BOOK HOLDS TOGETHER**

Mark, like the other three gospels, is a unified story of selected parts of Jesus' life. Let us see how the author organized his material.

1 . *Looking for a key turning point in the narrative.* It is clear from all four gospels that Jesus came to earth to minister by *life* and by *death*. Mark 10:45, which may be used as a key verse for Mark, states that very clearly. (Read the verse.) Where in Mark's gospel does Jesus move from the *ministration* phase to the *sacrifice* phase by explicitly telling of His coming death? The answer is: at 8:27. (Read that verse and the following verses.) This is the pivotal or turning point in the action of Mark's gospel.

Observe Jesus' key question and Peter's answer in 8:27-30. Then study the following diagram, which is a key outline for Mark's gospel.

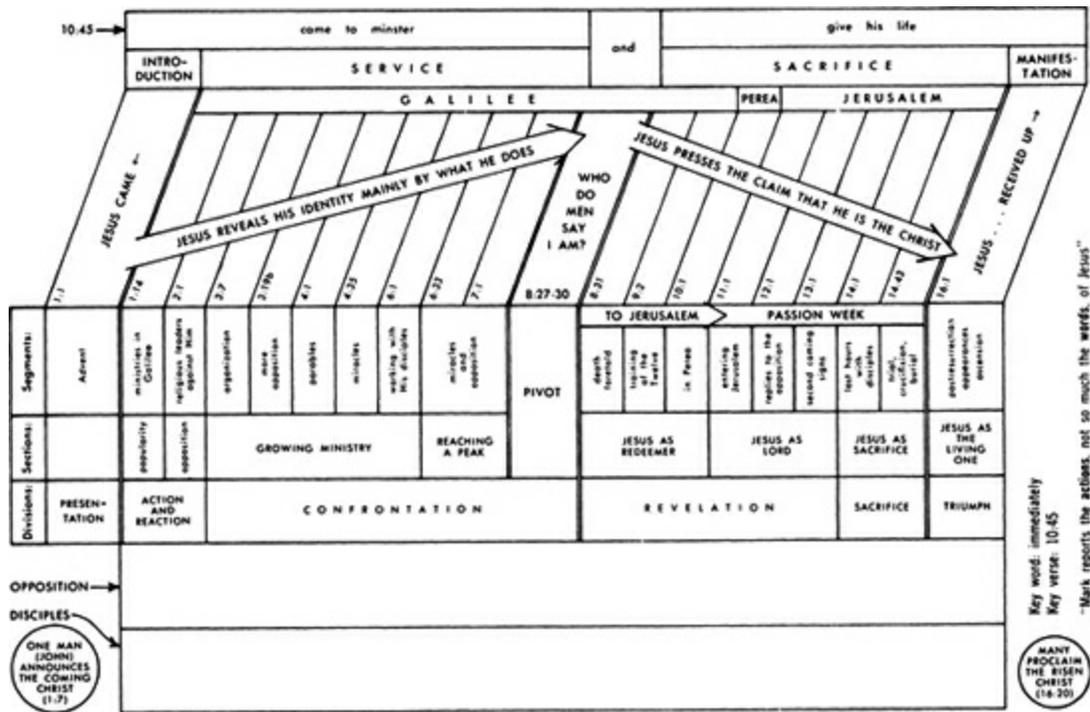
# KEY OUTLINE OF MARK



Up to 8:27 Mark shows how Jesus revealed His true identity mainly by His deeds.¹⁸ Then (8:27-30) Jesus inquires about His reputation. He learns that people have not seen Him as the Son of God, but only as an emissary sent from God (such as John the Baptist or Elijah). Jesus knew that to extend His public ministry by giving more of the same kind of revelation would not change the people's reactions. Basically, he had fulfilled the *deeds* phase of His ministering ("For even the Son of Man came ... to serve," 10:45a). Now He must proceed to the second task, that of giving His life ("and to give His life a ransom for many," 10:45b). This was not the life of a mere

man, but of Messiah, the Christ — the anointed one (*krino*) — who Peter, by revelation, confessed Him to be (8:29). And so, Jesus began to teach His disciples very explicitly that He (the Christ) must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and after three days rise again. The story of Mark from this point on, then, is the story of *sacrifice*.

# CHART 31: MARK: THE SERVANT JESUS



Observe how the strategic center of Mark, which was just described, is shown on the survey of the whole book, Chart 31.

2. *Looking for groups of material.* Refer back to Chart 30, page 142, where you recorded segment titles and segment main subjects. Study your series, and look for groups of segments according to similar subjects. Record those as sections.

Note on Chart 31 that the segment divisions are the same as on Chart 30. Some

segments do not begin at the first verse of the chapter (e. g., 1:14; 3:7). Refer to your Bible text and justify why the divisions are made where they are. The segment subjects shown on Chart 31 will help you here.

The bulk of a survey chart shows how the small individual segments combine to make groups of material with a common subject. For example, the two segments beginning at 14:1 and 14:43 are identified on the chart as the section *Jesus as sacrifice*.

As noted in Chapter 3, one of the advantages of a survey chart over the standard outline is that various topical outlines can be viewed simultaneously. Also, a survey chart is a vivid visual reference for context as one analyzes an individual segment.

A division, which is a group of sections, is determined in the same manner as a section.

Study the divisions shown on Chart 31. Observe the following on this survey chart:

a. Compare the opening segment (1:1-13) and the concluding segment (16:1-20).

b. What outlines show two main divisions in the book?

c. Study the various sectional and divisional outlines.

d. Note the geographical pattern of Mark's account. Relate this geographical pattern (Galilee, then Jerusalem) to the three-part outline around the pivotal 8:27-30, studied earlier.

e. At some time in your study, record at the bottom of the chart the various oppositions to Jesus and the part the disciples play in the gospel record. (You may want to do this exercise later on.)

f. What is the climactic part of Mark's

account? In what ways is it a climax?

3. *Identifying a Main Theme.* In your own words, what is the main theme of Mark? Your survey study should supply the answer. Also try assigning a title to Mark, one that would coincide with the theme. Observe the title shown on Chart 31 — *The Servant Jesus*.

4. *Your Own Summary of Mark's Gospel.* Try writing out your own summary of Mark's gospel. To do this, use all the survey studies you have made of the gospel account, together with everything supplied by this study guide. A sure way of staying on track as you move through the account is to follow the progression of the survey on Chart 31, segment by segment and section by section. As an example of what such a summary is, the following is supplied. Casually view its format; then write out your own summary.

*Announced and anointed for a redemptive ministry (Presentation, 1:1-13), Jesus preached and worked in the company of the multitudes, attracting many (Popularity, 1:14-45) and angering not a few (Opposition, 2:1—3:6). Jesus anticipated the day when He would no longer minister on this earth, and so He began to organize a band of close disciples (Organization, 3:7-35) while He continued to teach (Parables, 4:1-34) and perform miracles (Miracles, 4:35—5:43). Although He delegated more and more responsibility to the disciples (6:1-32), He nevertheless remained the tireless servant of the multitudes, constantly revealing His true identity by eventually coming to the moment when this phase of His ministry concluded (Peak of Advance, 6:33—8:30). From this point on, as He set*

*His face toward Jerusalem for the last time, He pressed the claim of His being the Christ. He explicitly told of His coming death and resurrection (Jesus as Redeemer, 8:31—10:52); claimed divine authority and prophesied of the future (Jesus as Lord, 11:1—13:37). Then the death plot was drawn up (Plot, 14:1-11); Jesus spent His last hours of fellowship with His disciples (With Disciples, 14:12-42); and He was tried, crucified, and buried (14:43—15:47). Raised from the dead by God, He appeared to His disciples and gave them the mandate of world-wide evangelization, as He was received up into heaven (Triumph, chap. 16).*

#### **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

## A. PRESENTATION (1:1-13)

Mark quickly gets to the main theme of his account, which is the *service* and *sacrifice* of Jesus the servant, by using just thirteen verses to introduce Jesus and His main ministry. Mark does this in the organization of his writing by omission (e. g., the nativity of Jesus is not included) and condensation (note how this is done for the wilderness temptations, 1:12-13).

Read the *presentation* passage. How does a condensed, brief opening passage like this call attention to itself? Does this illustrate the principle that emphasis can be made by brief content as well as by long content? Record how each paragraph points forward to the upcoming public ministry.

1:1 _____

1:2-8 _____

1:9-11 _____

1:12-13 _____

Who are the main characters of this opening passage of Mark?

Refer to Chart 29, page 140. How much of Jesus' three-year public ministry is spanned by Mark 1:1-13?

## **B. ACTION AND REACTION (1:14—3:6)**

This part of Mark covers much of the four-month period of Jesus' second year, after He returned to Galilee for His extended ministries (Chart 29). It includes a short time of popularity (*action*), followed quickly by opposition (*reaction*). (See Chart 31, p. 144.)

Read each part of this ministry, and record your identifications of the main parts:

Popularity 1:14-45

Opposition 2:1—3:6

## **C. CONFRONTATION (3:7—8:30)**

Mark shows incessant confrontation of Jesus with the religious leaders and the multitudes. The leaders always opposed Jesus; the multitudes usually followed the leaders, but at times they showed interest in this man of Galilee (either out of curiosity or because they were impressed by His miracles). Refer again to Chart 31. What three sections make up the division called *confrontation*?

Read the gospel account and record things that support the following outline:

- . Growing Ministry (3:7—6:32)
  - a. Scope of the Ministry (3:7-12)

- b. Helpers in the Ministry (3:13-19)
- c. Opposition to the Ministry (3:20-35)
- d. Ministry in Word (Parables, 4:1-34)
- e. Ministry in Works (Miracles, 4:35—6:32)
- . Reaching a Peak (6:33—8:26)
- . Pivot (8:27-30)

## **D. MIRACLES (4:35—6:32)**

Because he emphasizes the *works* of Jesus,¹⁹ miracles occupy a prominent place in Mark's gospel. Jesus' miracles were performed to show His power and authority and to attest that He was sent from God. Read this passage on miracles, and record observations on *power* according to the outline shown:

power over nature (4:35-41)

power over demons (5:1-20)

power over death (5:21-24, 35-43)

power over disease (5:25-34)

power restricted (6:1-6a)

power delegated (6:66-13)

power recognized (6:14-29)

power at rest (6:30-32)

## **E. TURNING POINT OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY (8:27—9:1)**

This is the pivotal point of Jesus' public ministry, the time at which He turned His eyes toward His death and resurrection. As Jesus reminisced with His disciples about the two and one-half years He had just completed of ministering to the multitudes, His one great concern was, "Who do people say I am?" According to the disciples' answer (8:28), He had failed to get across to the people who He really was. It must have

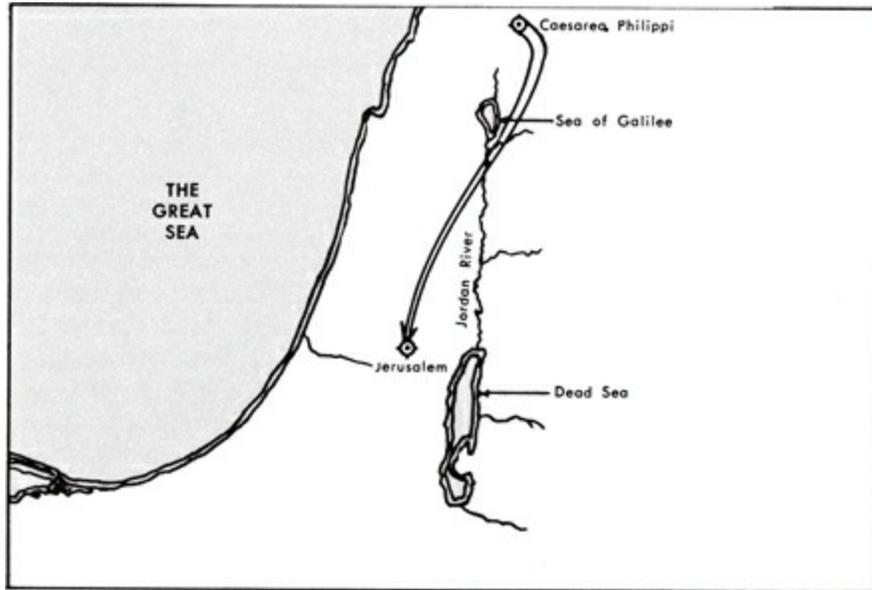
been gratifying to hear Peter's reply, "Thou art the Christ" when Jesus directed the question to Peter personally.²⁰

We know that this conversation between Jesus and the twelve marked a turning point in Jesus' ministry, because then for the first time He began to tell His disciples *explicitly* that He must die and be raised again the third day (8:31). He had hinted at it before and had foretold the events in parables and figures (e. g., John 2:19; 3:14), but He had not spelled it all out openly in clear words, (cf. 8:32a).

Jesus was miles away from Jerusalem at the time of the pivotal point of 8:27-30. (See accompanying Map J.) On His way to the holy city His main attention would be focused on His disciples, to prepare them for the months and years ahead. He would also have limited contacts with the multitudes,

and intense discussions with His opponents. In all of this He would, by showing Himself as Redeemer, Lord, Sacrifice, and the ever-living One, be pressing the claim that He was the Christ, the anointed Messiah. How do those four identifications appear on the survey, Chart 31 (p. 144)?

## MAP J: LAST MINISTRIES OF JESUS



Record what the three paragraphs of 8:27—9:1 teach about the following:

- Person of Christ 8:27-30
- work of Christ 8:31-33
- followers of Christ 8:34—9:1

### **F. JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION (9:2-13)**

The “high mountain” where the transfiguration took place was probably Mount Hermon (9,200 feet), about twelve miles northeast of Caesarea Philippi. (See Map F, p. 65.)

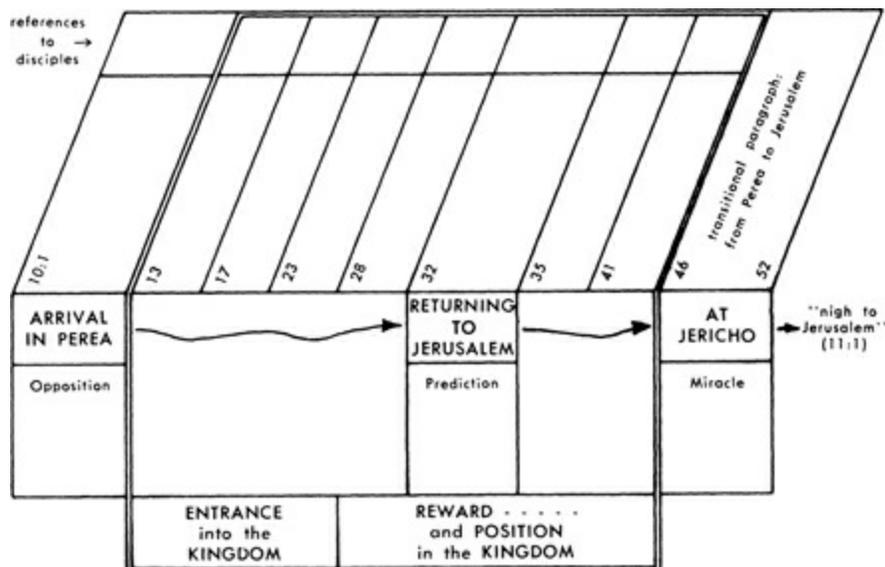
One factor that made Jesus' transfiguration especially impressive upon the hearts and minds of Peter, James, and John was *when* it took place — just about a week after the pivotal session around the questions “Who do people say that I am?” (8:27). For in the transfiguration experience, the prominent spoken words are those of Jesus' Father, and they also are about Jesus' identity: “This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!” (9:7). After you have read the entire passage, relate it to 8:27-30. Then reflect on how an experience like the transfiguration, at the time it occurred, would prepare the way for all that was to follow — in Jesus' life and also in the disciples' experiences.

## **G. MINISTRIES IN PEREA²¹ (10:1-52)**

Refer to Chart 29, page 140, and observe that Mark skips over the later Judean

ministry and part of the Perean ministries of Jesus. All of [chapter 10](#) is his reporting of the latter part of the Perean period. Chart 32 shows the organization of that chapter. Refer to the chart as you read the Bible text.

# CHART 32: MINISTRIES IN PEREA MARK 10:1-52



When we keep in mind that Jesus left Caesarea Philippi to go to Jerusalem to be crucified, and that He never sought to postpone His death, then we will see that His ministries for the next six months in Judea and Perea (Chart 32) were not delaying tactics but rather foreordained appointments of a divine calendar. In short, Jesus went to Perea because it was not yet His time to die, and because He had a work to do in those regions in the meantime.

What is chapter 10 mostly about: words or works?

Relate the teachings of Jesus to His impending death, resurrection, and glorification.

What is the context of 10:45, which is the verse chosen as a key verse of Mark?

## **H. DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS (15:22—16:8)**

Read the three parts of this account, in one sitting. Note all the short verses. What are your overall impressions of Mark's record? Compare this passage with all that goes before it.

Some hold that the original writing of Mark concluded at 16:8. If that were so, what are your impressions of such a conclusion?

# I. THE LAST TWELVE VERSES OF MARK (16:9-20)

There are major differences of opinion among textual critics²² as to whether the original autograph of Mark ended with verse 8, verse 20, or some other ending. Read the marginal notes at 16:8, 16:9, and 16:20 in the NASB.²³ One project for Further Study is based on this.

For this survey study, set aside all considerations of a short or long ending of Mark. Approach the passage as the authentic conclusion to Mark's gospel, and answer the following:

1. What are the various contents?
2. Who are the characters?
3. What do the last two verses report?
4. What earmarks of *conclusion* do you observe in the last two verses?

## V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES OF MARK

You have already observed the word *immediately* as a key word of Mark.²⁴ Usually the word *and* is not designated as a key word, but for Mark, the book of *continuous action*, it is a prominent word, appearing very often. Did you observe any other words, which may be called key words, as you surveyed Mark?

We have already suggested 10:45 as a key verse of Mark, one representing Jesus' redemptive ministry in the role of Servant. In your survey did you see other verses that may be called key verses of Mark?

## VI. APPLICATIONS

1. Mark was raised in a devout, God-fearing home. What are your reflections about God's often calling servants from such

homes, to carry on His work?

2. Mark matured spiritually during the years after Christ's ascension. What do you learn from Mark's experiences, regarding what contributed to his maturity?

3. Mark's account stresses the fact of *real events* — one after the other — in Jesus' life. How does that strengthen one's Christian faith?

4. What would you answer someone who asked you, on the spot, "Who do you say Jesus is?"

5. Jesus was the Christ — the Anointed One. What does this teach about His Father and about Himself? How are you brought into the picture?

6. List some major spiritual truths that you have learned in your survey of Mark.

## VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When was Mark born, and how old was he when he died?
2. What were the highlights of Mark's Christian service?
3. How did each of the following men influence Mark's life: Barnabas, Paul, Peter?
4. What kind of person was Mark?
5. For whom was this account originally written? What are some evidences of this?
6. Name some characteristics of Mark's writing, such as style.
7. What is the purpose and theme of Mark's account?
8. What is the pivotal point of the book? What three-point outline can be built around this?
9. What outline of Mark is suggested by the key verse 10:45?
10. Name some prominent passages of

Mark.

11. What is one key word of Mark?

## VIII. FURTHER STUDY

1. Study various sources on the unsettled question of the date of Mark's writing. Correct interpretation of the Bible text, of course, does not depend on the date, otherwise, God would have included the date in the text. But observations concerning such things as background (e. g., how much of the recorded gospel the readers were already exposed to) are made from the conclusions of date. Think of other things that do depend on date.

2. Study the question about the "long" or "short" ending of Mark. Among other things, compare Bible versions to see how the translators and publishers have represented their conclusions regarding the question.

Also, arrive at your own answer to this question, “If verses 9-20 are not genuine, why did God in His providence allow them to pass for genuine, in most Bibles, for so long?”

## IX. OUTLINE

MARK: The Servant Jesus	
SERVICE OF JESUS	1:1—9:1
Presentation	1:1-13
Popularity and Opposition	1:14—3:6
Growing Ministry	3:7—6:32
Reaching a Peak	6:33—8:26
Turning Point	8:27—9:1
SACRIFICE OF JESUS	9:2—15:47
Jesus as Redeemer	9:2—10:52
Jesus as Lord	11:1—13:37
Jesus as Sacrifice	14:1—15:47
TRIUMPH OF JESUS	16:1-20

## X. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Harrison, Everett F. *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 171-83.

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1:81-113.

Scroggie, W. Graham. *A Guide to the Gospels*, pp. 161-238.

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*, pp. 153-65.

Thiessen, Henry Clarence. *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 139-49.

## COMMENTARIES

Cole, R. A. *The Gospel According to St. Mark*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.

Earle, Ralph. *Mark: The Gospel of Action*. Everyman's Bible Commentary.

Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*. In his New Testament Commentary Series.

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *Mark: A Portrait of*

*the Servant.*

Lenski, R. C. H. *The Interpretation of Mark.*

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Gospel According to Mark.* Unexcelled for its thematic studies in the gospel.

## **OTHER RELATED SOURCES**

Blaiklock, E. M. *Mark: The Man and His Message.*

Burgon, John W. *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to St. Mark.*

Geisler, Norman L., and Nix, William E. *A General Introduction to the Bible.*

Jensen, Irving L. *Life of Christ.*

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Parables and Metaphors of Our Lord.*

Robertson, A. T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Vol. 1.

_____. *Making Good in the Ministry*. pp. 1-174. A description of Mark's biography.

Vine, W. E. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

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1. The Greek *Markos* is from the Latin *markus*, "large hammer."

2. D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospels and Acts*, 1:89.

3. E. M. Blaiklock, *Mark: The Man and His Message*, pp. 9-10.

4. For the places involved in some of the passages, follow the views that Paul wrote Colossians from Rome; "Babylon" was a symbolical reference to Rome; and Timothy was living at Ephesus when Paul wrote 2 Timothy.

5. Blaiklock, *Mark*, pp. 14-15.

6. C. F. D. Moule, *The Gospel According to Mark*, p. 4.

7. The *New International Version* reads, “gospel about Jesus Christ.”

8. Among these are the Greek fathers Papias (A.D. 70-155), Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165), Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-217), Irenaeus (A.D. 120-192), Origen (A.D. 185-254), Eusebius (A.D. 270-340); and the Latin fathers, Tertullian (A.D. 150-220), and Jerome (A.D. 340-420). (Most dates are approximate.)

9. Each view has strong arguments in its support. For a defense of an early date of A.D. 50, see W. Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels*, pp. 170-71. Henry C. Thiessen defends the late view in *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 145-46. Any view on the date of Mark’s writing must be tentative, for as Everett Harrison observes, “We do not possess the data for a precise

dating of the Gospel” (Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 177).

10. Mark had prophesied the city’s fall in part of chapter 13 of his gospel.

11. Henry C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 145.

12. Among evidences of a non-Jewish audience is Mark’s explanation of Jewish and Aramaic terms and customs not clear to the average Roman (e. g., 5:41; 7:2-4, 11, 34). Other non-Jewish characteristics: a paucity of Old Testament quotations; telling the reader the location of the Mount of Olives (13:3); no mention of the Jewish law.

13. W. Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels*, p. 169.

14. W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 2:27.

15. Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 175.

16. D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospels and Acts*, 1:97.

17. A comparison of the four gospels shows these percentages reporting Christ's words: Mark, forty-three percent; Luke and John, each nearly fifty percent; and Matthew, sixty percent.

18. In His contacts with the multitudes, Jesus also revealed His true identity by *word*, but Mark stresses the *works* ministry.

19. Mark rightly reports the parables of Jesus, as well (4:1-34), because the *words* and *works* of Jesus cannot be divorced. There are eighteen miracles in Mark. Proportionately more space is given to miracles in Mark than in the other gospels.

20. As reported by Matthew (Matt. 16:17), Jesus told Peter that His Father had revealed the truth of Jesus' messiahship and deity to Peter.

21. The name Perea does not appear in the

Bible, but it is the region referred to as “beyond the Jordan” (10:2). (See Map F, p. 65.) The Greek of that phrase, *peran tou Iordanou*, indicates how the word Perea was derived.

**22.** Textual criticism (also called “lower criticism”) is the discipline of reconstructing the Bible text as it probably appeared in the original manuscripts. The whole discipline is based on thousands of manuscripts, no one of which is part of *the* original writing. See Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pp. 358-93.

**23.** Most Bibles with marginal notes refer to this disputed question.

**24.** The Greek word *utheos* appears about forty times in Mark, translated in different versions as “immediately,” “straightway,” “forthwith,” “anon,” and so forth. It appears more often in Mark’s account than in the other three gospels combined.

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## ***7Luke: The Son of Man Among Men***

The gospel of Luke is the longest book of the New Testament, and of the four gospels it gives the most comprehensive picture of the life and ministry of Christ. After one has completed a study of Matthew and Mark, the pages of Luke's gospel are a warm and vibrant invitation to walk over new paths.

Luke and John are the two gospel writers who state in the biblical text something of their purpose in writing.¹ Luke, writing to his friend Theophilus, puts it this way: "It seemed fitting for me as well ... to write it out for you in consecutive order ... so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught."² So as Luke was inspired to write his account, the *content* he had in mind was the "exact truth," and the *form* he had in mind was "consecutive order." He was not implying that the

accounts of the gospel story written by other authors were inadequate or deficient, but rather that *he also was led to* write an account, of the kind identified by his words of purpose. And his reporting, inspired by the Holy Spirit, became part of the twenty-seven-book New Testament canon.

All survey and analytical study of the Bible text involves (1) what the Bible says (*content*) and (2) how it says it (*form*). Our survey of this third gospel will focus therefore on both of the following, which Luke had in mind as he wrote: (1) the content of exact truth and (2) the form of consecutive orderliness. Before doing that, however, we will study the background and setting of this inspired work, to better appreciate and understand its message.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

Review Chart 18, page 108, which shows comparisons of the four gospels. Luke is one of the three synoptic gospels. Note especially how it is compared with Matthew and Mark, which you have just surveyed in the preceding chapters. Among other things, the writer Luke is identified as a litterateur, a man of letters, for he was gifted and probably trained in the art of composition. We may expect to observe evidences of this training as we survey his book.

Think more about content (*what* the Bible says) and form (*how* it says it). The Holy Spirit moved in the heart and mind of each author of Scripture as he wrote, without dictating what the author should write.³ We do not know the exact process used by the Holy Spirit to guide each writer, but we know that the end product — the Scripture itself — is the authoritative Word of God. The human author's choice of words, style,

and plan of composing reflects his own personality, training, and background. Does this process of inspiration account for differences in the four gospels? If so, what kind of differences?

To what extent do you think Jews, living at the time of Jesus' birth, knew of and looked for the promised coming of Jesus as their Messiah? After you have thought about that, read Luke 2:22-38 and observe the expectations of two saints, Simeon and Anna.

To know the writer of this gospel is to appreciate more fully the book he has written. From the sparse biographical data about Luke contained in the gospels and Acts, an unusually full portrait of the man can be composed. The following pages are about the man Luke. Careful study of the descriptions is good preparation for your

survey studies.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

This gospel was inspired and written according to divine design and schedule, eventually to be listed as the forty-second book of the sixty-six-book library in the Bible. Let us see how it came to be.

### **A. THE MAN LUKE**

1. *Birth and early life.* Luke was born of Greek parents, a heritage that made him probably the only Gentile writer of the New Testament. He was born at about the same time as Jesus and Paul. Two possible birthplaces are Antioch of Syria and Philippi of Macedonia. His parents gave him the name of Lucas, a shortened form of the Roman name Lucanus. He studied for the

medical profession, and this advanced education might have been received at either Athens or Tarsus. From the content and style of his books, we may speculate that history and literature were two of his favorite subjects.

2. *Conversion.* Luke was not a disciple of Jesus during Jesus' earthly ministry. While living in Antioch he may have been converted under the ministry of Paul, such as is referred to in Acts 11.25-26.⁴

3. *Profession and ministry.* Luke was a man of various talents and callings:

a. Physician. "Luke, the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14).⁵ If he studied medicine at the university in Tarsus, then he and Paul may have first met at the university, because it is very possible that Paul studied there, his hometown school.

b. Historian. His interest in history is

shown by the many historical datelines cited in the gospel (e. g., 1:5, 26, 56; 2:1-2, 21-22, 36-37, 42; 3:1-2).

c. Writer. Luke's gospel is considered by many to be a literary masterpiece. It reveals a highly trained composer, who had a very large vocabulary, vivid style, historical outlook, and gift of communication. The combination of Luke's gospel and Acts makes Luke the writer of more content of the New Testament than any other author.

d. Evangelist and pastor. He was Paul's colaborer on the apostle's missionary journeys, remaining with him until Paul's death (read Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philem. 24). Apparently Luke never married.

4. *Luke's character.* Luke's writings serve as character prints. What he included and emphasized in his gospel and Acts reveals much about what kind of man he was. We

see him as kind, humble, joyful, bright, pious, and gentle. He had a keen sense of the might, justice, and holiness of God. He was surely a man of prayer, because he reported praise and intercession often in his writings. For example, read the songs recorded at 1:46-55 (Mary); 1:67-79 (Zacharias); 2:13-14 (angels); 2:25, 29-32 (Simeon). Also, Luke's gospel refers to the prayers of Jesus more than do Matthew and Mark, and it contains three parables on prayer not found in the other gospels. Luke was also a man of love and sympathy for the underprivileged and those of humble estate; for women, children, and the poor; and for the outcasts, such as the Samaritans. He was truly a saint who identified himself with needy humankind, and thus was the very appropriate divine choice as the writer of the gospel of "The Son of Man Among Men."

5. *Death.* One tradition says Luke died as a

martyr in Greece. According to the anti-Marcionite “Prologue to Luke,” written around A.D. 170, “at the age of eighty-four he fell asleep in Boeotia, full of the Holy Spirit.”

## **B. AUTHORSHIP**

The author of this third gospel is nowhere named in the book,⁶ but tradition and internal evidence strongly support Lucan authorship. Concerning tradition, Guthrie observes, “At no time were any doubts raised regarding this attribution to Luke, and certainly no alternatives were mooted. The tradition could hardly be stronger.”⁷

The same author wrote both Luke and Acts. (Compare Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1.) The internal evidence of Acts points to Luke as its author, and this evidence in turn

supports the accepted Lucan authorship of the third gospel.⁸

### **C. PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING**

The place of writing is unknown; it could have been Caesarea or Rome. Luke wrote his gospel around A.D. 60, not much earlier than writing Acts (c. A.D. 61). Read Acts 1:1 for Dr. Luke's reference to his gospel as "the first account."

### **D. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Luke had access to other early written records of the life and ministry of Jesus (cf. Luke 1:1-2), and he also interviewed many people who had been eyewitnesses of the events of Jesus' life (Luke 1:2). While Paul was imprisoned at Caesarea before his

voyage to Rome, Luke had ample opportunity for such interviewing in the cities of Palestine. Paul himself, though not an eyewitness, must have had some influence on Luke's production of this gospel, even as Peter influenced Mark. Direct disclosure of some parts of the gospel came by the Holy Spirit; *all* the gospel was divinely inspired, or God-breathed.

## **E. ORIGINAL READERS**

Luke wrote this gospel especially for his friend Theophilus ("lover, or loved, of God;" see Acts 1:1; Luke 1:3). Theophilus may have been an influential Christian layman of Greece, possibly even a convert of Luke. When Luke's gospel began to circulate throughout the Roman Empire in the first century, the readers particularly attracted to

it were people of Greek culture, the culture that glorified wisdom, beauty, and the ideal man. The excellent literary style of this third gospel must have afforded a special attraction to such readers.

Luke had all mankind in mind when he wrote this gospel, which is one reason the title of Jesus, “Son of Man,” appears throughout the book. Also, he traces Jesus’ genealogy back to Adam, not just to Abraham (see Chart 15, p. 100).

## **F. PURPOSE AND THEME**

As noted earlier, Luke states his purpose in 1:1-4 — to write a consecutive, chronological account of the full and exact truth of Jesus’ ministry. Also, because there are *four* gospels instead of *one*, we may conclude that the gospel of Luke is intended

to complement the other three gospels by telling the story of Jesus from a different angle and for a different viewer. When the four gospels are compared, differences of the following kind are seen, as shown in the accompanying chart.

## COMPARISON OF FOUR GOSPELS

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Jesus as:	King of Israel	Servant of the Lord	Son of Man	Son of God
Reader:	Jew	Roman	Greek	World
Prominent ideas:	Law	Power	Grace	Glory

The theme of Luke concerns “Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people” (Luke 24:19). Luke presents Jesus as the Son of Man among men (19:10), the perfect God-man (cf. 1:35) who alone offers to all nations (24:47) the salvation of God (3:6). He emphasizes the universality of salvation, and the word faith appears often

in his gospel.⁹

## **IV. SURVEY**

### **A. PREPARING TO SURVEY**

As a starting acquaintance with Luke's gospel, observe how many chapters there are in the book. Then turn the pages of your Bible and note the average length of Luke's chapters. After that, compare the opening historical paragraph (1:5-7) and the concluding one (24:50-53). What are your observations?

### **B. FIRST READING**

Now scan the book of Luke in one sitting if possible. It is not necessary to read every word or line at this time. If your Bible has

paragraph divisions, reading the first sentence of each paragraph will suffice. If your Bible has chapter or paragraph headings, note those as you scan the book.

The purpose of this initial scanning is to get the feel and atmosphere of the book and to catch its major purposes. Write down your first impressions of the book and any key words and phrases that stand out as of this reading.

### **C. WORKING WITH INDIVIDUAL SEGMENTS**

Refer to Chart 34, page 162, and note that Luke is divided into twenty-four segments. All the segments begin at verse 1, with what exceptions?

## CHART 33: SEGMENT TITLES OF LUKE

1	2	3	4:14	5	6:12	7	8	9:51	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19:28	20	21:5	22	23	24	
			VIRGIN MARY	SWADDLING CLOTHES	JOHN . . . WILDERNESS																			

Now go through the book of Luke once again (still in cursory fashion), and assign a segment title to each segment. Recall that a segment title is a strong word or short phrase, preferably taken from the text, intended to serve as a clue to at least one main part of the segment. Some Bible students like to memorize these titles as an aid in recalling the movement of the entire book. Record your titles on a worksheet similar to Chart 33.

What are some of your impressions of this gospel so far?

What have you noticed so far about these subjects:

1. the various groups Jesus spoke to and worked with
2. the constant action in the book — Jesus moving from place to place
3. how much speaking, compared to working, that Jesus did
4. where miracles mainly appear
5. where parables mainly appear?

## **D. SEEKING INTEGRATING RELATIONSHIPS**

The gospels are not unorganized collections of the recorded words and deeds of Jesus. Each gospel is a unified story of selected parts of Jesus' life. The Holy Spirit's inspiration determined the selectivity in each case. A general chronology is followed, with some parts written mainly with a

topical organization in mind.

Let us now look at the organization of Luke.

1. Observe from Chart 34 that main divisions are made at 4:14; 9:51; and 19:28. In order to understand the reasons for these divisions, we need to know the overall plan of Jesus' life. Chart 35 shows this plan. The shaded area indicates how much of Jesus' life is reported by Luke.¹⁰ Observe the locations of Luke 4:14; 9:51; 19:28.

Read 4:14-15. Is Jesus engaged in public ministry here? Scan all that happens before 4:14, and the reason for a main division at 4:14 will become evident. Make a brief outline for these sections: 1:1— 2:20; 2:21-52; 3:1-20; 3:21-38; 4:1-13.

Now read 9:51. Note the geographical reference. It is at this point in Luke that Jesus enters the later Judean and Perea

ministries (see Chart 34) on His way to Jerusalem.

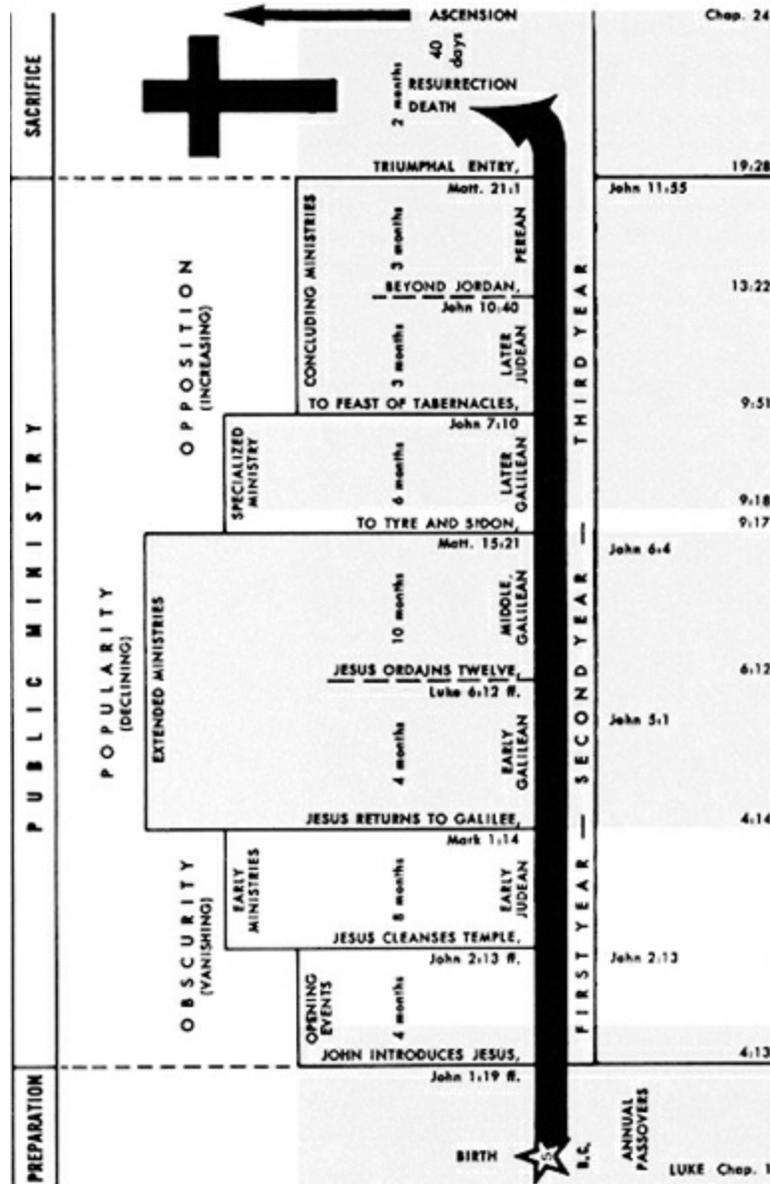
Read 19:28, and justify a main division at this point in the gospel.

2. It is interesting to observe where in Luke most of the miracles occur, and where the parables abound. Below is a list of each group. Record in the segment spaces of Chart 34 a check mark (✓) for each miracle, an (X) for each parable, and you will observe the respective concentrations.

*Miracles:* chap. 4: unclean demon, Simon's mother-in-law; chap. 5: fishes, leper, palsy; chap. 6: withered hand; chap. 7: centurion's servant, widow's son; 8:1—9:50: sea calm, man in tombs, twelve-year issue, Jairus's daughter, 5,000 fed, unclean spirit; chap. 11: dumb devil; chap. 13: eighteen-year infirmity; chap. 14: man with dropsy; chap. 17: ten lepers healed; chap. 21: ear healed.



# CHART 35: LIFE OF CHRIST SHOWING COVERAGE BY LUKE (SHADED AREA)



*Parables:* chap. 7: two debtors; chap. 8: sower; chap. 10: Good Samaritan; chap. 11: friend at midnight; chap. 12: rich fool; chap. 13: fig tree, mustard seed, leaven; chap. 15: lost sheep, lost coin, lost son; chap. 16: unrighteous steward; chap. 17: unprofitable

servants; 18:1—19:27: unjust judge, Pharisee and publican, pounds; chap. 20: wicked husbandman; chap. 21: signs of fig tree.

Concerning the deeds (miracles) and words (parables) of Jesus, compare 1 Corinthians 1:22: “For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom.” Also, read Luke 24:19, and note the phrase “mighty in deed and word.” How is this represented on Chart 34? Recall that Luke wrote the book of Acts. Read Acts 1:1, where Luke identifies what his gospel account was about. Relate the words “do” and “teach” with the two key words of Luke 24:19 already cited.

3. Study the outlines on Chart 34 to see how the segments of Luke may be brought together in groups of common subject. Try to relate each of your segment titles to the

different parts of the outlines. If you choose to do more survey study, you may want to add your own outlines to this chart.

The climax of Jesus' earthly ministry was His death and resurrection, so all four gospels include this in their last pages. On Chart 34 this reporting is identified by the one word *sacrifice*. What are the two main divisions of Luke just before this, leading to it? Relate the two outline words to the two words *deed* and *word* cited earlier. Most of what Luke reports in 1:1—4:13 is not found in the other gospels. How is this division identified on Chart 34?

4. Observe from the bottom of the chart the time duration of each division of Luke. Note that the largest division (9:51—19:27) is of only six months' duration. This division concerns Jesus' *transient* ministry on the way to Jerusalem. Note that much of these

chapters is found only in Luke.

5. How does Chart 34 compare the beginning (chap. 1) and ending (24:50-53) of Luke? Read the Bible text to confirm this.

6. What would you say is the main organizational outline of Luke, according to Chart 34? Compare this with the main outlines of Matthew (Chart 22, p. 120) and Mark (Chart 31, p. 144).

7. The structural organization of Luke's full account is simple and precise, which also describes his style with words and sentences.

## **V. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

The subjects that are identified below, because of their prominence in Luke, reveal something of that gospel's theme.

## **A. THE PERFECT HUMANITY OF CHRIST**

Luke presents Jesus as Son of God (e.g., 1:35), but he shows Him especially as Son of man. This gospel is the fullest account of the birth, childhood, domestic and social life of Jesus. It underscores His human feelings (e.g., 10:21; 19:41; 22:44). And many of His social contacts are reported, for example with Simon (7:36-50); with Martha and Mary (10:38-42); with Pharisees (11:37-52; 14:1-24); with Zaccheus (19:1-10).

Prayers of Jesus are prominent throughout the book, which fact again emphasizes His humanity. In the four gospels fifteen occasions of Christ praying are reported, eleven of which are found in Luke. Much teaching about prayer also is given in this third gospel (e.g., 11:5-13; 18:1-8; 21:36).

The genealogy of Jesus as recorded by Luke (3:23-38) also identifies Jesus

intimately with the human race, by tracing the descendants back to Adam (3:38). Recall your earlier study of this in [Chapter 4](#) (Chart 15, p. 100).

## **B. PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING**

Recall your earlier observation of praise at the beginning and end of this gospel (1:9; 24:52). Read the following passages, found only in Luke, which are the source of great hymns of the church:[11](#)

Ave Maria	1:28-31
Magnificat	1:46-56
Benedictus	1:68-79
Gloria in Excelsis	2:14
Nunc Dimittis	<a href="#">12</a> 2:29-32

Note the reference to men glorifying God in these passages: 2:20; 5:25, 26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43. Refer also to an exhaustive concordance, and observe how

often the word *blessed* appears throughout this gospel.

## C. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The *factual* basis of the gospel is underscored by the inclusion of many references to dates and secular rulers. Also, the organization of the book has a historical perspective. For example, Luke begins his gospel as one might expect a historian to do — by describing background and preliminary events first. He leads up to *the great event*, the coming of Jesus. In this connection it is interesting to observe that the first direct reference to Jesus is not made until verse 31 of [chapter 1](#). For the first thirty verses Luke is setting the stage; and then, bursting forth in all their glory, appear the beautiful words “You will ... bear

a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.”

## **D. THE RELATED MINISTRIES OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS (1:1—4:13)**

On Chart 34, page 162, the section 1:1—4:13 is called *preparation*.¹³ Two preparations are meant by this: the preparation of the people through the ministry of John the Baptist, and the preparation of Jesus for His public ministry. Study Chart 36 to see how Luke interweaves the two preparations into his account. Follow the numbers for Luke's order.

# CHART 36: PREPARATION LUKE 1:5—4:13

Preparation of the People			Preparation of Jesus				
6 B.C.							
1	Announcement of John's Coming	1:5-25	}	2	Announcement of Jesus' Coming	1:26-56	
3	Birth of John (5 B.C.)	1:57-58		}	4	Birth of Jesus (5 B.C.)	2:1-20
	Infant John Presented in Temple	1:59-79					Infant Jesus Presented in Temple
	Maturing Years of John	1:80				Maturing Years of Jesus	2:40-52
A.D. 26							
5	John Preaching in Wilderness	3:1-20	}	6	Baptism of Jesus	3:21-38	
					7	Temptations of Jesus	4:1-13

Observe from Chart 36 the following arrangement of interchange:

Announcement of John's coming            1:5-25  
 — announcement of Jesus' coming 1:26-56

Birth of John                                    1:57ff.  
 — birth of Jesus                                2:lff.

Keep in mind as you study 1:5—2:52 how such an arrangement emphasizes the likenesses of John and Jesus, and the differences. Which of the two birth accounts is longer?

One of Luke's reasons for interweaving the stories of John and Jesus is to magnify Jesus. For example, in the first two chapters of Luke, we read how John came on the

scene first, followed by Jesus. People rejoiced when John was born, as well as when Jesus was born. But there was everything about the narrative that spotlighted *Jesus* as the main person, the source of all blessing. Further, in their public ministries, John comes on the scene first, followed by Jesus. Here John can speak for himself, and what he has to say focuses all attention on the One whom he precedes, because he speaks this way of Christ: “He who is mightier than I is coming, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals” (3:16).

Jesus’ baptism (3:21-22) and temptations (4:1-13) are reported by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Read the Luke passages, and observe how the experiences prepare Jesus for His public ministry.

What truths revealed by Luke 1:5—4:13

stand out prominently in your mind?

## **E. THE CHRISTMAS STORY (2:1-20)**

This particular reporting of Jesus' birth appears only in Luke's gospel. The beauty of the narrative is unsurpassed in all of literature. Do not let the familiarity of the story keep you from seeing its significant and wonderful truths. Survey the passage and record your major impressions.

## **F. IDENTIFICATION BY MIRACLES (4:14—9:50)**

One way Jesus identified Himself was by miracles.¹⁴ The miracles demonstrated His power and, in particular, His deity. Twenty miracles are reported in this gospel, six of which are not in the other gospels.

# CHART 37: THE FOUR MIRACLES OF LUKE 8:22-56

Subject	Storm vv. 22-25	Demoniac vv. 26-39	Issue of Blood vv. 43-48	Jairus' Daughter vv. 40-42; 49-56
Realm of miracle	nature			
Occasion				
Persons involved				
Appeal made				
Faith demonstrated				
Manner and extent of miracle				
Effect				
Main instruction of the miracle				

As examples of miracles in Luke, read the four that are recorded in 8:22-56. Over what did Jesus exercise His power in each instance? Record this and other items listed on Chart 37.

## G. INSTRUCTION BY PARABLES (9:51—19:27)

We have already seen that parables abound in the third main division of Luke (9:51—19:27). In the entire gospel thirty-five parables are recorded, nineteen of

which are unique to Luke's account.¹⁵ Jesus' favorite method of teaching was by parables. Luke records a group of six parables in 15:1—17:10. Read the passage, and record some of your observations on Chart 38.

# CHART 38: GOD'S GRACE AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES LUKE 15:1—17:10

				Wise Accounting of Stewardship	Tragic Inadequacy of Riches	Right Attitudes of Service
15:1	8	11	16:1	14	19	17:1
GOD'S GRACE			MAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES			
three parables on recovery			three parables on stewardship			

## H. KINGDOM TEACHING (17:11—19:27)

One of the important subjects of Jesus' teaching was that of the kingdom. Jesus knew, as the prophets had taught, that in the end times He would be sitting on the Davidic throne. That was the kingdom especially oriented to Israel, according to covenant promises. But Jesus had in mind now a *larger* kingdom, as large and universal as the gospel itself, existing right now ("the kingdom of God is within you," 17:21, KJV).

Multitudes of Jesus' contemporaries had false views about the kingdom, hence His instruction concerning it. Read 19:28, noting the phrase "after He had said these things." Then read 17:11—19:27, where "these things" are recorded. Study the passage to learn what Jesus was teaching (whether by word or works) about the present kingdom.

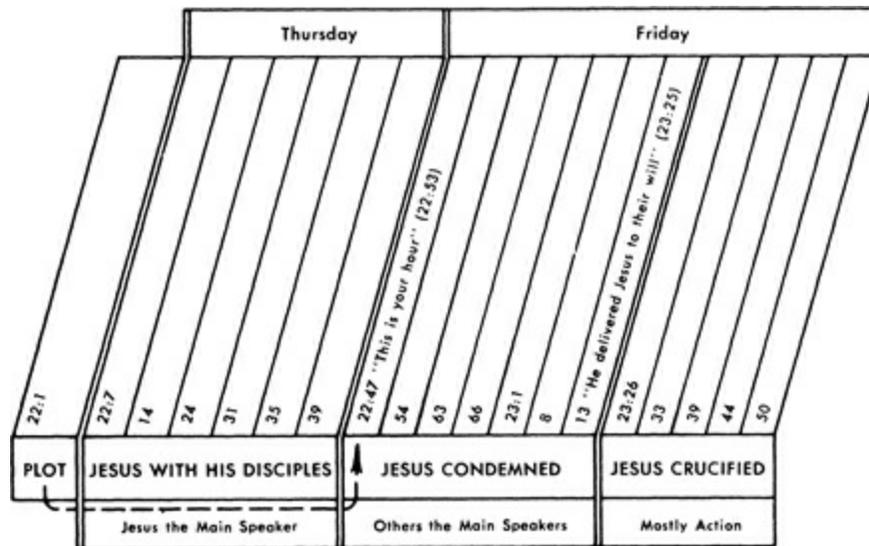
## **I. THE GREAT SACRIFICE (22:1—23:56)**

At 22:1 Luke begins his account of the darkest episode of Jesus' life. He tells of the satanic plot to betray Jesus (22:1-6); the sad last hours of Jesus with His disciples (22:7-46); the cruel scorn hurled against Him by the religious rulers and the mobs that they incited (22:47—23:25); the agony of scourging and crucifixion (23:26-56).

Read the entire passage, and record

observations and impressions on the  
accompanying Chart 39.

# CHART 39: EVENTS OF THURSDAY AND FRIDAY (PASSION WEEK) LUKE 22:1—23:56



## J. THE GRAND MIRACLE (24:1-53)

The tone of praise and blessing that pervades the first chapter of Luke reappears now at the last chapter. From the chamber of the empty tomb the triumphant message echoes forth in matchless glory, “He is not here, but He has risen” (24:6). When Luke wrote his narrative about thirty years had transpired since Jesus’ resurrection; but the glory of the event had not subsided. Read the last four verses of Luke’s gospel and you

will be convinced that intense joy must have filled his heart as he laid down his pen on completion of his writing task. Could any book close on a more triumphant note?

## **K. OTHER PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF LUKE**

1. The work of Christ in redemption. References to grace and the glad tidings occur throughout the book. Christ is the gracious Savior of mankind (19:10).

2. The work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is referred to more in Luke than in Matthew and Mark combined. Read 1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25-26; 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; 24:49.

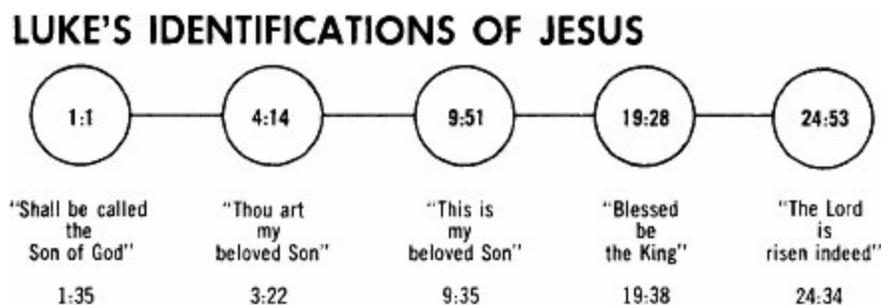
3. Christ's ministry to Gentiles. For example, read 2:32.

4. The needs of the humble estate.

Women, children, and outcasts appear often in Luke's story. For example, women are mentioned in all but five of the chapters.

5. Various identifications of Jesus. Near each main junction of Luke's gospel, shown below, there is recorded an identification of Jesus.

## LUKE'S IDENTIFICATIONS OF JESUS



6. The Emmaus story (chap. 24).

7. The medical terms, and descriptions with medical interest, which support authorship by a physician.

8. Angels. Scroggie writes, "There are more glimpses of the unseen world in this than in any other Gospel. It resounds with

angel songs, and with the music of their wings.”¹⁶

9. Short passages found only in Luke include:

- . Christ weeping over Jerusalem (19:41-44; cf. 13:34-35)
- . The sweat at Gethsemane (22:44)
- . Mercy to the thief on the cross (23:40-43).

10. The words of Christ are prominent in Luke’s gospel. About half of the account’s verses are Christ’s words (586 of 1,151 verses).

## **VI. KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

A key verse for Luke is 19:10: “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save

that which was lost.” Other suggested key verses are 24:19 and 4:18-19. A key phrase is “Son of Man,” found twenty-five times in this gospel. It was Jesus’ favorite title for Himself, used only by Him, with one exception in the New Testament.¹⁷ What key words did you observe in your survey study?

## VII. APPLICATIONS

1. How deep is your gratitude and joy over Christ, if He is your Savior?
2. Why is it so important to magnify Christ in all your ways? What do you learn about that from John the Baptist?
3. What lessons about humility do you learn from Jesus, as that quality is made prominent in Luke?
4. What are your relationships with people

of low estate?

5. Are you introducing the Son of Man to the people around you?

## **VIII. REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. In your own words, describe the man Luke.

2. Who were the original readers of this gospel?

3. What is the theme of Luke? Compare Luke's purposes in writing with those of Matthew and Mark.

4. Of what part of Jesus' three-year public ministry does Luke report very little?

5. What are the four main divisions of this gospel account?

6. Where in the account do miracles and parables, respectively, abound?

7. How does 1:1—4:13 fit into the organization of Luke's account?

8. What is a key phrase of Luke? Quote a key verse.

9. Name five prominent subjects of Luke.

## **IX. FURTHER STUDY**

1. John the Baptist served in the transitional period between the Old and New testaments. Study this subject further with the help of a Bible encyclopedia and Bible dictionary.

2. Study Jesus' use of parables in His teaching ministry.¹⁸

3. Worship of God is a prominent subject of the first two chapters of Luke. Using such helps as a concordance, commentary, and Bible encyclopedia, extend your study of this subject to other passages in the Bible.

Consider such areas as the object of worship; way of access to God; heart attitudes; forms of public worship; fruits of worship; idolatry. Some Bible passages to be read are: Exodus 20:5; 1 Kings 11:33; 1 Chronicles 29:20; Psalm 27:4; 95:6; 96:9; 100:4-5; Isaiah 2:8; 44:17; Matthew 4:8-10; John 4:20-26; Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:5; 10:20, 24-25; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 4; 5:5-14; 7:9-12.

4. Study the basic conflict between the *religion* of Pharisaism and the *life* of Christianity.

5. Study the important subject of prayer in Luke.

## **X. OUTLINE**

LUKE: The Son of Man Among Men	
PREPARATION	1:1—4:13
Births of John and Jesus	1:1—2:52
Preaching of John, and Baptism and Temptations of Jesus	3:1—4:13
IDENTIFICATION	4:14—9:50
Jesus' Message Identified, Demonstrated, and Opposed	4:14—6:11
Middle Galilean Ministry Begins	6:12—7:50
Last Months of Jesus' Galilean Ministry	8:1—9:50
INSTRUCTION	9:51—19:27
Ministries Around Jerusalem	9:51—11:54
Teaching in Cities and Villages	12:1—14:35
Six Parables	15:1—17:10
Kingdom Teaching	17:11—19:27
SACRIFICE	19:28—24:53
Last Messages	19:28—21:38
The Great Sacrifice	22:1—23:56
The Grand Miracle	24:1-53

## XI. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*, pp. 93-101.

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1:114-59.

Scroggie, W. Graham. *A Guide to the Gospels*, pp. 329-92.

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*, pp. 169-83.

Thiessen, Henry C. *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 150-61.

## COMMENTARIES

Geldenhuis, Norval. *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament.

Godet, F. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*. Reprint. 2 vols.

McNicol, J. "The Gospel According to Luke." In *The New Bible Commentary*.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Gospel According to St. Luke*.

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to St. Luke*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.

## OTHER RELATED SOURCES

Hobart, W. K. *The Medical Language of St. Luke.*

Morgan, G. Campbell. *Parables and Metaphors of Our Lord.*

Ramsey, William. *The Bearing of Recent Discoveries on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, pp. 222-300.

Robertson, A. T. *Luke the Historian in the Light of Research.*

Strong, James. *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*

Tenney, Merrill C, ed. *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary.*

Thomas, Robert L., ed. *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*

# Vine, W. E. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.*

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1. Luke 1:1-4; John 20:30-31; 21:24-25.

2. Luke 1:3-4.

3. In a few places of Scripture the method of inspiration did involve word-for-word dictation (e.g., the Ten Commandments). See Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, pp. 34-36; 43-47.

4. More is known of Luke from his Acts book than from the gospel. In the former he is one of Paul's companions in the "we" sections (to be studied later).

5. Note the medical terms and descriptions in these passages: Luke 4:38-39; 8:43-44; 13:11; 16:20-21. Also it is significant that of the six miracles recorded by Luke and not found in the other gospels, five are miracles of healing: 7:11-18 (widow's son); 13:11-17

(eighteen-year infirmity); 14:1-6 (man with dropsy); 17:11-19 (ten lepers); 22:50-51 (ear healed).

6. Luke is mentioned by name only three times in the New Testament. These occurrences are in prison epistles of Paul: Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24.

7. Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, p. 99.

8. See Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 114-24; and Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 150-54.

9. Faith is also a key truth in Paul's writings, and the close relationship of Paul and Luke might partly account for Luke's emphasis of this foundational doctrine. In the New Testament, the word *faith* appears more than 240 times, and only 53 times outside of Paul's and Luke's writings.

10. The full biographical content of the

chart is arrived at by comparing all four gospels. No one gospel includes all the events, but Luke's gospel is regarded as the most generally representative biography. About half its material is not found in the other gospels.

11. Scroggie has called these “the last of the Hebrew Psalms, and the first of the Christian hymns” (*A Guide to the Gospels*, p. 371).

12. The Latin title refers to the Bible text, “now ... let ... depart.”

13. Actually, 1:1-4, an introduction to the epistle, stands by itself.

This revelation of His nature is prominent in John's gospel, to be studied later.

15. For a list of parables and miracles found only in Luke *and* of those found in all the synoptic gospels, see W. Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels*, pp. 351-52.

16. W. Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the*

*Gospels*, p. 380.

17. Stephen referred to Jesus this way (Acts 7:56).

18. Two recommended outside sources on this subject are G. Campbell Morgan, *The Parables and Metaphors of Our Lord*; and Herbert Lockyer, *All the Parables of the Bible*.

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## ***8John: Life in Jesus, the Son of God***

About forty years after the first New Testament book was written, God inspired the aged apostle John to compose the last of the gospel accounts, known today as the fourth gospel. In many ways it is distinct from the other three gospels and serves as a capstone revelation of the life and ministry of Christ. Today it is often the first New Testament book recommended to new Christians for study. That is because it has a combination of many desirable features that make it a primer for reading and study: it clearly presents foundational truths; it combines fact and interpretation; it presents the way of salvation succinctly and persuasively (e.g., 3:16); its very setting and atmosphere are universal; and it is picturesque and attractive in varied forms. Some of those qualities will become evident

as you survey this fascinating portion of Scripture.

## I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

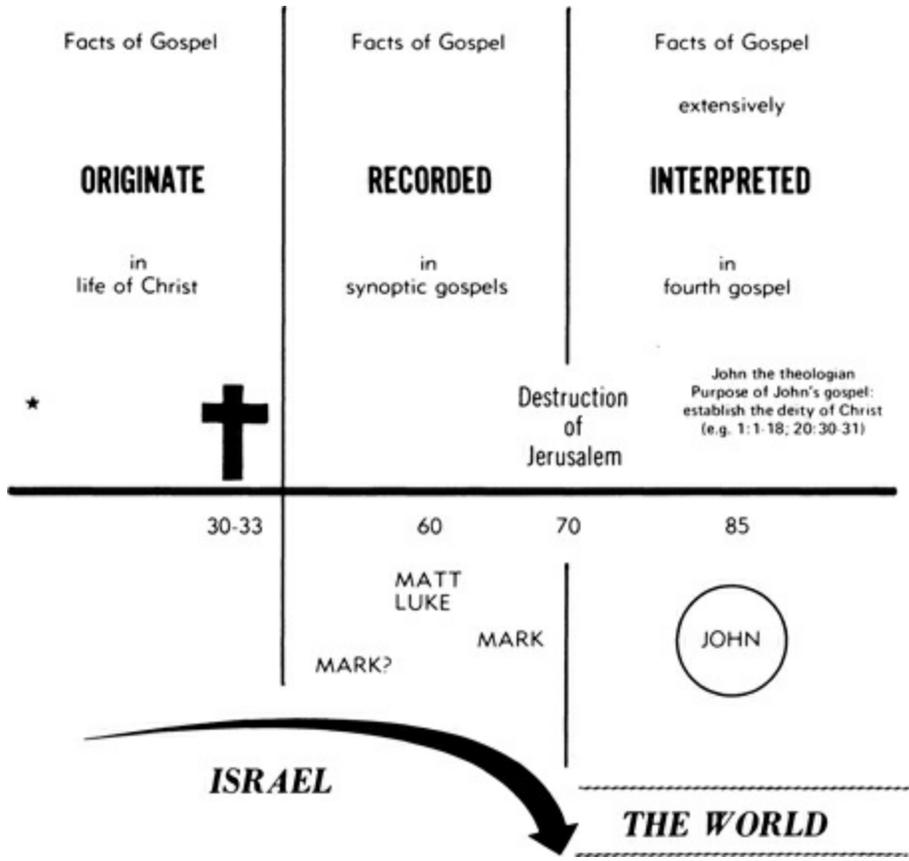
1. First, think about why God would want a fourth gospel written, since the combination of the three that had been written — Matthew, Mark, and Luke — was so comprehensive and instructional. A sweeping general view of the first century, involving the facts of the gospel, will suggest some answers to the question. Study Chart 40, observing the following:

a. The three words *originate*, *recorded*, and *interpreted* identify each of the century's three periods.

b. The *first period* (up to A.D. 33) is that of the historical origins. For example: Jesus was born; Jesus was crucified; Jesus was resurrected.

c. The *second period* (from Jesus' ascension to the destruction of Jerusalem, in A.D. 70) is when the three synoptic gospels were written. They mainly report the facts of Christ's life. They also include Jesus' teaching and as much of the writer's interpretation as God deemed necessary for that time.

# CHART 40: PLACE OF JOHN'S GOSPEL IN FIRST-CENTURY HISTORY



d. The *third period* begins after the fall of Jerusalem and reaches to the end of the century. It was a time of consolidation, organization, and reflection in the Christian communities of the Mediterranean world. In A.D. 85 God inspired John to write the fourth gospel, to include key facts of the gospel but extensively to interpret those facts for the reader. John writes as the reflective

theologian, with a main purpose of establishing the foundational truth of the deity of Christ. Do you see the logical order of:

HISTORICAL FACTS → REPORTED FACTS  
→ INTERPRETATIONS

e. John's gospel also fits into the transitional scheme of God's revelatory program:

(1) The Old Testament prophets, Jesus, and the early disciples preached first to Israel.

(2) Matthew's gospel was directed primarily to Jews; Mark's to Romans; and Luke's to Gentiles.

(3) John's perspective was particularly worldwide, with references to Jew, Roman, and Greek kept more in the background.

2. Now consider other aspects before beginning your survey studies. For example, what is perhaps the most-quoted verse in the New Testament? Do you see any significance that it is in this fourth gospel by John?

3. Review Chart 18, page 108, and think especially of John's gospel as you observe the comparisons of the four gospels.

4. Read the opening verse of each of the synoptic gospels. (Read Luke 1:5 in place of Luke 1:1.) Then read the first verse of John. What are your reflections?

5. Prepare your heart and mind to have open eyes and a receptive spirit as you survey this precious book of God.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. AUTHOR**

Authors of many Bible books are not identified by name. This is so in the case of the gospel of John. The traditional view is that John the apostle, sometimes referred to as John the evangelist, was the author; hence the title, gospel of John, or gospel according to John.¹ (The titles of our Bible books were not a part of the originally inspired text, but were added later for identification purposes.) According to 21:20, 23-24, the “disciple whom Jesus loved” was the author. Read 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7 for other similar descriptions of this disciple. In each case, John could be the disciple meant. If John was the author, why do you suppose he would not name himself in those passages?

Listed below are some descriptions and other facts concerning the apostle John. Study these carefully to become acquainted with the author. Be sure to read all verses

cited.

## 1. *Family*

a. John was a son of Zebedee (21:2) and Salome (cf. Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25). Since Salome was a sister of Jesus' mother Mary, Jesus and John were cousins. That would partly explain the close association between the two.

b. John was a brother of the apostle James. Jesus surnamed both men Boanerges, or "sons of thunder," a name indicating perhaps a fiery personality (cf. Luke 9:52-56).

c. Zebedee, James, and John were fishermen at the Sea of Galilee. Zebedee was probably well-to-do (Mark 1:19-20).

## 2. *Christian ministry*

a. John may have been a disciple of John the Baptist when Jesus called him to

His service (Mark 1:20). His age at that time may have been around twenty-five, and he lived to be about one hundred.

b. John was a Palestinian Jew, a close companion of Peter, a contemporary of the events of his gospel.

c. John became a leader of the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:9).

### 3. *Writings*

John wrote three epistles and Revelation in addition to his gospel. Because Revelation refers mainly to the last days, the statement may be made that, as John the Baptist prepared the way for the first coming of Jesus, the apostle John has prepared the way for Christ's second coming.

## 4. *Later life*

There are only a few historical references to John after the events of the gospels. Read these:

Acts 4:1-22; 8:14-15 — John with Peter

Galatians 2:9 — One of John's contacts with Paul

Revelation 1:1, 4, 9 — John's exile experience, around A.D. 95

## 5. *Character*

From New Testament biography and epistles, a composite personality image of John is seen, though the image is incomplete in some respects. John was a man of courage, fervor, loyalty, spiritual perception, love, and humility. The subject of love is a keynote of his epistles. Of this Merrill Tenney writes, "As Christ tamed his ardor and purified it of unrestrained violence, John became the apostle of love whose devotion was not excelled by that of any other writer of the New Testament."² (See 1 John 4:7.)

A little may be learned about the man John from the book he wrote, although one is not usually aware of the author, as John's gospel is being studied. From that standpoint, the authorship may rest in anonymity, as suggested symbolically by someone's remark that "this gospel was written by the hand of an angel."

## **B. PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING**

The latter years of John's life were spent around Ephesus, hub city of Asia Minor, where the apostle was teaching, preaching, and writing. The advanced nature of John's gospel points to the fact that the other three gospels had already been written, and that a period of time had elapsed since their writing. Now the church's need was for a restatement of the same story of Christ, but

with more reflection and interpretation combined with the narrative. On the basis of all this it may be concluded that John wrote his gospel toward the end of the century, or around A.D. 85, while he was ministering at Ephesus.³

Ten years later, around A.D. 95, John was exiled by Emperor Domitian to the Island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation (cf. Rev. 1:9).

## **C. ORIGINAL READERS**

By the time John wrote his gospel the church had matured in its transition from a Jewish exclusivism (cf. Acts 10) to a universal outreach. Recall from your study of Luke, written about twenty-five years earlier, that the third gospel had helped men understand the broader scope of Christ's

message by showing the gospel's universal application. By the time of the appearance of John's gospel it was very natural for the message of this fourth gospel to be directed to the world at large. There are many internal evidences of this universal outreach. For example, John knew as he wrote that not many of his readers would be Jews. So he translated Hebrew and Aramaic words (e.g., Siloam, 9:7; Gabbatha, 19:13; and Golgotha, 19:17), and he explained Jewish religious practices (e.g., the burial custom of 19:40). There are many other characteristics of his writing that reveal its universal application.

Despite this universal flavor of the fourth gospel, it has been observed that the account "is saturated with the thoughts, imagery, and language of the Old Testament."⁴ This confirms the unity of both testaments of the Bible.

## D. STYLE OF WRITING

There is a basic simplicity about the language and structure of the fourth gospel, whereas the meaning of its message ranges from the perspicuous (e.g., 3:16) to the mystical (e.g., 1:1). Luther wrote, “Never in my life have I read a book written in simpler words than this, and yet the words are inexpressible.” Another theologian has expressed it this way: “The noble simplicity and the dim mystery of the narration, the tone of grief and longing, with the light of love shedding its tremulous beam on the whole — these impart to the Gospel of John a peculiar originality and charm, to which no parallel can be found.”⁵

John is a book of contrasts, moving quickly from grief and sadness to joy and gladness, from the storms of opposition to the peace of fellowship, from condescension

earthward to ascension heavenward, from doubt to faith, from life to death. Any attentive reader of this gospel must be stirred within as he ponders what its narrative has to do with him.

## **E. PURPOSES AND THEME**

The three different writings of John (gospel, epistles, Apocalypse [Revelation]) reveal three different basic purposes of the author.

1. *The gospel*: the evangelic founding and nurturing of the church.

2. *The epistles*: the organic shaping of the church.

3. *The Apocalypse*: the eternal future of the church.⁶

It is interesting to observe that one author

should be divinely assigned such a wide range of content for writing.

Chart 41 shows how Christ's ministry is written about in each of the three groups of the New Testament, as well as in the Old Testament.

John explains specifically in 20:30-31 why his gospel was written. It was primarily to win *unbelievers* (Jew and Gentile) to a saving faith. John also must have had in mind the confirming of *believers* in their faith,⁷ so that the church would have a stronger witness.

Read 20:30-31 for John's purpose in reporting the "signs" of Jesus in his gospel. The miracles were called "signs" by John because they *signified* vital spiritual truths. John wanted his readers not only to learn those spiritual truths, but to come to a personal relationship with Jesus through faith in Him as the Christ, the Son of God.

The theme of his account may be stated as “Life in Jesus, the Son of God.” Keep in mind the words *believe* and *life* as key words of John’s gospel. What is the connection between signs, belief, and life?

# CHART 41: CHRIST IN THE BIBLE

OLD TESTAMENT	GOSPELS AND ACTS	EPISTLES	REVELATION
HIS MINISTRY PROPHESIED   (MESSIAH)	HIS MINISTRY INITIATED   DEATH AND RESURRECTION	HIS MINISTRY INTERPRETED AND APPLIED	HIS MINISTRY CONSUMMATED AND HIS CLAIMS VINDICATED  GLORY (KING)

John also had other purposes in mind, subordinate but related to those mentioned above. One was to refute the heresy of Docetism, which denied the true humanity of Jesus (observe John's "answer" in 1:14). Another was to expose the unbelief of Judaism⁸ (e.g., "He came to his own country, but his own people did not receive him," 1:11, TEV).

## F. RELATION TO THE SYNOPTIC⁹ GOSPELS

The four canonical gospels record an identical "good news" about the same God-

man, Jesus. Yet each gospel has its own unique function. The one gospel markedly different from the other three is John's. Some of these differences are shown on Chart 42.

Most of the comparisons shown on Chart 42 refer to the gospels' contents *as a whole*. For instance, Jesus is no less Son of God in the synoptics than He is in John. Study the chart.

## **G. RELATION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON**

We have already seen that John is the author of a gospel, three epistles, and the Apocalypse. Chart 43 shows his gospel as a link in the chain binding together the three groups of New Testament books (history, epistles, visions). Observe on the chart these

other interlocking connections in the whole  
New Testament canon:

# CHART 42: THE SYNOPTICS AND JOHN

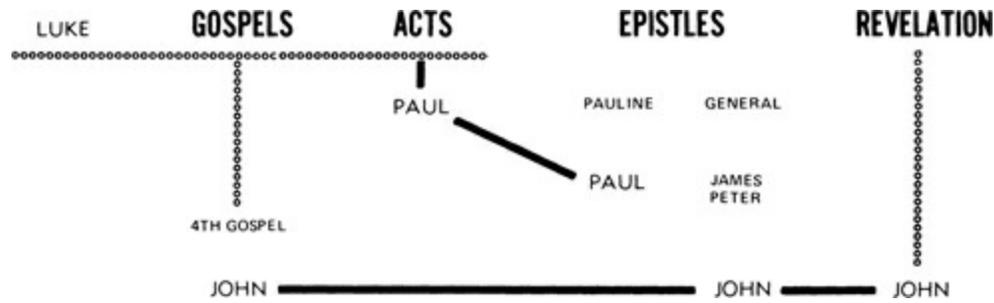
The Synoptics	John
chiefly concerned with Jesus' ministry in the north, around Galilee	gives more coverage to Jesus' ministry in the south, around Judea
much emphasis on "kingdom" inheritance	more emphasis on the person of Jesus ("I am's") and eternal-life inheritance
Jesus as Son of David, Son of man	Jesus especially as Son of God
the gospel of the infant church	the gospel of the maturing church
the earthly story	the heavenly meaning
Jesus' sayings generally short (e.g., parables)	more of the long discourses of Jesus
comparatively little commentary by the gospel writer	much commentary by John
only one mention of a Passover	three, possibly four, Passovers cited (on this basis it is concluded that Jesus' public ministry lasted 3½ years)

1. Luke wrote a gospel, supportive of the other three; and Luke wrote Acts.
2. Paul's credentials are established in Acts.
3. Paul wrote the Pauline epistles, supportive of the general epistles.
4. John wrote three epistles, supportive of the other general epistles.
5. John wrote Revelation.

## H. COVERAGE OF JESUS' LIFE

The four gospels differ from each other on how much they report of Jesus' life. Whatever each author included or excluded was determined by a divinely inspired selectivity with a view to the particular gospel's purposes.¹⁰ We have already seen what proportion of Christ's life recorded is covered by each of the synoptic gospels. Chart 44 shows the coverage of John's gospel, as indicated by the shaded areas.

# CHART 43: INTERLOCKING ATTESTATION OF N. T. BOOKS



1. Observe that John gives a full coverage of the first year of Jesus' ministry. What region of Palestine was primarily involved?

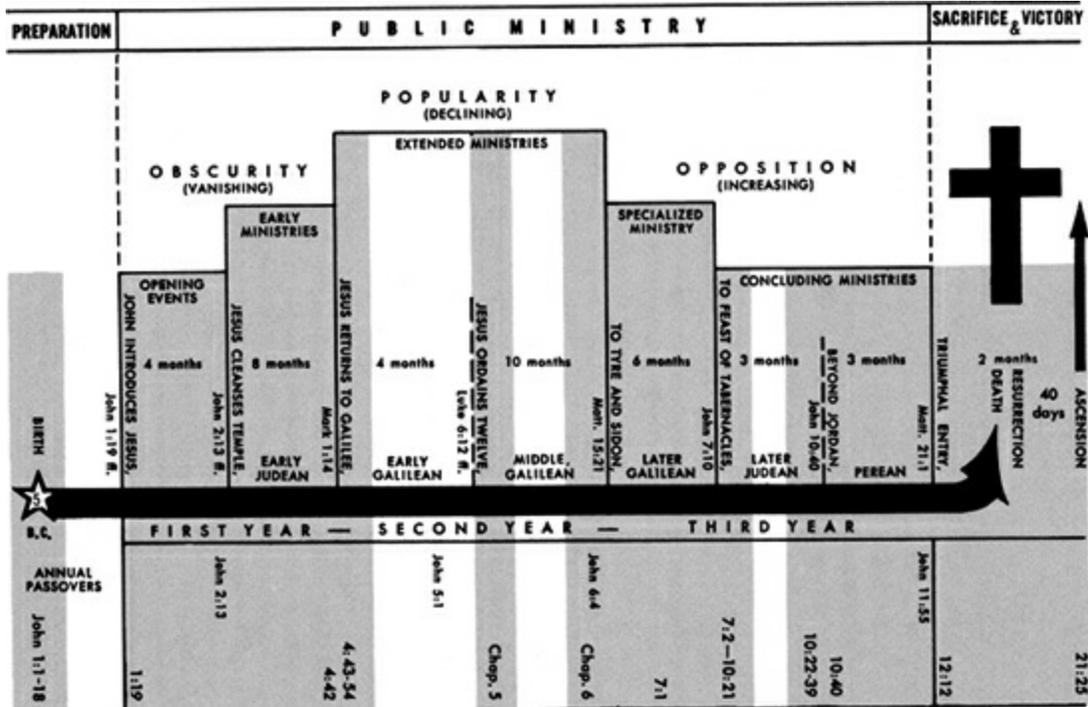
2. John also gives extensive coverage of the last months of Jesus' ministry. Like the other three gospels, he gives special attention to Jesus' death and resurrection.

3. Read in your Bible the four references to Passovers cited on the chart. (Some hold that the "feast" of 5:1 was not of Passover time.)¹¹

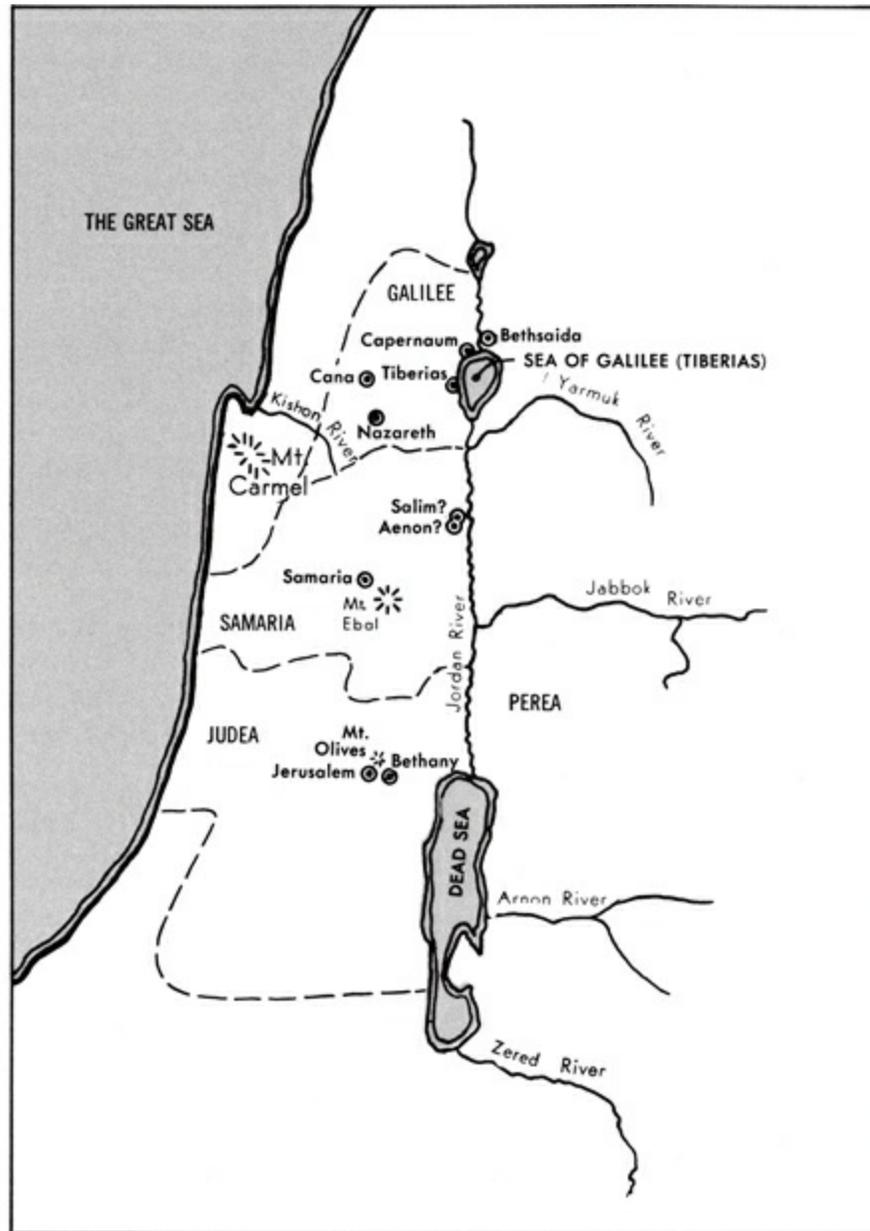
4. Observe that one verse, 7:1, covers the entire six-month period of Jesus' specialized ministry. (The synoptic gospels give an

extensive coverage of that period.) Why would an author, such as John, include in his gospel narrative only certain events of Jesus' life?

# CHART 44: THE LIFE OF JESUS SHOWING COVERAGE BY JOHN (SHADED AREA)



# MAP K: THE GEOGRAPHY OF JOHN'S GOSPEL



## I. GEOGRAPHY

Map K shows the geographical places mentioned in John's gospel. Refer to this as you survey the book.

### **III. SURVEY**

#### **A. PREPARING TO SURVEY**

We have studied the background of the fourth gospel in order to have a greater appreciation for how it came into being. Now as we enter the stage of survey study, our goal is to learn what this gospel emphasizes regarding Jesus' life and ministry.

Open your Bible to the gospel of John and rapidly turn the pages of its twenty-one chapters. As you do this prepare your mind to get a general overview of this book. Have you ever tried thumbing through a magazine first for a casual acquaintance and then returning to read the individual articles and features?

Two things that you should observe in this

preliminary glance are the lengths of the chapters and the topical headings at the top of the pages of your Bible.¹²

For your survey studies you should be using a Bible edition in which you will not hesitate to make pencil notations. Always keep a pencil in your hand as you read the Bible text, and use it to record your observations.

## **B. FIRST READING**

Your first reading of the text of John should be a scanning. Spend about an hour (averaging three minutes per chapter) viewing only some of the prominent features of each chapter.¹³ Do not try to be exhaustive in this stage of your study. The main purpose of scanning is to make a first acquaintance by identifying the book's major

contents.

Things to look for in scanning are main characters (e.g., Lazarus, chap. 11), main events, and key words and phrases. You may choose to read only the first verse or two of each paragraph in a chapter, rather than all the verses of the chapter. (For survey study, keep training your eyes to see things without tarrying over the details.)

What are some of your first impressions of John's gospel after your first reading?

## **C. WORKING WITH INDIVIDUAL SEGMENTS**

Note on Chart 45 that the first verse of each chapter of John begins a new segment, and three additional segments are made: at 1:19; 10:40; and 12:36b. Mark those additional segment indicators in your Bible.

Read John's gospel segment by segment, recording segment titles on Chart 45 as you read.

What are your further impressions of this gospel? Have key words and phrases begun to stand out?

## CHART 45: SEGMENT TITLES OF JOHN

1:1	WORD WAS GOD
1:19	JOHN BAPTIZING
2:1	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10:1	
10:40	
12:1	
12:36b	
14	
15	
16	
17	
18	
19*	
20	
21	

### D. SURVEYING THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK¹⁴

Keep in mind your set of segment titles as you move about in this stage of survey. Do you see any grouping of material in John's gospel, such as groups of miracles?

Try to identify any turning points, such as when Jesus becomes a prisoner. Read the Bible text and justify why new segment divisions are made at 1:19; 10:40; and 12:36b.¹⁵

Compare the first and last segments of John. Also, compare the first verse of John and the last verse.

Do you sense a forward movement in the

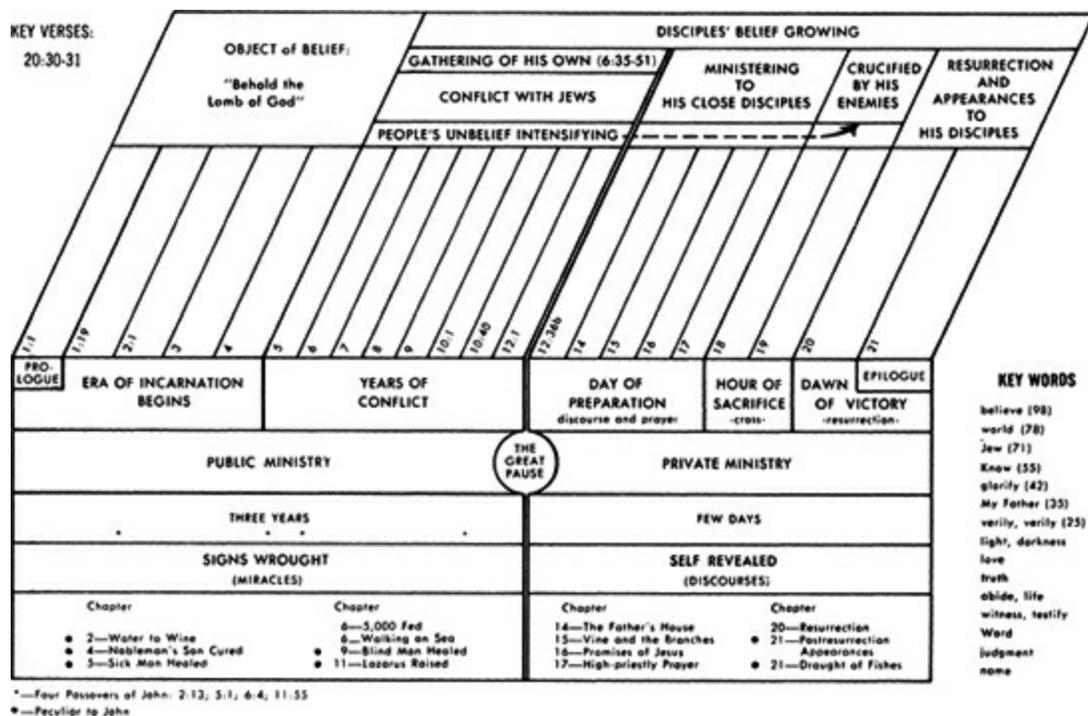
account?

Is there a climax? If so, where?

How does John identify the purpose of his account, in 20:30-31? What title would you give to the gospel, based on this purpose?

Chart 46 is a completed survey chart showing various outlines that you will be referring to as you now use the following study suggestions. The answers are not always found on the chart itself. Refer to the Bible text as much as possible.

# CHART 46: JOHN: LIFE IN JESUS, THE SON OF GOD



## Notes on Chart 46

1. Most of the chart divides the gospel of John into how many main divisions?

2. How does 1:19 begin a new section? That is, how is 1:1-18 different from 1:19ff.? What is 1:1-18 called, on the chart?

3. Generally speaking, to whom is Jesus extending His ministry in 1:19—12:36a? Who are the special objects of His ministry

in 12:36b—17:26?

4. What verses of chapter 5 show beginnings of opposition to Jesus?

5. Study the outline of Chart 46 concerning the people's unbelief, and compare this outline with the one shown of the disciples' belief. As you study John, keep in mind both of these developments. Are there progressions? climaxes?

6. The hour of 12:366 has been called "The Great Pause." How is this a turning point in the gospel? For help in answering this, identify the "they" of 12:37 and "his own" of 13:1. Then refer to Chart 46, and note the various outlines that have a turning point at 12:366.

7. In what chapter does Jesus' arrest take place? Where is the resurrection recorded? How are chapters 20-21 related to this resurrection?

8. Do the verses 20:30-31 appear to conclude the main story of the gospel? If so, how do you account for the inclusion of chapter 21? Observe that 21:24-25 has a reference to the *writing* of the fourth gospel, as does 20:30-31. Could you say that John has two endings? What might be an author's purpose in doing this? Chart 46 shows chapter 21 as an epilogue. Compare this with the prologue of 1:1-18.

9. From Chart 46, how long is the time period of 1:19—12:36a? Compare this with the time period of the last half of the gospel. As was noted earlier, of the gospel writers, only John reports Jesus' early Judean ministry, without which record the duration of Christ's ministry would seem to be only two and one-third years. To show how selective the gospel writers were, it may be noted that John reports events of only about twenty individual days of Jesus' public

ministry. Read 21:25 for an explanation of the necessity of such selectivity. Did the Bible authors depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in selecting what should be included in their writings?

10. What is the content of the last half of John mainly about, miracles or discourses?

11. Study the key outline shown just below the main horizontal line (*Era of incarnation begins, etc.*). What are the *time* words of this outline? How does the outline represent the survey of the book that has been made up to this point?

Compare this outline with the ones shown on Chart 47.

# CHART 47: FOUR MAIN SECTIONS OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

1:1	5:1	12:36b	18:1 21:25
IDENTIFICATIONS	CONFLICTS	PREPARATIONS	CRISES
<i>TRUE CLAIMS</i>	<i>FALSE CHARGES</i>	<i>INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP</i>	<i>REDEEMPTIVE WORK</i>
INTRODUCTIONS TO THE PEOPLE	OPPOSITION BY THE JEWISH RULERS	INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE DISCIPLES	EXPERIENCES IN TRIUMPH

12. Note the key words and phrases shown on the chart. (The numbers after some words indicate how often the word appears in the text.) Each key word (e.g., “believe”) suggests an important subject developed in John’s gospel.

13. Note also by Chart 46 that 20:30-31 are given as key verses for this gospel. What are the key words of those verses? Observe on Chart 46 what chapters record the signs. In performing the signs, was Jesus’ main purpose one of alleviating distress? How does 20:31 furnish an answer to this question?

14. Observe on the chart the outline *Signs wrought; Self revealed*. Actually, in both main sections of John's gospel Christ was revealing who He was. In the last section, however, He pressed His claim more explicitly and revealed it fully in His death and resurrection.

15. What title is assigned to this gospel? How does it relate to the suggested key verses? Suggest a title of your own.

#### **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

##### **A. THE PROLOGUE (1:1-18)**

This passage is unexcelled in the Bible for its compactness of the gospel message. The first three words repeat the first three words of Genesis, and two verses later John makes the summary statement that all things were

made by the “Word” (v. 3). From that point on, however, John’s object in the prologue is not to expand on the matchless cosmogony of Genesis, but to show how this Creator Jesus was involved in His Father’s plan of redemption for the fallen human race.

## COMPARISONS OF JOHN 1:1 AND 1:14

verse 1	verse 14
In the beginning was the Word,	And the Word was made flesh
and the Word was with God,	and dwelt among us
and the Word was God	full of grace and truth

In 1:1—4:54 John shows Jesus as the object of belief (see Chart 46). Read the prologue and observe how Jesus is identified as the One to believe. The accompanying diagram of comparisons further illustrates such unique revelations. How do these verses make it clear that the “Word” must be Jesus Christ? Where in the prologue is Jesus Christ first identified by name? How

does the title “Word” identify a main ministry of Jesus to this world? In answering this, consider the meaning of the phrase “he has explained Him” (1:18).

## **B. JESUS’ MEETING WITH NICODEMUS (3:1-21)**

Before this point in the gospel John has not recorded many actual spoken words of Jesus. A few of Jesus’ commands (e.g., “Come, and you will see,” 1:39; “Follow me,” 1:43) and a few prophecies (e.g., “You shall see greater things than these,” 1:50; “In three days I will raise it up,” 2:19) appear. But any extensive treatment on the subject of salvation is limited to the words of the gospel writer (1:1-18) and of John the Baptist (1:29-34).

Now in the design of his gospel, John

breaks forth with the story of one of the greatest confrontations of Jesus with an unsaved man. The man was Nicodemus, an influential leader of the Jews. The subject of the conversation was the urgency and way of salvation. Nicodemus's informant was none other than the "teacher come from God."

Little did John know that one of the verses (3:16) of this passage would become a universal "golden text" of Christians in the centuries to follow.

Read the passage and observe how Jesus reveals Himself to be both divine Teacher and Life Giver.

### **C. YEARS OF CONFLICT (5:1—12:36a)**

At chapter 5 the author begins to record instances of open opposition to Jesus by the

Jewish rulers.¹⁶ A key sentence of chapter 5 is, “For this reason the Jews began to persecute Jesus” (v. 16, TEV). Refer to the survey chart of John (Chart 46, p. 187), and observe that the section 5:1—12:36a is called *Years of conflict*. The chapters of this conflict section cover about two years of Jesus’ public ministry, which were marked by a growing hate of the Jewish rulers against Jesus because of His claims to Messiahship and divine sonship. Those religionists had one goal: kill Jesus.

Many of the multitudes gave a sympathetic ear to Jesus’ claims, and demonstrated their support by giving Him a royal reception as He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey (12:14). There were many persons from the multitude who believed on Him.

And then there were Jesus’ close friends and disciples. For the most part they are in

the background in John's gospel during these chapters, but all references to them reveal a loyal group of followers. (Judas was the exception.)

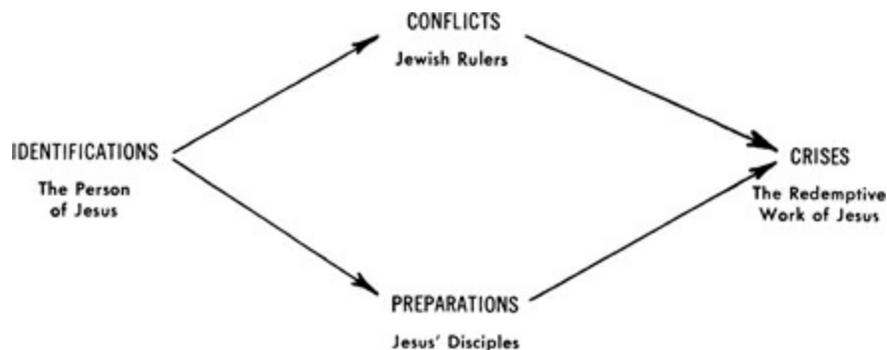
Throughout this period of conflict with His enemies, Jesus faithfully performed His mission. He told who He was, He demonstrated who He was, and He invited all people to believe on Him to be saved. When that mission was over, He "no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews" (11:54), for He was ready now to accomplish a more private ministry to the twelve disciples.

The climax of opposition came in the hour of crucifixion, recorded by John in chapter 19. The antagonism of the rulers and people against Jesus during these last two years of His public ministry was incessant. Even some of Jesus' disciples opposed Him on

occasion.

After writing the *Conflicts* section John chose to include a long *Day of preparation* section (12:36b—17:26) dealing with Jesus' intimate fellowship with His disciples just preceding His arrest and trial. The interrelationships of these four parts of John's gospel are shown in the accompanying diagram.

## INTERRELATED PARTS OF JOHN'S GOSPEL



Compare this diagram with Chart 47, page 189.

## D. FAREWELL DISCOURSES (14:1—16:33)

Anyone who asks the question, “What kind of person was Jesus?” will find innumerable answers in John’s gospel. This is particularly true in the section 12:36b—17:26. Chapters 14-16 contain three farewell discourses of Jesus, which were delivered to His disciples on the evening before His crucifixion. The first discourse, chapter 14, was probably spoken in the upper room where the Last Supper (chap. 13) was held.¹⁷ The last phrase of 14:31 suggests that Jesus and His disciples left the house and started walking east toward the Garden of Gethsemane. The second discourse (15:1—16:4a) and the third (16:46-33) may then have been spoken as the group moved quietly through the city.¹⁸ The high-priestly prayer of chapter 17 was prayed before Jesus and His disciples crossed the Kidron Valley on their way to Gethsemane.

The accompanying diagram breaks down

passage 14:1—16:33 into the three discourses and suggests a title for each discourse. Use these suggestions as starters for further study. Among other things, study what the passages teach about the *Person* of Jesus.

## **E. HIGH-PRIESTLY PRAYER (17:1-26)**

Jesus' high-priestly prayer in chapter 17 has been called the New Testament's noblest and purest pearl of devotion. A Christian cannot read this chapter without being warmed in heart over the tremendous fact that his Lord prays to the Father on *his* behalf.

We would like to be able to reconstruct the setting of this five-minute prayer of Jesus but no details are given in the account, other than that Jesus lifted up His

eyes to heaven (17:1), and spoke the words in the presence of the eleven disciples (cf. 18:1). Few details, but an awesome truth: the Son of God speaking to His Father in heaven about His disciples.

## THREE DISCOURSES OF JOHN 14:1-16:33

FIRST DISCOURSE	SECOND DISCOURSE	THIRD DISCOURSE
14:1 14:31 The Father's House	15:1 16:4a Vine and the Branches	16:4b 16:33 Promises of Jesus

The prayer is clearly of three main parts:

1. Jesus prays for Himself (17:1-5)
2. Jesus prays for His disciples (17:6-19)
3. Jesus prays for the church (17:20-26)

When you study the chapter, think of the heart needs of the disciples at that time. Also, think how Jesus was feeling at that

time, knowing what trying experiences were awaiting Him in the next hours. Let these studies be the background of applying the prayer to your own life.

## **F. HOUR OF SACRIFICE (18:1—19:42)**

After the high-priestly prayer of chapter 17 the succession of events was this:

Soul agony of Gethsemane¹⁹

Arrest

Trials

Scourging

Crucifixion

Death

Jesus did not try to delay or avoid any of these experiences. To the very end, His attitude was one of obedience to His

Father's will: "The cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" (18:11; cf. Matt. 26:1-2). That Jesus was not a fatalist concerning such a sovereignly fixed program is shown throughout the gospels by the intensity of His human emotions in the midst of each trying experience. This man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, was "obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8).

1 . *Trial* (18:12—19:16). Jesus was confronted by two different realms of authority in His trial. The political rulers were Roman, and the religious rulers were Jewish. Shown below are the two confrontations, with three stages in each. Note how much is reported by John.

a. Jewish Trial.

. Before Annas (18:12-14, 19-23).

. Informal trial by Sanhedrin before dawn (18:24; Matt. 26:57, 59-68; Mark 14:53, 55-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65).

. Formal trial after dawn (Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71).

## b. Roman Trial.

. First appearance before Pilate (18:28-38; cf. Matt. 27:2, 11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5).

. Before Herod Antipas (Luke 23:6-12).

. Final appearance before Pilate (18:39—19:16; cf. Matt. 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25).

2. *Death* (19:17-42). The redemptive fruits of Christ's death are glorious, but the hour of His death was mankind's darkest hour.

Even nature itself echoed this, with the darkening of the sun and the violent earthquake (Matt. 27:51; Luke 23:45).

John's account of Jesus' death is brief but weighty. He paints six portraits, identified below:

Identity recognized	19:17-22
Goods confiscated	19:23-24
Mother cared for	19:25-27
Life given	19:28-30
Death verified	19:31-37
Body buried	19:38-42

## **G. RESURRECTION CHAPTER (20:1-31)**

The resurrection of Jesus was both prescheduled of His Father and unanticipated by the disciples. Jesus had clearly instructed His disciples earlier about His forthcoming death and resurrection (Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22), but

they did not understand the meaning then, nor did they even remember the words later. Understanding would come through believing, and believing would come through signs. John 20 records some of the signs that restored the disciples to Jesus in a personal and new relationship to Him as the risen Lord. How utter defeat can suddenly and miraculously turn to victory is one of the glowing truths of this chapter.

Recall 20:30-31. The word *signs* is a key word of the verses. What signs are recorded in John 20? Observe in the chapter how often the word *see* (and related words) appears in the chapter.

## V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

Read again the list of key words shown on Chart 46, page 187. Add to the list the other key words that you have observed. Note also

the key verses indicated on the chart: 20:30-31. There are other key verses in John. Did you observe any in the course of your survey?

## **VI. APPLICATIONS**

1. Why is belief in the deity of Christ a key ingredient of saving faith?
2. When is your faith in Christ as miracle worker the strongest? How would you describe the *healthy* faith-life?
3. Christ is the believer's interceding High Priest. How does this truth affect your daily life as a Christian?
4. What does Christ's interest in individual persons teach you?

## **VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Describe John's home background and

his character. What was his approximate age at death?

2. What New Testament books did John write?

3. When and where was the fourth gospel written?

4. Who were the original readers?

5. What is the purpose of this gospel?

6. Compare this gospel account with the synoptic gospels.

7. Did John report more of Jesus' first or second year of public ministry?

8. What is the prologue (1:1-18) about?

9. What is "The Great Pause" of John?

10. Complete the five-point outline of John beginning with *Era of incarnation begins*.

11. Name three key words.

12. What is the main point of 20:30-31?

13. What is the epilogue (chap. 21) about?

## VIII. FURTHER STUDY

1. Study the references in John to Jesus' deity. There is at least one reference in each chapter, which references are the following: 1:49; 2:11; 3:16; 4:26; 5:25; 6:33; 7:29; 8:58; 9:37; 10:30; 11:27; 12:32; 13:13; 14:11; 15:1; 16:28; 17:1; 18:11; 19:7; 20:28; 21:14.

Include in your study personal recognitions of Jesus' deity by these persons: John the Baptist (1:34); Nathaniel (1:49); Peter (6:69); Christ²⁰ (10:36); Martha (11:27); Thomas (20:28); John (20:31).

2. Christ appears under many titles in this gospel, such as "the Word," "Creator," "Only Begotten of the Father," "Lamb of God."

John also records several “I am” testimonies of Jesus, including those appearing in these verses: 6:35; 8:12; 8:58 (cf. Exod. 3:14); 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1. Make a study of these identifications.

3. The gospels give no detailed description of the process of Roman crucifixion. The text usually reads only briefly, as in John 19:18, “They crucified him.” Can you suggest a reason for that relative silence? Consult a Bible dictionary for a full description of crucifixion as a Roman form of execution. Also, read Psalm 22:1-21 for a description of some of the physical, mental, and spiritual agonies of Jesus on the cross. Consult the dictionary also about the burial customs of Jesus’ day.

4. Study the subject of miracles in the gospel of John. For an outside source on the general subject of miracles, consult C. S.

# Lewis, *Miracles*.

## IX. OUTLINE

JOHN: Life in Jesus, the Son of God	
ERA OF INCARNATION BEGINS	1:1—4:54
Prologue	1:1-18
Witnesses and Discoveries of Jesus	1:19-51
Miracle Worker and Voice of Authority	2:1-25
Teacher Come from God	3:1-36
"This Is Indeed the Christ"	4:1-54
YEARS OF CONFLICT	5:1—12:36 $a$
Persecution Against Jesus Begins	5:1-47
Bread of Life Refused	6:1-71
Attempts to Arrest Jesus	7:1-53
Light of the World Rejected	8:1—9:41
The Good Shepherd Spurned	10:1-39
The King of Israel Enters Jerusalem	10:40—12:36 $a$
DAY OF PREPARATION	12:36 $b$ —17:26
Events Attending the Last Supper	12:36 $b$ —13:38
Farewell Discourses	14:1—16:33
High-Priestly Prayer	17:1-26
HOUR OF SACRIFICE	18:1—19:42
Arrested and Tried	18:1—19:16 $a$
Crucified and Buried	19:16 $b$ -42
DAWN OF VICTORY	20:1—21:25
Signs of the Resurrected Jesus	20:1-31
Postresurrection Appearances in Galilee	21:1-25

## X. SELECTED READING

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Edersheim, Alfred. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.

Gundry, Robert H. *A Survey of the New Testament*, pp. 101-11.

Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*, pp. 237-335.

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 1:191-242.

Iverach, James. "John, Gospel of in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 3:1720-27.

Scroggie, W. Graham. *A Guide to the Gospels*, pp. 393-470.

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*, pp. 185-97.

## **COMMENTARIES**

Godet, F. L. *Commentary on the Gospel of John*. 2 vols.

Hendriksen, W. *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*. 2 vols. In his New Testament Commentary Series.

Hunter, A. M. *The Gospel According to John*.

Lange, John Peter. *The Gospel According to John*.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Gospel According to John*.

Tasker, R.V.G. *The Gospel According to St. John*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.

Westcott, B. F. *Commentary on John*.

## **OTHER RELATED SOURCES**

Griffith-Thomas, W. H. *The Apostle John: His Life and Writing*.

Orr, James. *The Resurrection of Jesus.*

Robertson, A. T. *Epochs in the Life of Jesus.*

____. *A Harmony of the Gospels.*

Scroggie, W. Graham. *St. John: Introduction and Notes.*

Strong, James. *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*

Tenney, Merrill C. *John: The Gospel of Belief.*

Thomas, Robert L., ed. *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*

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1. Another view is that a close disciple of the apostle, referred to as John the elder, was the book's author. See A. M. Hunter, *The Gospel According to John*, pp. 12-14.

Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, p. 189.

John's gospel is sometimes called "The Ephesian Gospel."

A. Plummer, quoted by W. Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels*, p. 426.

5. August Tholuck, quoted in John Peter Lange, *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 17:vii.

6. *Ibid.*, 17:15.

7. *The New English Bible* translates 20:31 as "recorded in order that you may hold the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

8. The word *Jew* appears about seventy times in the gospel.

9. The word *synoptic* is used to identify the similarity of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The word itself is from the Greek *synoptikos*, which means "seeing the whole together."

10. For example, Matthew omits Jesus' first

miracle in Cana; Mark omits the nativity story; Luke omits Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman; John does not record Jesus' ascension to heaven. (Neither does John report Jesus' nativity and genealogy, youth, wilderness temptations, or transfiguration.)

11. The text of 5:1 reads "a feast of the Jews." Some ancient manuscripts read "the feast ...," suggesting that *the* main Jewish feast of the Passover was meant. Bible students have interpreted this unnamed feast in various ways: Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, Purim, Dedication.

12. NASB uses a helpful set of topical headings.

13. Of course, the original autographs did not have chapter divisions, or, for that matter, verse divisions. Such divisions are helps to us today for reference and for identification of small units of thought.

14. For a discussion of various structures of

John's gospel, read Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief*, pp. 25-53; and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, pp. 64-66.

15. The reasons for beginning divisions at these points will be seen later.

16. In most instances in the gospels, the word *Jews*, in context of opposition to Jesus, refers to the Jewish rulers.

17. Some Bible students prefer to regard 13:31-38 as part of this first discourse. The content is not affected either way.

18. It is difficult to say where the second discourse ends and the third begins because of the constantly recurring subjects that Jesus spoke about in this informal conversation with His disciples. Actually all three farewell discourses could be called one discourse, because they are so intimately related.

19. John makes only the brief mention of Jesus' entering the Garden of Gethsemane

with His disciples (18:1).

This is one of Jesus's own claims to deity. Only God Himself can rightfully claim deity. Since Jesus is God, He could make such a claim.

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## Part 2

### THE SEQUEL

### *The Church, Christ's Body*

Broadly speaking, the group of people that is the main object of attention in the New Testament is the church. The gospels present Christ as the Foundation and Head of the church. The book of Acts records the beginning and early history of the church. The epistles offer instructions for the church, and the book of Revelation prophesies end times and describes the eternal reign of the church with Christ.

The above capsule sketch shows how important Acts is in the full canon of the New Testament.

Acts

# *9Acts: The Beginnings of the Christian Church*

Acts is the church's standard textbook on the first three decades of its history and its ageless global task of evangelization. The book is clearly the sequel to the gospels; its story of the church is the wonderful continuation of the unique and fantastic story of Christ's earthly life. Beyond this, Acts provides the key for the fuller understanding of the epistles, which follow Acts in the New Testament canon and interpret the gospel that Christ lived and preached.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

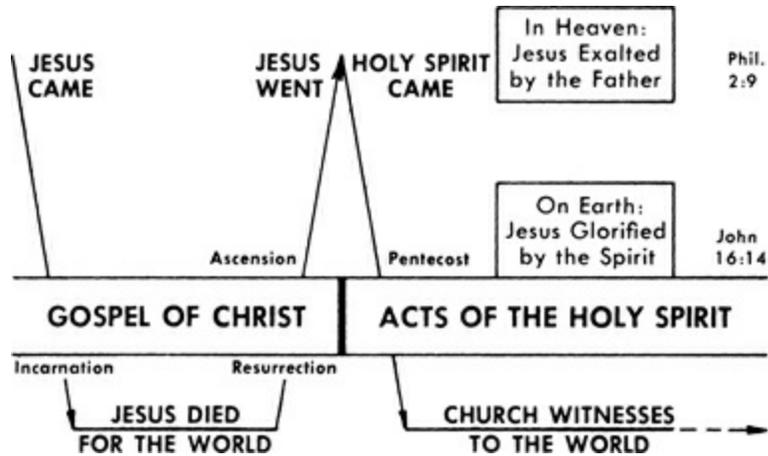
Reflect on the core of the gospels' history: Jesus came from heaven and then returned to heaven, accomplishing His Father's will while He was here on earth. That was His

time-bound, eternity-affecting life. The gospels tell the story of that wonderful life, but only a few pages relate the events of the few weeks of his postresurrection ministry. The Bible's history would conclude with an abrupt void if the account of what the resurrected Christ did to men's hearts was limited to only a few instances, such as the two men's reaction, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us?" (Luke 24:32) and Thomas's, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Acts was designed by God to complete the story of the gospels, by showing the gospel of the resurrected Christ at work. That work was the transforming of men's hearts to make them witnesses of the Way, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit sent to earth for that purpose. This is all illustrated by Chart 48.

Acts was not written to furnish a system of

doctrine for the church, or even to do much interpreting of the tremendous truths of the gospel. That task was assigned by the Spirit of God to those who were later inspired to write the epistles. Acts reports the gospel in action, and it is the Christian student's opportunity to seek out the universal, timeless, historically-backed principles, by which he and the church may live and serve God.

# CHART 48: RELATION OF ACTS TO THE GOSPELS



As you survey the story of Acts, think of it as a historical link book and a doctrinal demonstration book. Concerning doctrine, what does it demonstrate?

## II. BACKGROUND

### A. TITLE

The short name usually assigned the book is Acts.¹ The full name Acts of the Apostles is traceable back to the second century. When the book was originally written, its

author Luke probably combined it with his earlier writing, the gospel of Luke. Then when his gospel was joined to the other three gospels, Acts stood alone. Here are some observations:

1. The key word in the longer title is Acts. These are not the dreams, theories, or speculations of the apostles, but their acts, their deeds, things they actually accomplished.

2. The phrase *of the apostles* probably refers to the main apostles during the years of the book's record. Of those apostles, Peter and Paul were the key leaders.

3. It is recognized that the book records the acts of the Holy Spirit as He worked through the apostles. In that sense the book could be called The Acts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's name appears about seventy times in the book.

## **B. AUTHOR**

Most authorities agree that Luke was the writer of Acts. Extant ancient witnesses, dating as early as A.D. 170, are practically unanimous about that. The strongest internal evidence for Lucan authorship is the fact that Acts and the third gospel are both addressed to Theophilus, and Acts refers to a “first account,” which obviously was the gospel. (Compare Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-5.)

Other internal evidences for Lucan authorship of Acts, based on a comparison with the gospel, include (1) the similar style and language of the two writings; (2) the natural connection between the ending of the gospel and the beginning of Acts; (3) similarities such as the prominent place of women in both narratives. Further, the writer of Acts accompanied Paul on many of

his travels (as the “we” sections of Acts reveal: 16:10-17; 20:5—21:18; 27:1—28.16),² and of the number of close associates of Paul, Luke is most clearly identified as that fellow-traveler.³

The writing style of Acts is as clear and organized as that of Luke’s gospel. Blaiklock describes it further: “Vivid, rapid in its movement, sure and purposeful in brief summary or leisurely report, amazingly evocative of atmosphere, economical of words, but never drab in colour, the book holds the reader from its dedication to the end.”⁴

For biographical information on Luke, refer back to those descriptions given in [Chapter 6](#).

## **C. DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING**

Luke probably wrote Acts while in Rome, toward the end of Paul's two-year imprisonment there, or about A.D. 61. He could not have completed his writing earlier than that, since Acts records that imprisonment (Acts 28:30), which is dated around A.D. 59-61. The Holy Spirit's design was not to include any more of Paul's life or of the church's experience in this book, and so He inspired Luke to write at that time.

That Luke did not write Acts at a later date is obvious from the following:

1. The Jewish war of A.D. 66-70, climaxing in the holocaust of the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), is not even alluded to.

2. Nero's anti-Christian policy, following the great fire of Rome (A.D. 64), finds no place in the account.

3. Though Paul was in prison at the close of Acts, there is no suggestion in the

narrative that his death was imminent. Very likely he was soon released. After traveling for a few years in evangelistic work, even as far as Spain, Paul probably was arrested again and placed in the execution cell at Rome, where he wrote 2 Timothy, his “dying letter,” and then finally was executed shortly before Nero’s suicide. (Date of the latter was June 8, A.D. 68.)

## **D. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Luke the master writer was also the master researcher. For his gospel he needed to interview many witnesses for their firsthand accounts of the life of Jesus. Research of oral and written sources also was required for Acts, but he had personally seen and heard much of its history or had learned about it from his intimate

companion Paul. Chart 49 shows the most probable sources of information for Luke's Acts.

# CHART 49: LUKE'S SOURCES FOR WRITING ACTS

OUTLINE OF ACTS	EARLY DAYS		TRANSITION				MISSIONARY EXPANSION			
	6:1	8:1	9:1	9:32	11:24	12:25	16:10-17	20:5— 21:18	27:1	28:16
LUKE'S SOURCES	Peter & John, Mark, Mnason and others, plus written sources		Paul & Philip	Philip	Paul	Peter	Paul and/or Barnabas	"WE" "WE" "WE" Luke may have observed much of this entire action firsthand.	P A U L	

## Notes on Chart 49

1. Luke personally observed much, as is indicated by the three “we” sections.⁵ Also it should be noted that Luke may have witnessed the action of portions of Acts where he does *not* use “we” in his narrative. This may have been true regarding the large section of Acts 20:5 to 28:31.

2. Luke’s main informant was Paul, who was able to supply not only the events of his conversion and missionary ministry but also

other facts of the early church's history, such as Stephen's message and martyrdom (chapters 6-7).

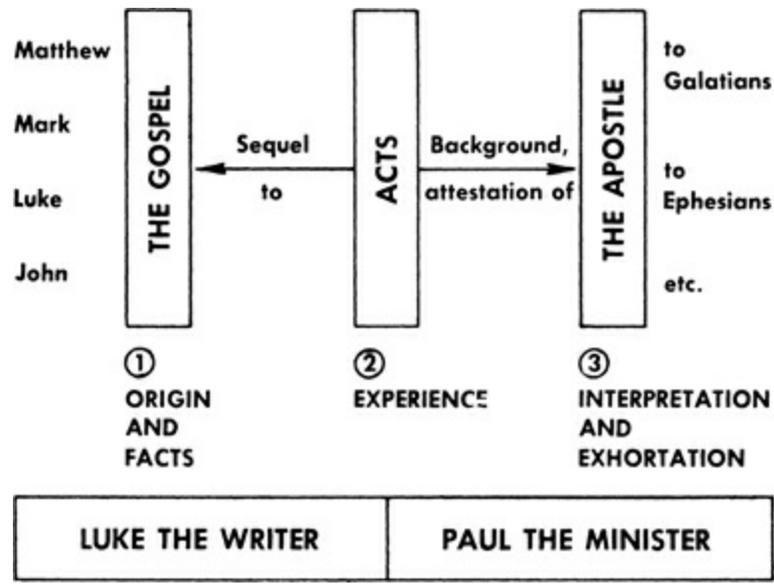
3. The remainder of the source material for Acts concerned the early days of the church. Most of it probably was secured orally from other sources, such as Barnabas, Philip, Peter, James, John, Mark, and Mnason (e.g., Acts 21:16). Luke probably consulted with them at such cities as Jerusalem, Antioch of Syria, and Caesarea.

## **E. RELATION TO THE OTHER NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS**

Originally, Luke's two writings — his gospel and Acts — probably were circulated as one work, because the narrative of his Acts was the natural sequel to the story of his gospel. But when John's record was

published as the final gospel at the end of the first century, Luke's gospel was weaned from Acts and linked with the other three gospels to become known corporately as "The Gospel."⁶ At about the same time, Paul's writings were being collected and identified under the one title, "The Apostle." Thus seventeen New Testament books were brought together and reduced to two units. Moreover, these two units found their common link in Acts, as shown on Chart 50.

# CHART 50: RELATION OF ACTS TO THE NEW TESTAMENT



## F. GEOGRAPHY

The mission assigned to the early church, spelled out in Acts 1:8, was universal. The performance of that mission in the years of Acts retained the universal quality, because the home base of the missionaries kept moving. The advance reported by Luke in Acts was generally from east to west: Jerusalem to Antioch (Syria) to Ephesus to Rome. (See Map L, and visualize the

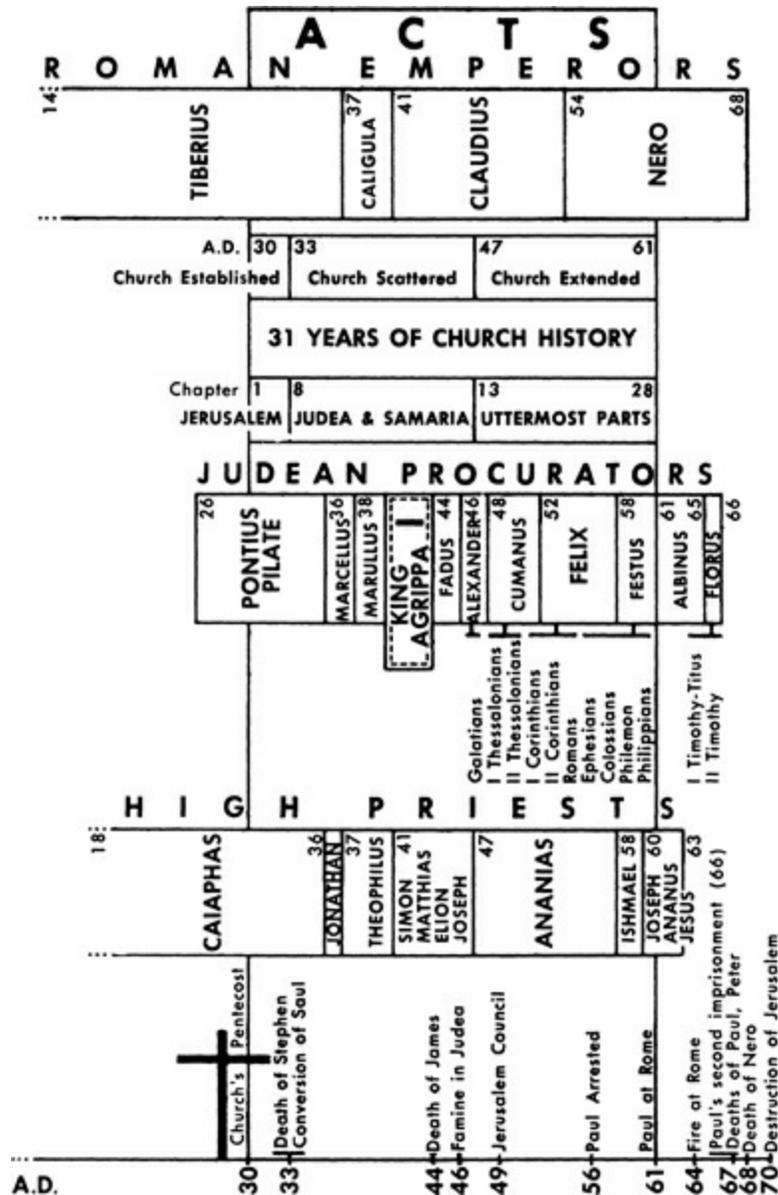
Palestinian Christians' view into the west.)  
Actually, Christianity spread in all directions  
from Jerusalem after Christ's ascension. Why  
do you think Acts records only the westward  
advance?⁷

# MAP L



Courtesy American Bible Society

# CHART 51: RULERS DURING THE TIMES OF ACTS



## G. RULERS DURING THE TIMES OF ACTS

Chart 51 shows the times of reign of the Roman emperors, Judean procurators, and high priests during the three decades of the

Acts history. Among other things, the chart helps you see what emperor, procurator, and high priest were ruling contemporaneously, at any one time of Acts. For example, identify the emperor, procurator, and high priest ruling at the time of Acts 8, when the church was scattered.

## H. PURPOSES

Three words may be used to suggest the overall *grand* purposes of Acts: registration, vindication, edification.

1. *Registration*. The written record of the history of redemption makes up a substantial part of both the Old and New Testaments. The experiences of individual believers, as well as those of the corporate people of God, are registered in the Bible, thereby demonstrating before the audience of the

ages that redemption is real, dynamic, and worthy to be sought. God moved Luke to record the narrative of the early church in the Holy Scriptures in order to show the church's relation (a) to the past (continuation) and (b) to the future (propagation).

a. Continuation. Luke's own words reveal this aspect of the narrative. His purpose in the third gospel was to record, like the writers before him, the origins of Christianity "To compile an account of the things accomplished among us" (Luke 1:1). The first verse of Acts, by citing "all that Jesus began ... to do and teach" implies that Luke intends to show how Acts *continues* the story of Jesus as the ascended, exalted One (Acts 1:2, 9).

b. Propagation. Throughout Acts the thrust is one of extension, propagation,

multiplication, and advance. Externally, the advance is from Jerusalem to Rome; internally, it moves from a Jewish hearing to a universal audience. All in all, the church makes fantastic progress in its first three decades of life, and Luke accurately registers this phase of its history.

2. *Vindication.* Acts was written soon after the last event of its narrative. Why was there no delay or waiting period, as with the gospels? As we approach the question we must recognize that although each book of the Bible was written primarily for the ages, its publication date was ordained by God so that its message could fill a contemporary need as well. A study of the times in which Luke wrote reveals that Acts apparently was given to the Roman world to let the history and message of the church *vindicate its claim to divine origin*. The church needed to make clear to the Roman government that

Christianity was not to be associated with Judaism, though both claimed the same God and same Old Testament Scriptures. In fact, Luke emphasized in Acts that the leaders of Judaism considered Christians as heretical and blasphemous, and that this formed the basis for most of the persecutions of the disciples of that day. There was a divine purpose in such a clarification of the church's identity at this time, for in just a few more years rebellion of Jewish authorities against the Roman Empire would lead to war. That war would eventually culminate in the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) by the Romans. Thus Rome would know that the Christians were not part of any rebellion brewing against the Empire.⁸

The authenticity of Luke's gospel is shared by Acts because of the one author. And, since Paul's conversion and divine call were reported by Luke in Acts, the message of

Paul's letters ("The Apostle") was thus given a strong acceptance. Furthermore, Acts provided evidence of the apostleship of other New Testament writers, such as Peter and James. So in a real sense Acts served as the pivotal book of the New Testament. At the same time it must be recognized that this vindicative purpose of Acts was not one of the main reasons it was written.

3. *Edification.* The primary purpose of Acts must have been edification, for it was inspired and written to profit for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness — a ministry of edifying of the church of God. A soul may learn how to be saved from Acts, but the book was written primarily for the believer's instruction in how to live and serve God. Your study of Acts should be geared to learning what the book teaches about Christian living and the mission of the

church of which you are a part. And the fruits of studying Acts are multiplied when it is studied in connection with the epistles of the New Testament, for which it provides the setting and background.

### **III. SURVEY**

#### **A. PREPARING TO SURVEY**

Recall your study in [Chapter 1](#) of the complex environment of Christianity in the first century. Three major forces (combinations of such things as culture, religion, knowledge, and tradition) controlled the environment that formed the life and makeup of the peoples described in Acts. Those three forces were the Jewish, Greek, and Roman elements.⁹ The following summary will help you visualize that setting of the three decades covered by Acts.

(Recall [Chapter 3](#).)

*Judaism* was one important element of the culture. Negatively, it was known for its false sects, its hard and impenetrable traditions, its rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, and its zealous patriotism. Positively, it stood for a belief in one God, the Old Testament Scriptures as the revelation of God, a search for salvation, the salting influence of a believing remnant, a sense of destiny, and a faithful attendance at the worship services of the Temple in Jerusalem and the synagogues scattered throughout the Empire.

*Hellenism* was another ingredient that vitally affected the environment. Among its major contributions were a philosophical spirit of inquiry that invaded its many religions, an attractive culture that sought the good and the beautiful, and, above all,

its vernacular (Koine) Greek language, the universal communication medium of the Roman world by which the gospel was spread quickly and efficiently.

The *Roman Empire* gave the church political and governmental advantages. It guaranteed law and justice in hostile situations; it provided roads, bridges, and seaways for travel; and it promoted an underlying religious tolerance of the new religion of Christianity.

Before beginning your survey study, think of answers to this question, “Why might God have wanted a book like Acts to be a part of the canon of Scripture?”

## **B. FIRST READING**

Scan the book of Acts in one sitting. You may choose to read only the first verse of

each paragraph. Read enough to get the feel of the book. If possible, read aloud. What are your impressions? Is there much action in Acts? Are there many sermons? many characters? Have any words or verses stood out as being prominent, from this scanning?

## **C. SURVEYING THE INDIVIDUAL SEGMENTS**

First note on Chart 52, page 214, how the text of Acts is divided into segments. Each segment begins at verse 1 with the exceptions shown below. Read the Bible text to justify these beginnings:

1. 8:1b — The phrase of 8:1a, “And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death” is appropriately associated with the end of the Stephen story.
2. 9:32 — Chapter 9 gives the story of

Paul's conversion. Verse 31 is a fitting conclusion to that story; verse 32 picks up the Peter account again, therefore it seems logical to begin a new segment here.

3. 15:36 — Paul's second missionary journey begins at this point, therefore it is well to make a division here.

4. 18:23 — The start of the third missionary journey is almost obscured in the narrative. A new division (and therefore new segment) is necessary here.

5. 21:18 — The point that one chooses to distinguish between the end of the third journey and the subsequent events at Jerusalem is rather arbitrary. We shall use 21:18 as the beginning of the new section.

Mark the above-mentioned dividing points in your Bible, to help your survey study.

Now quickly read each segment of Acts. Record segment titles on a worksheet similar

to those used in your earlier studies (e.g., Chart 45, Segment Titles of John). When you have chosen titles for all the segments of Acts, scan the list and try to visualize the progression of the narrative from beginning to end. You now will begin to sense a movement or flow in the narrative of Acts. Record any new observations and impressions of the book.

Your survey so far has been groundwork. From this point on, the structure of Acts is what you will examine.

## **D. SEEING HOW THE BOOK HOLDS TOGETHER**

Having seen the content of individual chapters (or more accurately, segments), your task now is to determine Luke's narrative organization. It would be an

oversimplification to say that because Acts is history Luke simply followed the chronology of events and recorded them in diary fashion. Remember that Acts does not exhaustively record everything that transpired in the first decades of the early church. Luke, inspired of the Holy Spirit, selected the events and items that he would include to best serve the book's purposes. Selectivity and nondiarylike composition, plus the inclusion of many sermons and addresses, happily afford the potential of all the beauty, interest, and appeal that can be found in a true literary work.

This part of your study does not involve another reading of the entire book of Acts as such. Instead, you will find that you must continually page through the book or certain sections of it as you proceed from subject to subject. As you discover different parts of the structure of Acts, record those on the

worksheet chart where you have recorded segment titles.

1. *Groupings of segments.* The easiest way to begin the search for Acts' organization is to identify groupings of chapters as determined by similarity of subject. In history, the three items of persons, events, and places usually steer the narrative. Consider each of those separately, using the following questions as directive helps in locating groupings.

a. Who is the main character of the first few chapters of Acts? What was his title or work? How long does he stay in the narrative of Acts? (Refer to an exhaustive concordance for a quick answer to this question.)

b. Who is the main character of the last chapters? Where is he first introduced? At what chapter does he reappear to remain the

key person?

c. From your study so far, is any part of Acts not represented by one main character?

d. Now try events. We have already spoken of Paul's missionary journeys. How many were there? Where did each begin and end? If Paul was not always on missionary journeys in Acts, account for the remainder of his Acts years. Repeat this study for Peter's life, earlier in Acts.

e. Consider the events of the church. Does Acts record its beginning? Where? Then what were its periods of experience? (Note: This stage of survey is looking for *groupings*. Hence, the question just given does not ask for experiences, but periods of experience.)

f. Evangelism is a prominent theme in Acts. In the early chapters of Acts the gospel was generally preached where and to whom? Was there a change in audience,

generally speaking, on Paul's missionary journeys? What do chapters 10 and 11 contribute to your answers to this question?

g. You have already observed that geography plays a vital part in Acts, especially in terms of the expansion of the gospel. Consider where Acts begins and where it ends. Relate that to 1:8. Using the geography of this verse as an outline for the whole book of Acts, identify the three geographical sections on your worksheet chart.

h. Other survey studies either may be made now or reserved to a later time in your project. Two suggested subjects are: "Persecution," and "Progress of the Gospel."

2. *Major movements in Acts.* Progress in some direction is the normal pattern of composition. The book of Acts is no exception. From what you have already read

and studied of Acts, try to identify its major movements. You have already noted the geographical expansion of the gospel witness. In the account does persecution increase, wane, or remain constant? Is there a climax of any sort in the book? Look also for turning points or strategic centers about which the narrative pivots. Are there any transition sections or any notable contrasting sections?

# CHART 52: ACTS: THE EARLY CHURCH'S WITNESS OF THE GOSPEL

Author: Luke  
Date Written: A.D. 61  
Key Word: Witness  
Key Verse: 1:8

Acts of Peter												Acts of Paul																																																																										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8:16	9:1	9:23	10:1	11	12	13	14	15:1	15:36	16:1	17:1	18	19	20	21:1	21:18	22	23	24	25	26	27	28																																																								
TAKEN UP			HOLY SPIRIT IN WARD			GATE BEAUTIFUL			ANANIAS & SAPHIRA			WIDOWS			STEPHEN			PHILIP			SAUL			DOXCAS			CORNELIUS			PETER EXPOUNDED			HEROD			CYPRIUS			LYSTRA			CIRCUMCISED			PHILIPPI			ATHENS			CORINTH			EPHESUS			FAREWELL			GIRDLE			ARREST			STAIRWAY			CONSPIRACY			FELIX			FESTUS			AGRIPPA			SHIPWRECK			ROME		
Church Is Born			Church Grows Through Testing			Church Is Scattered			Church Embraces Gentiles			Church Extends Overseas						Church's Leader on Trial																																																																				
A.D. 30			30			33			37			47			49			52			56			61																																																														
Paul in Acts			Paul the Persecutor			Paul Saved			Paul Instructed			Paul the Missionary						Paul the Prisoner																																																																				
			Judea			Damascus			Arabia			First Journey		Second Journey		Third Journey		Jerusalem		Caesarea		To Rome																																																																
Jerusalem			Judea & Samaria			Uttermost Parts																																																																																
Jewish Period			Transition			Gentile Period																																																																																
Peter			Philip — Barnabas — Peter — Paul			P A U L																																																																																
Church Established			Church Scattered			Church Extended												Rome																																																																				
Jerusalem Old Testament Heritage			Jewish Period			Gentile World						Universal Gospel																																																																										

Compare the beginning (e.g., chap. 1) and end (e.g., chap. 28) of Acts. What are your observations? What is the last word of Acts? What does that suggest?

On the basis of your survey studies so far, how would you identify the theme of Acts? From that theme, what title would you suggest for the book?

## E. SURVEY CHART OF ACTS

Chart 52 shows ways of identifying the structure of the text of Acts. You have already observed many of those things in your survey study. Refer to this chart as you read the brief discussion below.

1. The twenty-eight chapters of Acts fall into three main divisions, with dividing points at 8:16 and 13:1. What outlines show this threefold organization? The geographical outline is a natural unfolding of 1:8. The outline on the church shows a progression of the church in the Acts narrative.

2. Acts can also be divided into two main parts, according to main characters. In chapters 1-12, Peter plays the leading role, whereas in chapters 13-28 everything centers on Paul's activities.

3. Note the divisions related to Jew and Gentile. In the early chapters of Acts, the

Jews make up most of the audience of the gospel. In chapters 10-12 the church sees its responsibility to extend the invitation of the gospel to Gentiles as well. This was a transitional period for the church. From chapter 13 on, the field is the world.

4. Paul as a missionary served well when at liberty (13:1—21:17) and remained loyal when in bonds (21:18—28:31).

5. A main outline of Acts is on the church and appears under the main horizontal line of the chart.

6. Note the outlines about Paul in Acts.

7. Geographically, where does Acts begin? Where does it end?

8. The dates shown on the chart are not obtained from the text of Acts, but are shown here to give chronological perspective.¹⁰ What is the time span of Acts? How long was each missionary

journey?

## **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

The number of prominent subjects in Acts is unusually large. Only a few of those can be identified here.

### **A. THE CHURCH IS BORN (2:1-47)**

Acts 2 records a new experience in the history of God's people, involving the Holy Spirit. The time was the Feast of Pentecost,¹¹ one of the three great festivals of Jerusalem attended by Jews from all parts of the world. In the design of God the day had arrived for the beginning of an extended ministry of the Spirit in the lives of believers.

Pentecost day was the time when the

church was born. There had been an invisible organism of believers in Old Testament days and during Jesus' earthly ministry, but now the people of God — known as the church¹² — would be experiencing and serving in a new relationship to a more fully revealed God. That extended revelation was by the incarnate Christ (“God ... has ... spoken ... in His Son,” Heb. 1:1-2) and the indwelling Spirit (John 16:13-15). In light of that, it is accurate to say that the Pentecost day of Acts 2 was the birthday of the church.

The following outline of chapter 2 shows the highlights of Luke's recording:

Event	2:1-4
Reaction	2:5-13
Explanation	2:14-36
Response and Sequel	2:37-47

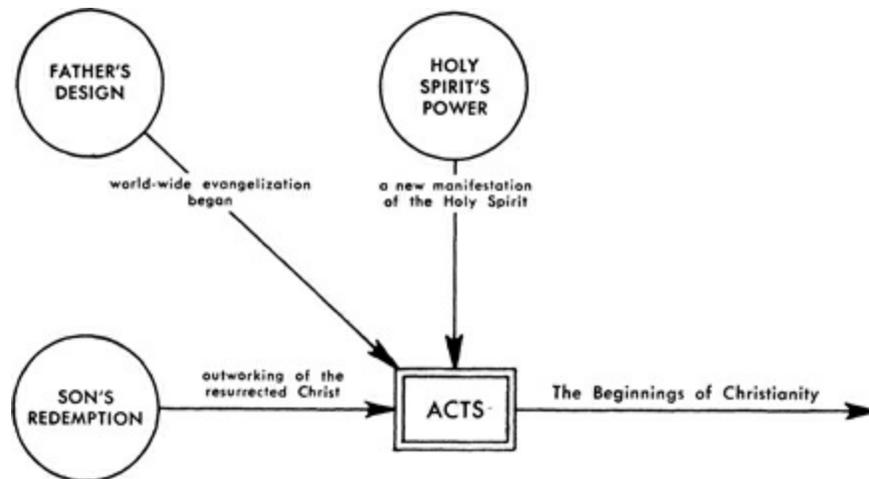
From chapter 2 to the end of the book, Luke shows the active role of all three

persons of the Trinity during the first three decades of the Christian church.¹³ See Chart 53.

## **B. STEPHEN'S LIFE AND DEATH (6:1—8:1a)**

Stephen is usually remembered for his martyrdom. That was his ministry “by death” (cf. Phil. 1:20). (In Acts 22:20 “witness” means *martyr*.) We should also remember him, however, for his brief but faithful ministry “by life” as one of the seven deacons serving in the “business” phase of the Jerusalem church (see 6:2-3). The twofold story of Stephen is organized in Acts as illustrated in Chart 54.

# CHART 53: THE ROLE OF THE THREE PERSONS OF THE GODHEAD



When Stephen was falsely accused by religious opponents, the high priest invited him to defend himself. The essence of his speech (7:2-53) was that the religionists of his day were the guilty ones, even as their forefathers had been: “You people of this day are just like your ancestors, you always resist the Holy Spirit. Only you are worse than your fathers; they killed God’s messengers who prophesied of the Messiah, but you have killed the Messiah Himself!” (Acts 7:51-53, author’s paraphrase).

The rulers and people became more

incensed, and they stoned Stephen to death. His dying words were, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” (7:60).

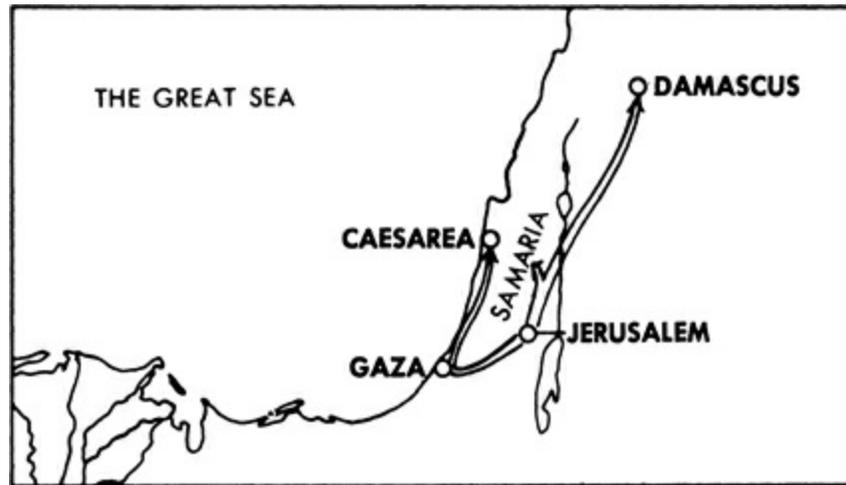
# CHART 54: STEPHEN'S LIFE AND DEATH

PART I	By Life	Ministry of Serving Tables	6:1-6
		 Fruit of the Ministry	6:7
PART II	By Death	Ministry of Words and Miracles	6:8—8:1a
		 Fruit of the Ministry	8:1b ff.

## C. SAUL SAVED (9:1-19a)

Persecution against the believers in Jerusalem scattered them throughout Judea and Samaria, and even to such distant cities as Damascus (Map M).

## MAP M: EARLY CHURCH SCATTERED



It was when the persecution had reached a peak through the fanatic labors of the arch-persecutor Saul¹⁴ (8:1-3), that God came down and struck him to the ground. In Blaiklock's words, "The rabid persecutor was a tormented man, soon to be brought to surrender, and destined to be the greatest name in the history of the Church."¹⁵ The wonderful, miraculous conversion of a man who called himself the chief of sinners is the subject of Luke's reporting in 9:1-19a.

## D. THE CHURCH EMBRACES GENTILES

## (9:32—12:25)

In the early chapters of Acts most of those who believed in Christ were Jews. That is understandable, since the gospel was the fulfillment of the Jews' Scriptures; Jesus and His disciples were Jews; and His mission was primarily to the house of Israel. The disciples were thus now taking it for granted that the gospel was mainly for Jews, with Gentiles brought into the fellowship of the church *only* via the Jewish institutions. The time had come for God to emphasize more than ever before that the gospel was for Gentile as well as Jew. Peter, leader of the church at that time, was the logical one to whom God would give such instruction. How God did that is the story of most of 9:32—12:25.

The scattering of the Jewish believers, which began on the day of Stephen's death,

was the first break in the solidarity of Jewish exclusivism that God would eventually liquidate. It was inevitable that Spirit-filled disciples should touch human hearts with whom they came in contact, regardless of race or religion. That is illustrated in the unrestricted expansion of the church as recorded by Luke in 8:1b—9:31 and summarized so triumphantly in 9:31.

But God wanted the Jews to hear clearly and in unambiguous words that the gospel was universal. So He led His disciples into the experiences recorded in 9:32—12:25. The entire section might be called “The Church Embraces Gentiles.”

Read 11:18 as a key verse of this section. What other similar verses do you observe?

Note: The problem of Gentile salvation was to reappear at a later time. It was part

of Paul's reason for writing Galatians, and it was the subject of discussion at what is now called the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

## **E. PAUL THE MISSIONARY (13:1—21:17)**

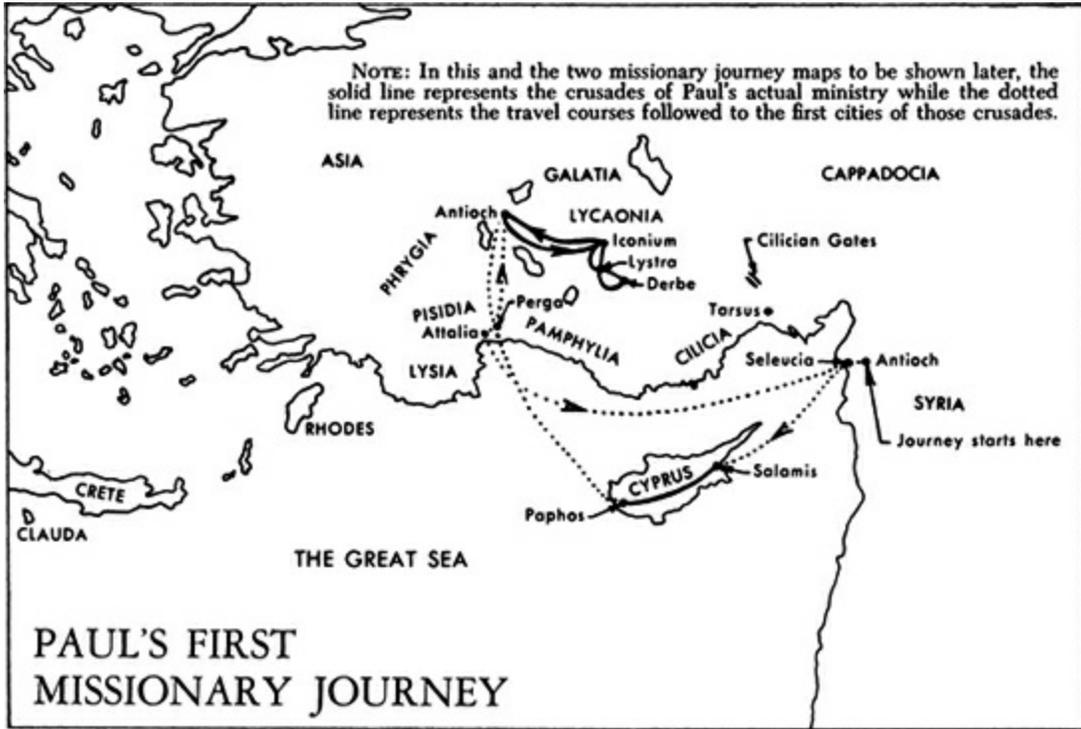
For about ten years (A.D. 47-56) Paul had the privilege and responsibility of leading the evangelization crusade of the early church in three missionary journeys (see Chart 52, p. 214). There was one major interruption — the Jerusalem Council — between the first and second journeys (15:1-35).

### **SUMMARY OF PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS**

JOURNEY	DATE	REGION	MILEAGE	ACTS
1	47-48	S.E. Asia Minor	1,500 mi.	13:1—14:28
2	49-52	Macedonia, Achaia	3,000-4,000 mi.	15:36—18:22
3	52-56	W. Asia Minor	4,000 mi.	18:23—21:17

Chapter 13 begins an entirely new section in Acts. [16](#) Antioch replaces Jerusalem as the base of operations or the mother city of the church. Saul (soon to be Paul) replaces Peter as the central figure of the evangelistic program. A mission field of all races and religions becomes the church's obligation, while the Jerusalem church continues to minister primarily to Jews. Home missions work in the homeland of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria continues, but foreign missions work to Asia and Europe is added to the responsibility of the apostles.

# MAP N



# CHART 55: SUMMARY OF PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

13:1	13:4	13:13			14:21	14:26	14:28
COMMISSION	MISSION <b>A</b> Island	MISSION <b>B</b> Inland			MISSION <b>C</b> Return	HOMECOMING	
	CYPRUS: <b>1</b> SALAMIS <b>2</b> PAPHOS	<b>1</b> ANTIOCH OF PISIDIA	14:1 <b>2</b> ICONIUM	14:7 <b>3</b> LYSTRA	14:20 <b>4</b> DERBE	LYSTRA ICONIUM ANTIOCH PERGA ATTALIA	ANTIOCH OF SYRIA
	<b>1</b> Solomis Ministry:  <b>2</b> Paphos Ministry:  Opposition:  Miracle:  Spiritual Fruit:	<b>1</b> Antioch Ministry: Opposition: Altered strategy: Spiritual Fruit:  <b>2</b> Iconium Ministry: Opposition: Spiritual Fruit:  <b>3</b> Lystra Ministry: Miracle: Problem: Opposition:  <b>4</b> Derbe Ministry: Spiritual Fruit:			RETURN VISITS Ministry:    Spiritual Fruit:	MISSIONARY REPORT	

# MAP O



Areas of concentrated ministry of first ① and second ② journeys.

# CHART 56

## SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

A.D. 49-52

Acts 15:36—18:22

15:36	15:41	16:6	16:11	17:1	17:10	17:15	18:1	18:18	18:22
Antioch	Syria Cilicia	Mysia Troas	Philippi	Thessalonica	Berea	Athens	Corinth	Ephesus Caesarea Antioch	
	ASIA MINOR		MACEDONIA		ACHAIA				
PREPARATION & COMMISSION	MISSION (A)		MISSION (B)		MISSION (C)		RETURN		
PERSONNEL									
DURATION									
ITINERARY DETERMINANTS									
MINISTRIES						I and II Thess. written from Corinth ¹⁷			
KEY MESSAGES									
OPPOSITION & DELIVERANCE									
SIGNS & MIRACLES									
SPIRITUAL FRUIT									
KEY VERSES									

Maps and charted summary-worksheets of Paul's three missionary journeys are included in the accompanying pages to help your survey of these important chapters of Acts.

*Notes on the missionary journeys*

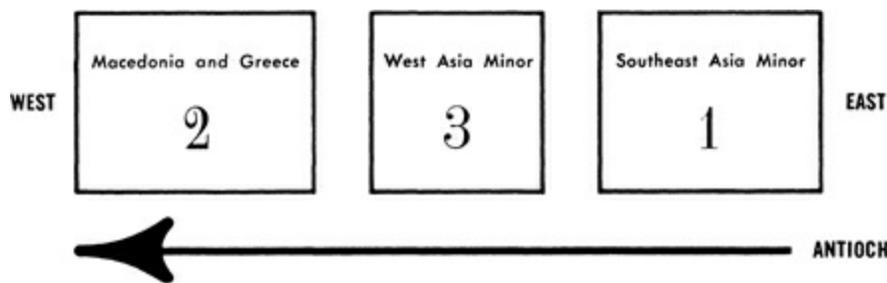
1. World evangelization was the plan that Jesus shared with His apostles (1:8). At 13:1 it was the time to execute such a plan. We observe from the text that it was not Saul or the church, but the Holy Spirit who took the initiative of this new venture (13:2). It was God's plan, and it was God's work. The missionaries were to be His instruments in the work (cf. 14:26-27).

2. It was during Paul's missionary journeys that the apostle was inspired to write some of the New Testament epistles, and it is obvious from them that the interpretations and implications of the ABC's of the gospel message were becoming deeper and more advanced by revelation from God.

3. The end of Paul's second journey and the beginning of his third are so briefly and casually recorded by Luke that the reader of

Acts is hardly aware that a new missionary crusade has begun. The second journey closes at 18:22, and in the very next verse, [18](#) although a period of time is spent at Antioch, Paul is off to the work again, moving about Galatia and Phrygia.

## GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE ON MISSIONARY JOURNEYS



4. Observe that Paul bypassed western Asia Minor on his second journey and did most of his work in Macedonia and Greece. So it was very natural for his third tour that he should be led to spend most of his time (three years) in western Asia Minor (with Ephesus at the hub).

# MAP P



Areas of concentrated ministry of first ①, second ② and third ③ journeys.

# CHART 57

THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY  
Acts 18:23—21:17

A.D. 52-56

18:23	18:24	19:1	19:8	19:21	20:1	20:7	20:13	20:17	21:1	21:17
Galatia & Phrygia	Apolllos	Paul to Ephesus	Teaching & Preaching	Riot	Macedonia & Greece	Troas	To Miletus	Forewell	To Jerusalem	
Galatia & Phrygia	Ephesus				Macedonia & Greece	Troas to Jerusalem				
MISSION (A)					MISSION (B)		MISSION (C)			
Follow-up	NEW				Follow-up	CONCLUDING				
about 3 years					10-14 months					
PERSONNEL										
DURATION										
ITINERARY DETERMINANTS										
MINISTRIES	I Cor. written				II Cor. written from Macedonia Romans written from Corinth					
KEY MESSAGES										
OPPOSITION & DELIVERANCE										
SIGNS & MIRACLES										
SPIRITUAL FRUIT										
KEY VERSES										

## F. PAUL THE PRISONER (21:18—28:31)

Paul the missionary became Paul the prisoner, and he remained in bonds for the remainder of the story of Acts. Luke knew he was not writing a complete biography of

Paul, so any awareness that Paul might be given later opportunity to serve God in even greater ministries did not deter Luke from closing his account where he did. Borne of the Holy Spirit, the physician-author designed Acts to close with an action-packed account of the appearances of Paul the prisoner in defense of his Christian testimony. These were appearances before an angry mob, a disorganized council, and confused rulers — all of that leading to his finally reaching Rome (28:14), the goal of his heart (Rom. 1:10-11; 15:22-24). Blaiklock writes, “Paul’s was the most significant life ever lived, and when he came to Rome, the purpose for which he had toiled and striven was virtually achieved.”¹⁹

Map Q shows the route over which Paul was taken to Rome (27:1—28:14), and Chart 58 is a survey of these last chapters of Acts.

## V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

A key word of Acts is *witness*, which appears in its various forms about twenty times. Some other key words and phrases are “and it came about,” “but when,” “preached,” “boldly,” “Jews,” “Greeks.” What other words did you especially observe in your survey?

Acts 1:8 is often identified as a key verse of Acts, especially since an outline of Acts (geography) is in the verse. What other key verses did you observe?

## VI. APPLICATIONS

Various applications of Acts have already been made in the course of this chapter, so additional ones will not be cited. As you think back over your survey, what spiritual applications remain with you indelibly?

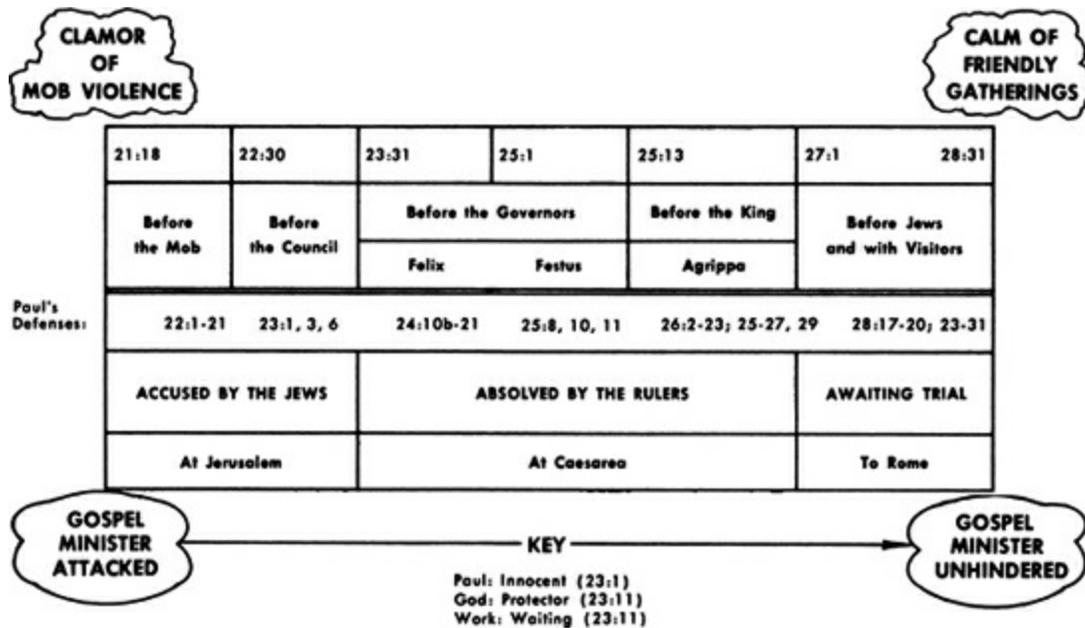
## VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When and where did Luke write Acts?
2. What were his purposes in writing?
3. What were Luke's sources of information?

# MAP Q



# CHART 58: APPEARANCES OF PAUL THE PRISONER (Acts 21:18—28:31)



4. Compare Acts with the other New Testament books. Why is it called a pivotal book?

5. What is the time period covered by Acts?

6. What are the three main divisions of the text of Acts? Can you recall three outlines built around that threefold structure?

7. Where in Acts is Paul's conversion

recorded?

8. Who is the main character of chapters 1-7? of chapters 13-28?

9. How would you describe the content of the middle section of Acts?

10. Generally, what were the geographical itineraries of each of Paul's three missionary journeys?

11. What were some of Paul's examination appearances as a prisoner, in 21:18ff.?

12. What is the last word of the text of Acts?

## **VIII. FURTHER STUDY**

Here is a list of subjects for further study, selected from the wide range of subjects in Acts:

the early church

ministries of the Holy Spirit on  
the day of Pentecost  
life of Peter  
life of Paul  
use of the Old Testament in Acts  
miracles, prayers in Acts  
demonism  
idol worship  
personal evangelism  
persecution of Christians.

## IX. OUTLINE

ACTS: The Beginnings of the Christian Church	
THE CHURCH IS BORN	1:1—2:47
The Church's Work	1:1-14
The Church's Workers	1:15-26
The Church's Spirit Baptism	2:1-21
The Church's Gospel	2:22-47
THE CHURCH GROWS THROUGH TESTING	3:1—8:1a
The Test of Popularity	3:1-26
The Test of Loyalty	4:1-22
The Test of Things	4:23—5:11
The Test of Fortitude	5:12-42

The Test of Responsibility	6:1-15
The Test of Grace	7:1—8:1 _a
THE CHURCH IS SCATTERED	8:1 _b —9:31
Samaritans Saved	8:1 _b -25
An Ethiopian Saved	8:26-40
Saul Saved	9:1-19 _a
Saul's First Ministries	9:19 _b -31
THE CHURCH EMBRACES GENTILES	9:32—12:25
Peter's Outlook Changes Through a Vision	9:32—11:18
Mission-Minded Church at Antioch	11:19-30
God's Deliverance of Peter from Prison	12:1-25
THE CHURCH EXTENDS OVERSEAS	13:1—21:17
First Missionary Journey	13:1—14:28
Jerusalem Council	15:1-35
Second Missionary Journey	15:36—18:22
Third Missionary Journey	18:23—21:17
THE CHURCH'S LEADER ON TRIAL	21:18—28:31
Paul Before the Mob and Council	21:18—23:30
Paul Before the Governors	23:31—25:12
Paul Before a King	25:13—26:32
Paul Reaches Rome	27:1—28:31

## X. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Bruce, F. F. *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 1-64.

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 243-81.

Manley, ?. T., ed. *The New Bible Handbook*, pp. 344-50.

Robertson, A. T. "Acts of the Apostles."

In *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1:39-48.

Thiessen, Henry C. *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 177-88.

## COMMENTARIES

Blaiklock, E. M. *The Acts of the Apostles*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Political and cultural background is given on pages 20-44.

Bruce, F. F. *Commentary on the Book of Acts*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. This is one of the best commentaries on Acts available today.

Lange, John Peter. *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Acts*.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Acts of the*

*Apostles.*

Rackham, Richard B. *The Acts of the Apostles.*

Scroggie, W. Graham. *The Acts of the Apostles.*

## **OTHER RELATED SOURCES**

Foakes-Jackson, F. J., and Lake, Kirsopp, eds. *The Beginnings of Christianity.*

Goodwin, Frank J. *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul.*

Jensen, Irving L. *Acts: An Independent Study.*

Kent, Homer A., Jr. *Jerusalem to Rome: Studies in the Book of Acts.*

Purves, George T. *The Apostolic Age.*

Robertson, A. T. *Epochs in the Life of Paul*.

Sauer, Erich. *The Dawn of World Redemption*.

Stalker, James. *The Life of St. Paul*.

Walvoord, John F. *The Holy Spirit*.

1. Various titles were ascribed to this book in the early days of its circulation. The three most common ones were “Acts of the Apostles” (found in the *Muratorian Fragment* on the Canon, of the late second century); “Acts of Apostles” (fourth-century *Vaticanus* and *Beza* manuscripts); and “Acts” (fourth-century *Sinaiticus* manuscript).

2. Luke no doubt was also with Paul at other times in the book of Acts, even when Luke uses the third person in the narrative. (Richard B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. xxvii.)

3. See Rackham, p. xvi, for evidences of this

identification.

4. E. M. Blaiklock, *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 12-13.

5. A “we” reference is one where the writer (in this case Luke) is a participant in the action (e.g., Acts 16:10).

6. This was a natural fusion, since all four books recorded the same message, through from four different vantage points. W. Graham Scroggie compares the gospels with the other twenty-three books of the New Testament as follows:

<i>Gospels</i>	<i>Acts-Revelation</i>
The Christ	The Church
Introduction of the Gospel	Progress of the Gospel
Into the World	In the World
Christ for Us	Christ in Us
Christ Revealed Historically	Christ Revealed Mystically

Chart adapted from *Know Your Bible*, 2:59.

7. For a history of the expansion of Christianity in the other directions, see church history volumes such as Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion*

*of Christianity*, 1:86-113. Latourette cites one tradition that arose in the early centuries of the church concerning missionary work beyond Roman frontiers: “Sometimes in the early centuries of Christianity the tradition arose that the Twelve Apostles had parcelled among themselves the known world. One form of this tradition declared that Thomas received the Parthians as his assignment; Matthew, Ethiopia; and Bartholomew, part of India” (p. 101).

8. See F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, pp. 17-24, for a discussion of this apologetic purpose of Luke.

9. For further study see E. M. Blaiklock, *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 20-44.

10. For a good system of New Testament chronology, see the study graph chart *New Testament Chronological Chart*, revised edition (1968), by James L. Boyer, Moody Press, Chicago. Professor Boyer also gives a

clear presentation of the factors that determine the assigning of dates to New Testament events.

11. Read Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 23:15-21; Numbers 28:26; Deuteronomy 16:10, 16, 17.

12. The first appearance of the word *church* (assembly) in Acts is at 2:47. Before this it appears only three times in the New Testament: Matthew 16:18; 18:17 (twice).

13. When a generalization is made concerning the *prominent* functions of the three Persons of the Godhead during the years of Bible history, it may be said that the Father is most prominent in the Old Testament, the Son in the Gospels, and the Holy Spirit in Acts.

14. Saul is called Paul (a Roman name) for the first time in Acts 13:9. After that, Luke always refers to him as Paul. (Paul uses "Saul" in describing his conversion experience in 22:7, 13; 26:14.) The

significance of the two names will be discussed later.

15. E. M. Blaiklock, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, p. 79.

16. The last verse of [chapter 12](#) might be considered as part of [chapter 13](#).

18. The *Berkeley Version* and the *New International Version* accurately make a new paragraph at 18:23, indicating the third journey's commencement here.

19. E. M. Blaiklock, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 12.

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## Part 3

### THE MESSAGE

#### *Christ the Savior, Sanctifier, and Coming King*

Twenty-one of the twenty-seven New Testament books are epistles. This kind of writing, with its personal characteristics, is a very natural follow-up of the historical kind represented by the four gospels and Acts. As the Christian church was expanding geographically in the first decades after the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), communication from individual to individual, from group to group, and from individual to group was usually by letter. The characteristic common to all the New Testament epistles was the spiritual bond in Christ, between the writer and the reader(s). It was a personal, intimate relationship, and so the epistle was an appropriate channel for sharing personal

testimony and delivering exhortations and commands, in addition to interpreting the grand truths of the gospel.

Of the twenty-one epistles, thirteen bear the name of the apostle Paul, and are referred to now as the Pauline epistles. The remaining letters are non-Pauline epistles, and were written by Peter, James, John, Jude, and an anonymous author (Hebrews).

Philip Schaff says the New Testament epistles “compress more ideas in fewer words than any other writings, human or divine, excepting the Gospels.” The subject of the epistles is Jesus Christ. Their message is that He is the sinner’s Savior, the Christian’s sanctifier, and the King who one day will return to rule over His kingdom forevermore. The world desperately needs to hear that message.

*Pauline epistles*

Romans	Colossians
1, 2 Corinthians	1, 2 Thessalonians
Galatians	1, 2 Timothy
Ephesians	Titus
Philippians	Philemon

*Non-Pauline epistles*

Hebrews
James
1, 2 Peter
1, 2, 3 John
Jude

## *10 Paul and His Letters*

In so many different ways the apostle Paul must be regarded as a key servant of God in the New Testament's story of the church, "given to Christianity when it was in its most rudimentary beginnings."¹ James Stalker writes that the early Christian community "was in the utmost need of a man of extraordinary endowments, who, becoming possessed with its genius, should incorporate it with the general history of the world; and in Paul it found the man it needed."² It was God, in His sovereign ways of foreknowledge, who brought the two together at the right time.

The purpose of this chapter is to furnish background for the surveys of each of Paul's letters, by looking briefly at the man, his life, and his ministry, including the letters he wrote.

# I. THE MAN PAUL

A brief description of the man Paul is given below. We will see more of the apostle and his ministry as we survey each of his epistles in the chapters that follow. Refer to outside sources for extended treatment of Paul's life and ministry.³

## A. NAME

Paul's Hebrew name was *Saul* ("asked of God"); his Roman name was *Paul* ("little").⁴ Very possibly he had both names from childhood. In his epistles the apostle always refers to himself as Paul. Consult an exhaustive concordance for all the references to the two names in the New Testament. Read Acts 13:9, which is the turning point in Acts for the changeover of designation from Saul to Paul. After 13:9,

the author of Acts always refers to him as Paul. But Paul uses the name Saul in describing his conversion experience in Acts 22:7, 13; 26:14.

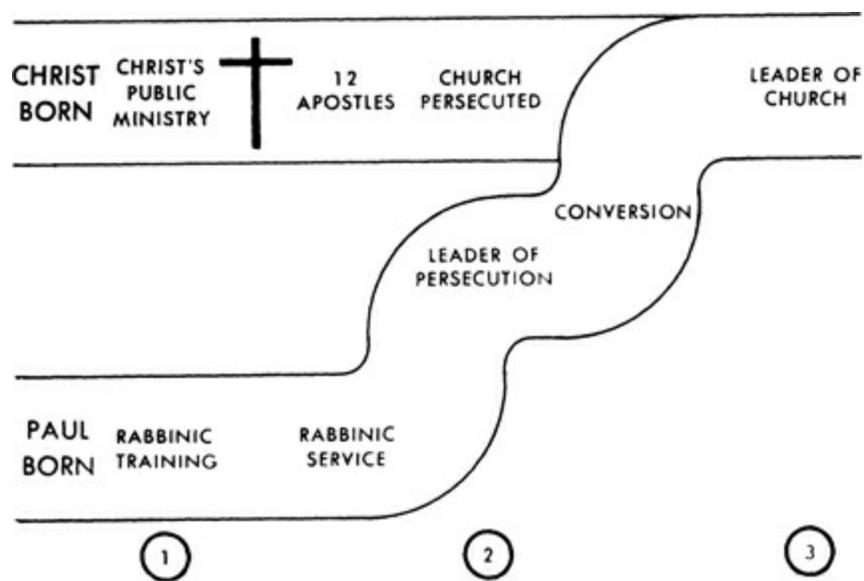
## **B. DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH**

Paul was born about the time of Jesus' birth,⁵ in the city of Tarsus, of the province of Cilicia. (See Map E, p. 64.)

## **C. FAMILY**

Paul's father was a native of Palestine, a Roman citizen, merchant by trade, and a strict Pharisee. His mother was probably a devout woman. Paul had at least one sister and one nephew (Acts 23:16).

## **THREE PHASES OF PAUL'S LIFE**



## D. EDUCATION

In his youth Paul learned the trade of tent-making. He may have matriculated at the famous university in Tarsus, one of the three major universities of the Roman Empire. His rabbinical training was under Gamaliel at Jerusalem.

## E. POSTSCHOOL YEARS

Paul probably served in synagogues outside of Palestine after his rabbinical

training, and he returned to Jerusalem some time after Christ's ascension. He soon became the leader of the persecution of the Christian church.

## **F. CONVERSION**

Paul's conversion to Christ came at the height of his opposition to the church, on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:1-19a reports the experience. (Recall your survey of Acts.) The sovereign ways of God are remarkably demonstrated in Paul's three-phased life (early training; church persecutor; church leader) in relation to Christ and the early church. This is shown on the accompanying diagram. What are your impressions?

## **G. MISSIONARY-AUTHOR**

Many of Paul's New Testament letters were written during the years of his missionary labors. Chart 59 shows how these two ministries overlapped each other.⁶ (For Scripture references to each item, see Appendix B, p. 518.)

# CHART 59: OUTLINE OF HIGHLIGHTS OF PAUL'S LIFE

Birth of Paul _____	around the time of Christ's birth
Conversion of Paul _____	A.D. 33
First missionary journey _____	47-48
GALATIANS written after first journey? _____	48
Apostolic council at Jerusalem _____	49
Second missionary journey _____	49-52
I and II THESSALONIANS written during second journey _____	52
Third missionary journey _____	52-56
I and II CORINTHIANS written during third journey _____	55
ROMANS written during third journey _____	56
Arrest in Jerusalem _____	56
Journey to Rome _____	60-61
In Rome awaiting trial, under guard _____	61
PHILEMON, COLOSSIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS written from prison _____	61
Paul released, revisits churches, resumes evangelistic ministry _____	62-66
I TIMOTHY, TITUS written _____	62-65
Paul arrested, imprisoned at Rome _____	66-67
II TIMOTHY written from prison _____	67
Paul executed _____	67

## H. CHARACTER

A study of Paul's character as revealed by Acts and his writings shows him to be one of the most unique Christians of the New Testament. A. T. Robertson's interpretation of that character revelation is given here:

Passing by Jesus himself, Paul stands forever the foremost representative of Christ, the ablest exponent of Christianity, its most

constructive genius, its dominant spirit from the merely human side, its most fearless champion, its most illustrious and influential missionary, preacher, teacher, and its most distinguished martyr. He heard things in the third heaven not lawful to utter (II Cor. 12:4), but he felt himself a poor earthen vessel after all (II Cor. 4:7). He sought to commend himself in the sight of God to every man's conscience, for he had seen the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ and was the servant of all for Jesus' sake (II Cor. 4:3 ff.).⁸

## **I. TRIALS AND DEATH**

Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:16-31), but he was incarcerated again after about four years of

freedom. His second letter to Timothy was written from prison, and the letter reveals that he did not expect to be released (2 Tim. 4:6). His trial was probably very brief, and according to tradition he was beheaded. Stalker describes the scene, as he imagines it:

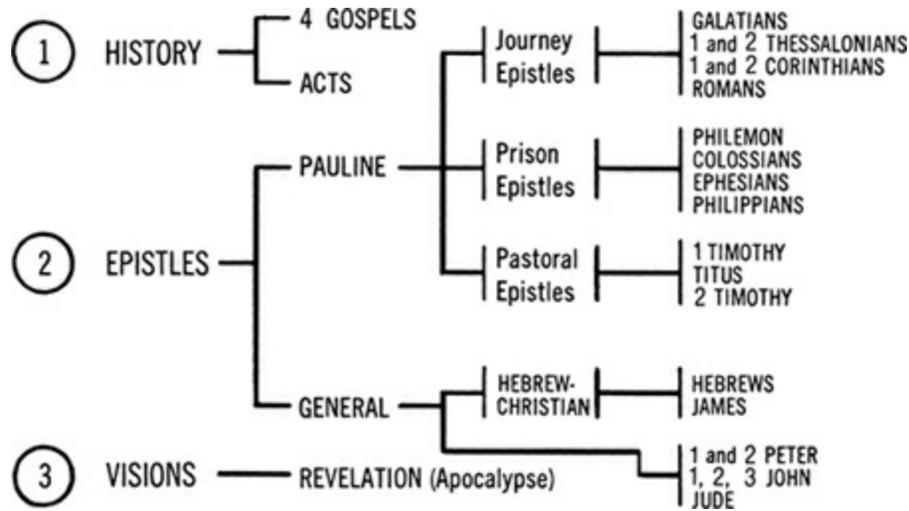
The trial ended, Paul was condemned and delivered over to the executioner. He was led out of the city with a crowd of the lowest rabble at his heels. The fatal spot was reached; he knelt beside the block; the headsman's axe gleamed in the sun and fell; and the head of the apostle of the world rolled down in the dust. So sin did its uttermost and its worst. Yet how poor and empty was its triumph!... ten thousand times ten thousand welcomed him in the same hour at

the gates of the city which is really eternal. Even on earth Paul could not die ... in ten thousand churches every Sabbath and on a thousand thousand hearths every day his eloquent lips still teach that gospel of which he was never ashamed.⁹

## **II. PAUL'S LETTERS**

The epistolary form of most of the New Testament (21 of 27 books) is one of its unique characteristics, distinct from all other sacred writings of the world. Hiebert compares that form with the Old Testament legal document form:

# CHART 60: GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



The use of the epistle as a medium of revelation in the New Testament reveals the difference between the ages of law and grace. Under the legal dispensation the demands of God were set forth in legal documents, sealed with the direct authority of God; in the age of grace God further makes known His will to His children through loving letters of instruction and exhortation.¹⁰

The writings of Paul — at least thirteen of

twenty-one New Testament letters — constitute a major part of the New Testament.¹¹ A fourteenth book, Hebrews, also might have been written by Paul. All twenty-seven New Testament books are shown on Chart 60, which breaks down the list into three major groups. What are the groups?

Nine of Paul's letters are addressed to seven Gentile churches (in Galatia, Thessalonica, Corinth, Rome, Colossae, Ephesus, and Philippi). Locate these places on Map L, p. 207. (Galatia is a region; the other places are cities.)

Four of Paul's letters are addressed to individuals (Timothy, Titus, and Philemon). Paul wrote four "prison epistles."¹² The epistle to the Hebrews, whoever the author, was written especially for Jewish Christians and may have been intended as a circular

letter.

Paul's letters are not listed in the New Testament in the chronological order of their writing. Study Chart 61 carefully, observing the progressions involved in the ongoing additions to the New Testament canon. For example, what progression do you see in the main subjects of the three groups?

## **A. THE NEW TESTAMENT LISTING OF PAUL'S LETTERS**

As noted in [Chapter 1](#) (see Chart 2, p. 23), the order in which Paul's epistles are listed in the New Testament canon is generally topical, involving two main groups: epistles addressed to local churches (Romans to 2 Thessalonians); and epistles addressed to individuals (1 Timothy to Philemon). Within

each group the epistles are arranged in descending order of length.¹³

1. *Letters to churches.* These epistles teach the proper order of the church and her relationship to Christ the Head. They also instruct the church regarding her position, possessions, privileges, and duties.

# CHART 61: PROGRESSIVE ADDITIONS OF PAUL'S EPISTLES TO THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

GROUP	SETTING	EPISTLE	DATE A.D.	MAIN SUBJECTS	GENERAL PURPOSES	
I TRAVEL EPISTLES	between first and second journeys	GALATIANS	48	SALVATION at Present and in the Future	EVANGELIZING	TO CHURCHES
	second journey	1 and 2 THESSALONIANS	52			
	third journey	1 and 2 CORINTHIANS	55			
		ROMANS	56			
II PRISON EPISTLES	first Roman imprisonment	COLOSSIANS	61	CHRIST and the Christian Life	EDIFYING	
		EPHESIANS				
		PHILEMON				
		PHILIPPIANS				
III PASTORAL EPISTLES	release	1 TIMOTHY	62	CHURCH and its Workers	ESTABLISHING	TO INDIVIDUALS
		TITUS	62		.....	
	second Roman imprisonment	2 TIMOTHY	67		personal farewell	

Romans has naturally the first place in order, since it is the foundational epistle of the doctrines of salvation. Romans shows the material out of which God forms the church: man lost in sin, hopeless, helpless. It also

shows how God by His mighty power transforms this unpromising material into living stones of which the church is built, Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. Here is the canonical order:

Romans

1 and 2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 and 2 Thessalonians 2.

2 . *Letters to individuals.* The message of these epistles applies especially to individual Christians, concerning Christian living and service. This is the order:

1 and 2 Timothy

Titus

## **B. DIFFERENT ORDERS OF STUDYING THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS**

There are various orders that may be followed in studying the books of the New Testament. A few of these have already been identified. The different orders are these:

1. *Canonical order*. This follows the list of books as it appears in our New Testament. It is the order of our surveys in this study volume.

2. *Chronological order*. See Chart 1, p. 20, (entire New Testament) and Chart 61 (Paul's letters). Here one studies the books in the order of their first public appearances in the first century.

3. *General groups*. This order is shown on Chart 60, page 239.

4 . *Doctrinal content.* There are various possible orders using this approach. Below is one suggestion, which is charted on Chart 62. This chart shows a logical order (Matthew to Revelation, with the epistles built around Acts) combined with a doctrinal progression (*salvation; Christ; church; consummation*).

a. basic facts of the gospel — Matthew, Mark, Luke

b. further reflections of the gospel — John

c. sequel to the gospel — Acts

d. salvation (soteriology) —

(1a) Romans: The way of salvation

(1b) Hebrews: The person of salvation

(2a) Galatians: Liberation by the gospel

(2b) James: Compulsion of the gospel

e. Person and work of Christ (christology)

---

(1a) Ephesians: Christ and the church

(1b) Colossians: Christ and the cosmos

(2a) Philippians: Joy in Christ

(2b) Philemon: Forgiveness in Christ

f. church (ecclesiology) —

(1a) 1 Corinthians: Problems of a church

(1b) 1 Timothy: Pastoral care of a church

(1c) Titus: Traits of a good church

(2a) 2 Corinthians: Ministry  
vindicated

(2b) 2 Timothy: Ministry  
accomplished

g. last things (eschatology) —

(1a) 1 Thessalonians	}	Lord's (second) coming
(1b) 2 Thessalonians		
(2a) 1 Peter	}	Christian's living
(2b) 2 Peter		
(2c) Jude		
(3) Revelation: God and Christ on the throne		

## **C. THE MAIN PURPOSES OF PAUL'S LETTERS**

The main purposes of Paul's letters are seen when they are compared with the gospels and Acts. The gospels emphasize especially the facts of Christ's redemptive ministry; the epistles interpret those facts and tell the redeemed ones how to live the Christian life. In the gospels Christ

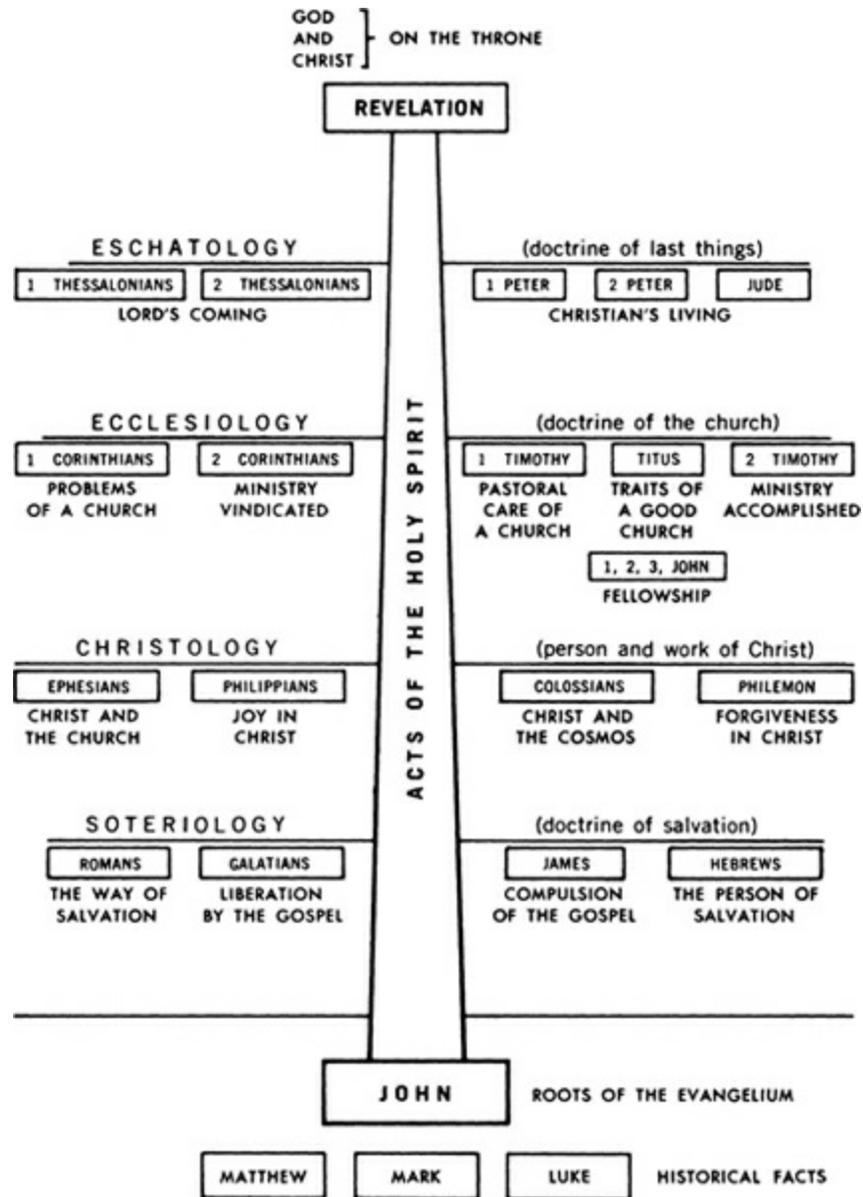
announces His purpose to build the church (Matt. 16:16-18). Acts shows the church in the first stages of construction. The epistles show how the church is built, what materials are used, and what are the positions, relationships, privileges, and duties of the members of its glorious and mysterious fellowship.

Prominent in all Paul's epistles are the exhortations and commands based on the doctrines. Seemingly simple duties are based on sublime truths that originate with the Person and work of Christ. Difficult commands (e.g., "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice," Rom. 12:1) are justified as being reasonable and consistent. Paul's epistles make it very clear that God offers all the help needed to fulfill His commands.

Little did Paul and the other writers of the

New Testament epistles realize the impact their letters would make on the lives of people for two thousand years. One church historian has evaluated the epistles thus:

# CHART 62: MAIN SUBJECTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS



The Epistles of the New Testament are without a parallel in ancient literature. ... Tracts for the times, they are tracts for all times. Children of the fleeting moment, they contain truths of infinite

moment. They compress more ideas in fewer words than any other writings, human or divine, excepting the Gospels. They discuss the highest themes which can challenge an immortal mind — God, Christ, and the Spirit, sin and redemption, incarnation, atonement, regeneration, repentance, faith and good works, holy living and dying. ... And all this before humble little societies of poor, uncultured artisans, freedmen and slaves.¹⁴

### III. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do Paul's two names mean, literally? Which name appears first in the New Testament text?
2. Where and when was Paul born?
3. Describe Paul's education.

4. What may have been Paul's activities during Jesus' public ministry?
5. What letters of Paul were written in connection with his missionary journeys?
6. Describe Paul's character.
7. When did Paul die?
8. List the books of the New Testament under each of these groups: History, Epistles, Visions.
9. How many epistles did Paul write? In what chronological order did he write them?
10. What are the two groups of New Testament listings of Paul's letters?
11. Describe various orders in which one may study the New Testament books.
12. What are the main purposes of Paul's letters?

#### IV. SELECTED READING

Ball, Charles Ferguson. *The Life and Journeys of Paul.*

Bruce, F. F. *The Letters of Paul: An Expanded Paraphrase.*

_____. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free.*

Conybeare, W. J., and Howson, J. S. *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul.*

Farrar, F. W. *The Life and Work of St Paul.*

Goodwin, Frank J. *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul.*

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_____. *Personalities Around Paul.*

Kelso, James L. *An Archaeologist Follows the Apostle Paul.*

Longenecker, Richard. *The Ministry and Message of Paul*.

Moe, Olaf. *The Apostle Paul*.

Ramsay, W. H. *The Cities of St. Paul*.

Robertson, A. T. *Epochs in the Life of Paul*.

Stalker, James. *The Life of St. Paul*.

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1. James Stalker, *The Life of St. Paul*, pp. 7-8.

2. Ibid., p. 8.

3. James Stalker's book, *The Life of St. Paul*, is an excellent condensed biography.

4. Bruce writes, "The apostle, as a Roman citizen, must have had three names — *praenomen*, *nomen gentile* and *cognomen* — of which Paullus was his *cognomen*.... The apostle's *praenomen* and *nomen gentile*, unfortunately, have not been preserved." F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*,

pp. 264-65.

5. This is a strong likelihood when one considers that in A.D. 33 (Stephen's death) Paul was a "young man" (Acts 7:58), and in A.D. 61 he calls himself an aged man (Philem. 9).

6. Some of the dates on the chart can only be approximated.

7. Some hold that Galatians was not written until a later date, for example after the third missionary journey, around A.D. 56.

8. A. T. Robertson, *Epochs in the Life of Paul*, p. 4.

9. James Stalker, *The Life of St. Paul*, p. 143.

10. D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, p. 14.

11. Of course Paul wrote other letters during the course of his life. But these were noncanonical. Only those inspired by the Holy Spirit became part of the New Testament.

12. Those were written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. Second Timothy, Paul's "dying letter," was written during his second imprisonment.

13. There is one minor exception to this order, because Galatians is slightly shorter than Ephesians. We do not know if this descending order of length had any bearing on the original formation of the canonical listing, whenever that took place.

14. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 1:740-41.

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## ***11 Romans: God's Salvation for Sinners***

Romans is Paul's masterpiece, a key that unlocks the door to vast treasures of Scripture. People who have read and studied this epistle cannot find words sufficient to describe its worth. "The most profound book in existence" (Coleridge). "Cathedral of the Christian faith" (Godet). "The chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel" (Luther). "A thorough study of this epistle is really a theological education in itself" (Griffith Thomas).

The uniqueness of Romans is not for its telling a different gospel or new teaching, but for its spelling out the ABC's of the gospel of salvation in Christ, in clear, full scope, so that there can be no question concerning any important aspect of that gospel. Romans tells, for example, how sinful man can be restored to fellowship

with his Creator, the holy God. It was of divine design that, by interpreting the truths already spoken by Jesus, one epistle should be written especially to explain such truths to people. Paul was the man chosen to be the writer, and Romans was the epistle. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit this longest of the epistles has been placed by the people of God first in the order of New Testament epistles.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

In order to appreciate the important place that Romans occupies in Scripture, it is necessary to understand something of fallen man's utter lack of righteousness as revealed throughout human history.

A review of the moral history of the race as set forth in the books of the Bible up to the book of Romans shows that man is, and

always has been, an utter failure as regards righteousness. When Adam was tempted in the Garden of Eden he proved himself a failure, and all of Adam's descendants have done the same. "All have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). "There is none righteous, not even one" (3:10).

From Adam to Abraham God patiently dealt with the sons of man, wooing them to His compassionate heart, giving them opportunity after opportunity to choose Him and His way, and so to find His favor. But the human race as a whole rejected Him, and the result was utter failure — failure so great that God "gave them over" and allowed them to go their own wicked ways (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).

Then God tested the nation of Israel, the Jews. This is the story of Genesis 12 to the end of Malachi. Everything was given Israel

to afford a perfect opportunity to choose the righteous ways of God: special privileges, perfect instruction, marvelous revelations, miraculous protection, and matchless covenants and promises. But again there was utter and complete failure — failure so great that when Israel chose, with others, to crucify the Lord Jesus and refused to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit through the apostles, God rejected her and scattered the people throughout the earth, allowing them to go on in their own blindness and darkness.

In the book of Romans God is saying to the readers of the whole world — Jew and Gentile — that though they have failed to attain a righteousness acceptable to a holy God, this righteousness may be received as a gift from Him, through faith, in the person of His righteous Son. It is their only hope for now and eternity.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. AUTHOR**

According to the text of 1:1, Paul was the author. Note the three ways Paul identifies himself in the verse. In your own words write down what is involved in each identification. Most of what is known about Paul's life is given to us in the book of Acts.

### **B. DATE WRITTEN**

Paul wrote Romans from Corinth toward the end of his third missionary journey, around A.D. 56.

### **C. THE CITY OF ROME IN A.D. 56**

When Paul wrote this letter Rome was the largest and most important city of the world (estimated population: one to four million). Emperor Nero had just begun to rule (A.D. 54-68), and anti-Christian persecutions had not yet begun. The city's population was made up of the usual mixture of a large city: wealth, poverty, capitalism, slavery, citizens, aliens, religion, worldliness. There was a large number of Jews living in Rome at the time, for about a dozen synagogues were located throughout the city. Hiebert writes, "Around the various synagogues of the Jews there gradually grew up a considerable following of Gentiles more or less in active sympathy with their religion. Here, as elsewhere in the Empire, these 'God-fearers' furnished fertile ground for the spread of Christianity."¹

## **D. ORIGINAL READERS**

The letter was addressed to the saints in Rome (1:7), a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles, the latter group probably constituting the majority (cf. 1:13; 2:17). These Christians had migrated to Rome from various parts of the Mediterranean world. Some no doubt were converts of Paul's and Peter's itinerant ministries. It is possible also that included in the number were "visitors from Rome" (Acts 2:10) who had been present at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and had returned to Rome with the message of Christ. Paul had not as yet visited the church at Rome when he wrote the epistle.

## **E. OCCASION AND PURPOSE OF WRITING**

Paul had various things in mind in writing this letter. Among them was his desire to

tell the Roman Christians of his plan to visit them and enlist their support for his proposed tour to Spain (15:23-25). The letter also would pave the way for Paul's personal visit by giving instruction to the Christians regarding the basic truths of salvation and Christian living. This intent of setting forth a solid interpretation of the gospel must be the underlying purpose of the epistle, and almost two thousand years of church history have demonstrated successful fulfillment of such a divine purpose.²

### **III. SURVEY**

#### **A. PREPARING TO SURVEY**

1. Keep in mind that a single Bible book is a structure composed of various parts. Recall from an earlier study that we are

using the following terms to represent individual units of that total structure:

a. Paragraph: A paragraph is a group of sentences (usually verses) making up one thought unit (e.g., Rom. 9:1-5).

b. Segment: A segment is a group of paragraphs, often the length of one chapter, sometimes shorter or longer (e.g., Rom. 2:17—3:8).

c. Section: A section is a group of segments, such as Romans 1:18—3:20.

d. Division: These are the largest units of a book. For Romans, there are four divisions: prologue; doctrine; practice; epilogue. These will be located later.

2. Turn the pages of Romans in your Bible, for quick, first impressions. How many chapters in this letter? Are any exceptionally long? What is the first and last word of the letter? Does Paul quote the Old Testament

often? (NASB clearly shows Old Testament quotes by using all capitalized letters.)

## **B. FIRST READING**

Scan the book of Romans, chapter by chapter, in one sitting. It is not necessary to read every word at this time, but it is important to read the first and last verses of each chapter. For this first reading do not tarry over the text as though you were analyzing it. Otherwise, the weight of sixteen chapters will suddenly bear down heavily upon you, and you will be discouraged from pursuing your survey.

Did you observe any repeated words, especially in the first verse of each chapter? Is there a prevailing atmosphere throughout, or does the atmosphere change along the way? Regarding the kind of content, how

does chapter 16 compare with all the other chapters?

## **C. SURVEYING THE INDIVIDUAL SEGMENTS**

Now refer to Chart 63 (survey of Romans) and note that the epistle is divided into twenty segments. Note that all the segments begin with the first verse of each chapter, with these exceptions: 1:18; 2:17; 3:9; 3:21; 9:30; 12:9; 15:14. Mark these segment divisions in the Bible version that you are using as the basic text of your survey. Then scan through Romans segment by segment and assign a segment title to each. Record the titles by whatever method you are using for this.

What new impressions do you have of Romans? Have key words begun to appear?

## D. STRUCTURE OF ROMANS

The next step in survey study is to look for groups of segments according to content or any turning point in the book. Do not refer to the outlines on Chart 63 until you have first tried to arrive at your own outlines. Even if you do not arrive at a complete outline for the book, the time spent here in independent study is well spent, for you will begin to get acquainted more intimately with *what* Paul was writing as you try to discover *how* he wrote those truths. This is the search for *structure*, or organization, of the book.

Try answering these questions on the basis of your survey of the twenty segments of Romans:

1. What is the first segment about? In what ways does it serve as a prologue (introduction) to the book?

2. Paul's letters are composed mainly of doctrinal and practical passages. Which comes first in Romans? Where does the concentration of the second kind of passage begin? How is the opening sentence of this second kind a clue to what follows in the division?

3. The last two segments (15:14-33 and 16:1-27) make up the epilogue. How do they conclude the letter? What are the last three verses of the letter?

4. Now you have viewed the four main divisions of Romans: *prologue*; *doctrinal*; *practical*; *epilogue*. Where are they identified on Chart 63?

5. Where in the epistle does Paul write much about sin and judgment? about justification? about Israel?

6. Try to group the segments between 1:18 and 11:36 according to similar content.

These groups are called sections. Is there a logical progression of general doctrinal content in the sequence of the sections? If so, what is it?

7. Before referring to the outlines on Chart 63, survey the segments and sections of Romans some more.

## **E. SURVEY CHART OF ROMANS**

Observe on Chart 63 that the prologue is made up of three parts: salutation; personal testimony; and introduction of the theme. Locate these in the Bible text.

The first eleven chapters are mainly *doctrinal*. In those chapters Paul presents the great truths of the gospel. What are the main doctrines involved? How does the doctrinal division (1:18—11:36) end? Is that a clue that a change of subject follows?

The remaining chapters, 12-16, are mainly *practical*. In those chapters Paul shows the practical working out of the doctrines taught in chapters 1-11. Read Philippians 2:12-13 for what Paul writes about working out one's salvation.

There is an ascending progression of subject in the sections of 1:18—11:36, shown by the arrow. The progression moves from the wrath of God (*God's holiness in condemning sin*) to the glory of God (*Gods glory the object of service*). Study the other parts of the outline as they fit into this progression. From the outline of 12:1—15:13 note also what should be the ultimate object of all Christian service.

Though the practice of Christianity may involve the most menial of tasks, all such practice is placed by the Bible on a very high plane. Observe how the practical

section of Christian service begins at the peak of the Christian's consecration (12:1-2) and ends at the peak of God's glory (15:8-13). All the commands and exhortations are recorded in between. Read those two passages at this time.

Study the threefold outline at the very bottom of the chart, beginning with *Deadliness of sin*. Another way to word this outline is: Need of salvation; Way of salvation; Results of salvation.

Some look on chapters 9-11 as parenthetical, because in those chapters Paul's subject is a special people, Israel, whereas in the sections preceding and following those chapters he speaks about *all* people and *all* Christians. But the Jews are brought into the discussion of the epistle in other parts of Romans, such as the first chapters, and Gentiles are very prominent in

chapters 9-11. Therefore the outlines of Chart 63 consider those chapters to be an integral part of Paul's theme, not parenthetical. That will be discussed later as a prominent subject of Romans.

To help get a mental image of the full scope of Paul's epistle, study the other outlines shown on Chart 63. The easiest outline to remember for Romans is the one that begins *sin; salvation;* and so forth. In your own words, what is each of the sections about? Compare your segment titles with these subjects.

#### **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

##### **A. WHOLE WORLD CONDEMNED (1:18—3:20)**

The theme of Romans is salvation by faith

in Christ (1:16-17), but Paul's starting point is showing why that salvation is needed: because the whole world is guilty of sin and condemned to eternal death. The first section of Romans is divided into these four parts:

The pagan world condemned  
(1:18-32)

The self-righteous condemned  
(2:1-16)

The Jew condemned (2:17—3:8)

The whole world condemned  
(3:9-20)

1 . *The pagan world condemned* (1:18-32). These verses represent the classic Bible passage referred to for answers to such questions as, Are the heathen lost? and, Is it fair that those who never in their lifetime hear or read a gospel message should be

eternally condemned? Paul firmly declares that God's wrath is justly revealed against unevangelized sinners because God gives them sufficient knowledge of Himself to induce reverent worship and obedience, making this revelation of Himself both in their conscience (1:19) and through nature (1:20). But when men thus introduced to God refuse to worship and serve Him (1:21-23), God gives them up to their own ways (vv. 24-26), and those ways lead them into the fearful depths of iniquity pictured in verses 26-32. The wrath of God must be understood as His hatred of sin, not of the sinner.

# CHART 63: ROMANS: GOD'S SALVATION FOR SINNERS

1:1 Boswell	1:18 Heart was darkened	2:1	2:12	3:9	3:21	4:1	5:1	6:1	7:1	8:1	9:1	9:30	11:1	12:1	12:9	13:1	14:1	15:14	16:1
PROLOGUE	DOCTRINAL												PRACTICAL			EPILOGUE			
Salvation	God's Holiness In Condemning Sin		God's Grace In Justifying Sinners		God's Power In Sanctifying Believers		God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile		God's Glory the Object of Service			Consecration of 12:1-2		Practical Obedience	Glory of God 13:8-13	Personal Notes			
Personal Testimony	SIN	SALVATION		SANCTIFICATION		SOVEREIGNTY		SERVICE			Benediction and Doxology								
Theme Introduced	slave to sin	→ slave to God		→		slave serving God													
	God's righteousness IN LAW	God's righteousness IMPUTED		God's righteousness OBEYED		God's righteousness IN ELECTION		God's righteousness DISPLAYED											
	LIFE BY FAITH												SERVICE BY FAITH						
	The Need of Salvation	The Way of Salvation		The Life of Salvation		The Scope of Salvation		The Service of Salvation											
	Deadliness of Sin	Design of Grace		power given		Demonstrations of Salvation promises fulfilled		paths pursued											

KEY WORDS:  
law, righteousness, faith, believe, sin, death, flesh, all, in Christ, Spirit.

KEY VERSES:  
1:16-17

The concluding paragraph of 1:28-32 presents the dark picture of man after the threefold “giving up” of God. The climax of this picture is seen in the statement of verse 32, that those guilty of these crimes commit them with the full knowledge of the penalty of death that they deserve. Worst of all, they rejoice in others, and encourage others who practice the same sins.

This dark and painful picture of

the pagan world ... is a picture of the degradation into which mankind ever sinks when turning from the truth of God and no longer restrained by his grace. It was given as the reason why Paul gloried in the gospel and desired to have it proclaimed in Rome. It should arouse all Christian readers to-day to hasten the preaching of this gospel as the only hope of the human race.³

The pagan world is condemned in the sight of God not because of ignorance of God but because their reaction to the light given them concerning God is one of rejection, unthankfulness, vanity, presumption, and evil deeds. They are all without excuse.

2 . *The self-righteous condemned* (2:1-16).  
The self-righteous moralist of this passage is

a legalist who believes that the life acceptable to God is the zealous performance of that which *he* considers to be morally right. But the only source of infallible judgment is God Himself, who is absolutely righteous, fair, and good. And God applies His standard and declares the self-righteous moralist to be guilty for his sin.

3. *The Jew condemned* (2:17—3:8). The sin of the Jew exposed here is that of outward religion devoid of inner spirit. These religionists find their haven in formal religion and are willing to pay any price of outward worship.

4 . *The whole world condemned* (3:9-20). After writing that all have sinned (3:9-12) and that such sin is totally cancerous and God defying (3:13-18), Paul clearly records the verdict “Guilty before God” (3:19).

In these last verses he not only pronounces God's final verdict upon sinners, but declares every man to be helpless and hopeless as well. It is clear at this point in Paul's epistle that God's law — whether it is the law written in the heart (2:15), or the law written on tablets of stone — cannot save a man. If such a one is to be justified there must be some other way than through such law. Paul presents that other way in the next two and a half chapters (3:21—5:21). The diagnosis of man's fatal disease has been ascribed: *the heart cannot do good* (3:12). It is not righteous, nor does it have the power to attain righteousness. In the next chapters the prescription of cure is written, telling how sinful man can be given a heart of righteousness. No diagnosis without an offer of cure — such is the method of the holy and gracious God.

## **B. JUSTIFICATION (3:21—5:21)**

All the world is guilty before God, because all have sinned and have fallen short of God's glory. "But now," writes Paul, "a way to get right with God has been revealed ... provided by God, through faith in Jesus Christ, for all who believe in Him" (3:21-22).⁴ This is the bright message of this second main section of Romans.

Paul writes here about God's grace in justifying sinners, as he follows this train of thought:

Justification defined (3:21-31)

Justification illustrated (4:1-25)

Justification's fruits (5:1-21)

Paul writes also about three other doctrines in connection with justification. Definitions of the four divine works are

given here. (Read the verses where they appear in the text of Romans.)

1 . *Justification* (3:24, 26, 28). In justification God *declares* a sinner righteous on the basis of his faith in Jesus Christ. Such a believer is legally declared to be in good standing with God.

2 . *Redemption* (3:24). Christ's work of redemption for a soul is the offering of His life as a ransom, to give (1) deliverance from the penalty of the law, sin as a power, and the bondage of Satan; and (2) release to a new relationship to God and a new life in Christ.

3 . *Propitiation* (3:25). Propitiation is not man's appeasement of God's wrath for sin, but God's merciful provision of forgiveness for that sin (cf. Heb. 2:17). The shedding of Christ's blood effected this propitiation. Read Hebrews 9:5 and note the reference to

the mercy seat, which in the Old Testament was the place where the high priest sprinkled blood to provide a sacrifice for the people's sins. The Greek word translated "mercy seat" is the same word translated "propitiation" in Romans 3:25.

4. *Remission* (3:25). In the ten appearances of this word in the New Testament (KJV), the word *sins* is always included (e.g., "remission of sins"). Remission of sins is the canceling, pardoning, passing over of sins against the soul, made possible by the shedding of blood (cf. Heb. 9:22). Christ appeared "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26b).

Now read 3:24-25 in the light of the above definitions, and observe the interrelations of those four works of Christ on behalf of the sinner.⁵ The good news for the people of the world, all of whom are

guilty before God because of their sin, is that God in His grace offered His Son as a sacrifice to pay the penalty of sin. He who places his faith in Jesus Christ is counted as righteous, and therefore receives the gift of eternal life. Abraham believed God, and his faith (not works, nor religion, nor law) was counted unto him for righteousness. God accepts the sinner in the same way He accepted Abraham (4:24), and showers him with all the cherished fruits of justification, including eternal life, joy, and love (5:1-21).

### **C. SANCTIFICATION (6:1—8:39)**

The doctrine of sanctification is one of the most practical and vital doctrines involving *every* believer. Sanctification is a work of God in three phases of the believer's experience: past, present, future. It began in

his life the moment he was saved (past), when he was positionally made holy, in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2, 30). As a progressive experience it continues throughout his earthly life (present), God working in his heart, conforming him more and more to the image of Christ. The believer's sanctification is completed (future) when he is raptured and sees his Lord face to face and is made like Him (1 John 3:2).

Sanctification in the believer's present life involves the negative *separation* from evil, and the positive *setting apart* for God's worship and service. In these three chapters Paul writes mostly about this present phase of sanctification — victorious Christian living. For study, the section may be divided into three parts, as shown on Chart 64.

# CHART 64: VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING (ROMANS 6-8)

	6:1	PRINCIPLES	7:7	PRACTICE	8:1	POWER	8:39
a key subject		surrender		self		Spirit	

## 1. *Principles of Christian living* (6:1—7:6).

The basic problem in Christian living is *sins* (the problem of *sin* having been settled once and for all for the Christian when he was saved). In Romans 6-8 Paul is writing about sins, and the temptations that come to Christians daily to commit sins. In 6:1—7:6 he lays down the principles that should govern Christians in their everyday walk. Three such principles are:

- a. Double identification (6:1-11). The Christian is identified with Christ in death *unto sin* and resurrection *unto God*. Key thoughts: dead and alive.
- b. New servitude. (6:12-23). The

Christian is now a bonds slave of righteousness. Key thoughts: before and after.

- c. Total liberation. (7:1-6). The Christian has been liberated from the old life (indictment of the law) to the new life (compulsion of the Spirit). Key thoughts: old and new.

## 2 . *Practice of Christian living* (7:7-25).

Before the new birth the Christian had only the old, corrupt nature inherited from Adam; after the new birth he has also the new, divine, spiritual nature imparted by God. The co-existence of the two natures accounts for the conflict that goes on within him when temptation comes. How is this conflict depicted in 7:14-25? What is the key to victory (7:25)?

## 3 . *Power of Christian living* (8:1-39).

Victory in the daily spiritual conflicts is possible through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Observe the many truths taught about the Spirit in this chapter.

Victory today (8:1-17), glory to come (8:18-30), and fellowship with God forever (8:31-39) are the happy fruits of God's work of sanctification in the heart of the believer.

#### **D. ISRAEL (9:1—11:36)**

Paul writes about Israel in Romans to make his treatise on salvation complete. This is necessary because Israel is the special object of divine attention for practically all of Old Testament history (beginning at Genesis 12), and for much of the New Testament. Coupled with this is the fact of an indissoluble covenant extending to the end of time, which God made with Israel.

In chapters 9-11 of Romans Paul is writing especially about Israel and Gentiles as entities, not individuals. In chapters 1-8 he has discussed the salvation of individuals — Jew or Gentile. Now he can focus his attention on the salvation of the nation of true Israel by comparing it with the salvation of Gentiles.

Chart 65 shows a brief outline of this section of Romans. Follow this outline as you read the Bible text.

# CHART 65: GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN SAVING JEW AND GENTILE

9:1 INTRODUCTION	9:6 GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY	9:30 MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY	10:21 GOD'S PURPOSE	11:30 CONCLUSION	11:36
Paul's Concern for Israel	(over Jew and Gentile)	(Jew and Gentile)	for ISRAEL (related to Gentile)	God's Purpose for Mankind	

In chapters 9-11, when writing about the Jews, Paul moves chronologically in the direction shown on Chart 66.

## CHART 66: PAUL WRITES ABOUT THE JEWS

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
(Israel Selected) (9:6-29)	(Israel Rejected) (9:30—10:21)	(Israel Accepted) (11:1-29)

Paul shows in each successive chapter that “the key to all of God’s *past* dealings with Israel is the *sovereignty* of God; that the key to all God’s *present* dealings with Israel is the *salvation* of God; and that the key to all God’s *promised* dealings with Israel is the *sincerity* of God.”⁶

There is also a progression in the expression of Paul’s feelings for Israel at these three junctions in this section:

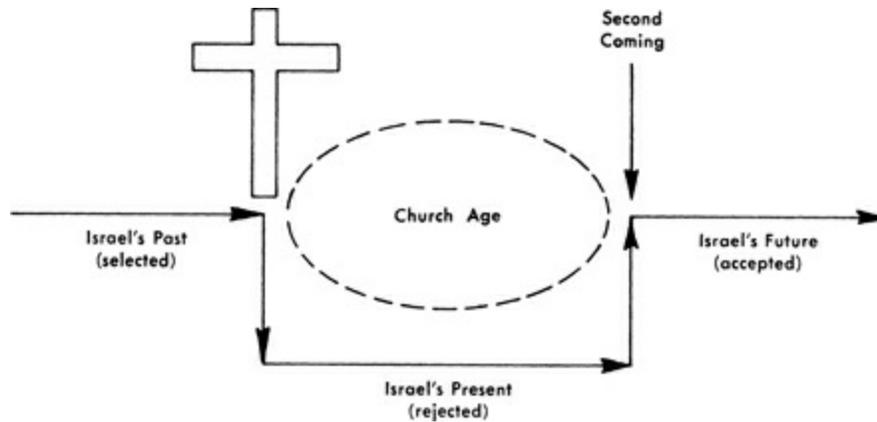
1. Heaviness — “great sorrow and unceasing grief” (9:2).
2. Desire — “My heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved” (10:1, KJV).

### 3. Hope — “God has not rejected His people” (11:2).

God has not finished His dealings with Israel. Their present rejection by God is neither total (11:1-10) nor final (11:11-32). Partial blindness of Israel will persist “until the full number of the Gentiles has come in” (11:25, NIV; cf. Acts 15:14-18). Christ will return to earth at that time, to deliver Israel (11:26-27).

Chart 67 shows Israel in relation to the present church age.

# CHART 67: ISRAEL IN RELATION TO THE CHURCH AGE



## E. CHRISTIAN CONDUCT (12:1—15:13)

This division of Romans, entitled *practical* on Chart 63 (p. 253), contains a host of valuable exhortations and commands for everyday Christian conduct. Use Chart 68 as a guide in your study of the segments.

# CHART 68: PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## ROMANS 12:1-15:13

12:1	12:3	12:9 12:21	13:1	13:8	13:11 13:14	14:1		15:8 15:13
Introduction	Christian Servant		Christian Citizen			Christian Brother		
	Gifts for Service	Obligations to Others	Subjection to Authorities	Attitude of Love	Armor of Light	Christian's Position on Questioned Practices		
						Principle of Liberty (tolerance)	14:13 Principle of Love (care)	15:1 Example of Christ (obedience)
Consecration of Christian								Conclusion  Glory of God

## V. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES

### A. THEME

The central theme of Romans is the imparting of God's righteousness to the sinner who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. What are some key truths that are woven into this theme? The title shown on Chart 63 reflects this theme: "God's Salvation for Sinners."

## **B. KEY WORDS**

There are many important words in Romans. The following are definitely key words, used by Paul often in the book: law, righteousness, faith, believe, sin, death, flesh, all, impute, in Christ, Spirit. Add to this list other words that you have observed. You may want to glance at an exhaustive concordance to see how often Paul uses such words in this one epistle.

## **C. KEY VERSES**

Because of the key words contained in 1:16-17, these verses may be considered key verses for Romans. What other key verses did you observe in your survey?

## **VI. APPLICATIONS**

Record a list of applications to daily living that you have observed in Romans. Include what the letter assures the believer regarding the *power* to live pleasing to God.

## VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In what three ways does Paul identify himself in 1:1?

2. When and where was Romans written? To whom?

3. Why did Paul write this letter?

4. How many chapters are there in Romans? Name the four main divisions.

5. Where (chapter, verse) does the practical division begin?

6. Complete the outline of the epistle:

SIN; _____; _____; _____.

7. What key verses represent the theme of Romans? State the theme, in your own words.

8. Name five key words of Romans.

9. Where is the Israel section in Romans? Why is this subject included in the letter?

10. Define justification, redemption, propitiation, remission, sanctification.

## **VIII. FURTHER STUDY**

1. Go through the entire letter to the Romans and make a list of the various doctrines that are taught (e.g., justification).

2. With the help of outside sources study the subject of Israel in Bible prophecy, especially concerning the end times.

## **IX. OUTLINE**

PROLOGUE	1:1-17
DOCTRINE	1:18—11:36
God's Holiness in Condemning Sin	1:18—3:20
God's Grace in Justifying Sinners	3:21—5:21
God's Power in Sanctifying Believers	6:1—8:39
God's Sovereignty in Saving Jew and Gentile	9:1—11:36
PRACTICE	12:1—15:13
The Christian Servant	12:1-21
The Christian Citizen	13:1-14
The Christian Brother	14:1—15:13
EPILOGUE	15:14—16:27

## X. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Harrison, Everett F. *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 280-92.

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, pp. 164-205.

Mickelsen, A. Berkeley. "The Epistle to the Romans." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, pp. 1179-83. A comprehensive outline of the epistle is included.

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2:162-75.

## COMMENTARIES

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Erdman, Charles R. *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans.*

Hodge, Charles. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.*

Newell, William R. *Romans Verse by Verse.*

## OTHER RELATED SOURCES

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Chafer, L. S. *He That Is Spiritual.*  
Discussion of sanctification.

Walvoord, J. F. *Israel in Prophecy*.

Wuest, Kenneth S. *Romans in the Greek New Testament*.

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1. D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, pp. 166-67.
  2. Paul did not include the whole range of doctrines in his letter, evidenced by the little he wrote about the church and eschatology.
  3. Charles R. Erdman, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, p. 31.
  4. F. F. Bruce, *The Letters of Paul*, p. 191.
  5. The Greek translated “remission” in the KJV is translated “passed over” in the NASB.
  6. John Phillips, *Exploring Romans*, p. 143.
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# 12 *The Corinthian Letters*

## 1 *Corinthians: Problems of a Local Church*

## 2 *Corinthians: Paul's Apostolic Ministry*

The Corinthian letters immediately follow Romans in the New Testament canon, though in point of time they were written just before Romans (see Chart 1, p. 20). Their location in the canon shows a topical progression when one considers *general emphases*.¹ Observe how this is shown in the accompanying diagram.

### THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

NEW TESTAMENT ORDER	EMPHASES
GOSPELS      ACTS	HISTORICAL FACTS
ROMANS	INTERPRETATIONS
1 and 2 CORINTHIANS	APPLICATIONS

The Corinthian letters *apply* the Roman letter's *interpretations* of the historical books'

*facts*. Seen from another view, the church, which is the subject of the Corinthian letters, is the outcome of salvation, which is the subject of Romans.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

### **A. PAUL'S JOURNEYS**

Review Paul's missionary journeys and his ministry of writing New Testament letters ([Chapter 7](#)). This will help you see clearly just where the Corinthian letters fit in the chronological sequence of his writings. It will help to adjust your perspective, having just studied Romans.

### **B. THE LOCAL CHURCH**

The Corinthian letters, especially 1

Corinthians, focus on the operations of the local church. Observe in an exhaustive concordance how often the word *church(es)* appears in the letters. Reflect on the importance of this vital organism of God's working. New Testament references to *church* are of three different kinds:

1. *Invisible church* — all believers, whether alive or dead, who are members of Christ's Body. (Read Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23, 25-27.)
2. *Visible church at large* — a constituency of all believers living at any one time (Acts 8:3; cf. "churches" in Acts 9:31).
3. *Visible local church* — a fellowship of believers who worship in a given locality (e.g., Corinth, 1 Cor. 1:2). It is possible for persons to have their names on the membership roll of a church, and not be believers (cf. Rev.

2-3).

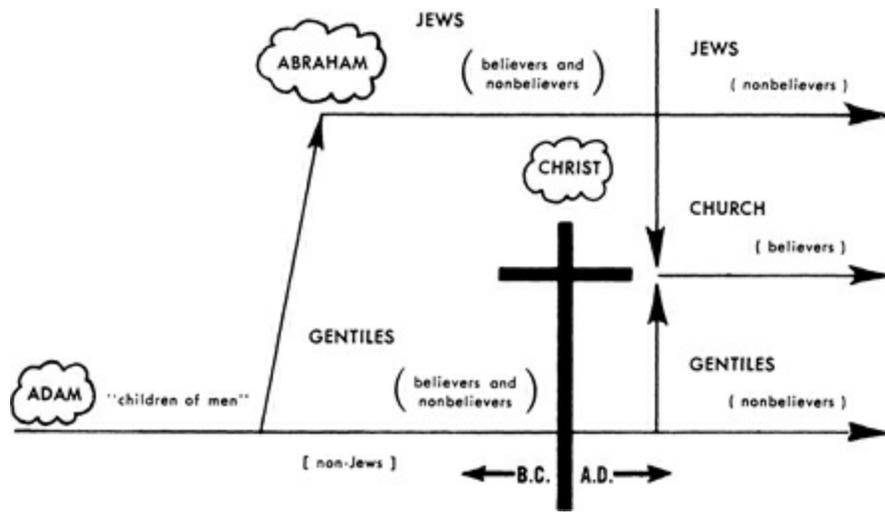
A local church, such as the church of Corinth, is a geographically confined fellowship of believers, a visible outworking of the invisible church. It is important to have clearly in mind just what the invisible church is and whom it comprises. Read 1 Corinthians 10:32, and note the reference to three groups: Jews, Gentiles, and the church of God.² Chart 69 identifies these in the stream of the human race.³ Refer to this chart in the discussion that follows.

In the early generations of the human race there were no group distinctions, such as Jew and Gentile. All the descendants of Adam were as one family, “children of men,” and God spoke to the whole race, seeking to get all people to obey Him and fellowship with Him. The race as a whole refused to do this, although there were some

individuals who responded acceptably. Men persisted in doing their own will rather than God's will, and they became utterly rebellious and disobedient. God allowed men to go on in their self-chosen ways.

But from the multitudes of the world living around 2000 B.C. God selected one man, Abraham. From him He made a nation that was to be His chosen people, special representatives to whom and through whom He could speak and act. The top line of Chart 69 represents the descendants of Abraham, known as Jews or Israelites. The name Gentiles shown on the bottom line represents all other people.

# CHART 69: THE STREAM OF THE HUMAN RACE



Not all Jews were believers, just as not all Gentiles were unbelievers. For nearly two thousand years God patiently dealt with that chosen nation of Israel and sought to get more than just a remnant to obey and represent Him. But the nation as a whole repeatedly refused to do that, although there were individual Israelites who obeyed. The nation became so corrupt and rebellious that God allowed them to go on in their self-chosen ways. The pattern was the same as for the human race before the time of Abraham.

Finally the day came when God sent His

only begotten Son into the world, to redeem lost sinners (whether Jew or Gentile) and form a new, unique people, the church, Christ's Body (1 Cor. 12:27). That invisible church is composed of all twice-born men, women, and children, who have received a divine nature from God upon believing on Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Not long after Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, the Holy Spirit came down from heaven to indwell and empower the first members of that church. From the very beginning the believers at Jerusalem worshiped together as a local church, and when some moved to other cities, they started local churches there. And all the local churches together made up the visible church at large. The visible church at large is God's representative body of Christians on earth today, through whom He speaks to nonbelieving Jews and nonbelieving

Gentiles.

## **II. BACKGROUND OF THE CORINTHIAN LETTERS**

Ancient Corinth was very similar to today's large cities of the world. It was a busy, cosmopolitan, commercial center known by all. The first Christian church of Corinth had an equally strong likeness to many urban churches of today. As you anticipate surveying the Corinthian letters try to *visualize* the setting of those letters. In doing so you will find it very easy and natural to apply their teachings to the twentieth century. Assuredly the letters were written not only for a local congregation of one generation, but for Christians everywhere, throughout the entire Christian age.

### **A. CORINTH: THE CITY AND ITS PEOPLE**

When Paul visited Corinth for the first time in A.D. 50 on his second missionary journey, he must have been impressed by its stately buildings and bustling commerce. This Greek city was widely acclaimed as the hub of the Roman Empire's commerce, a strategic position that Paul no doubt coveted for the advantage of propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The following descriptions will help you appreciate what Paul saw, learned, and experienced concerning the city and its people.

1. *Name*. The Greek name *Korinthos* means “ornament.”

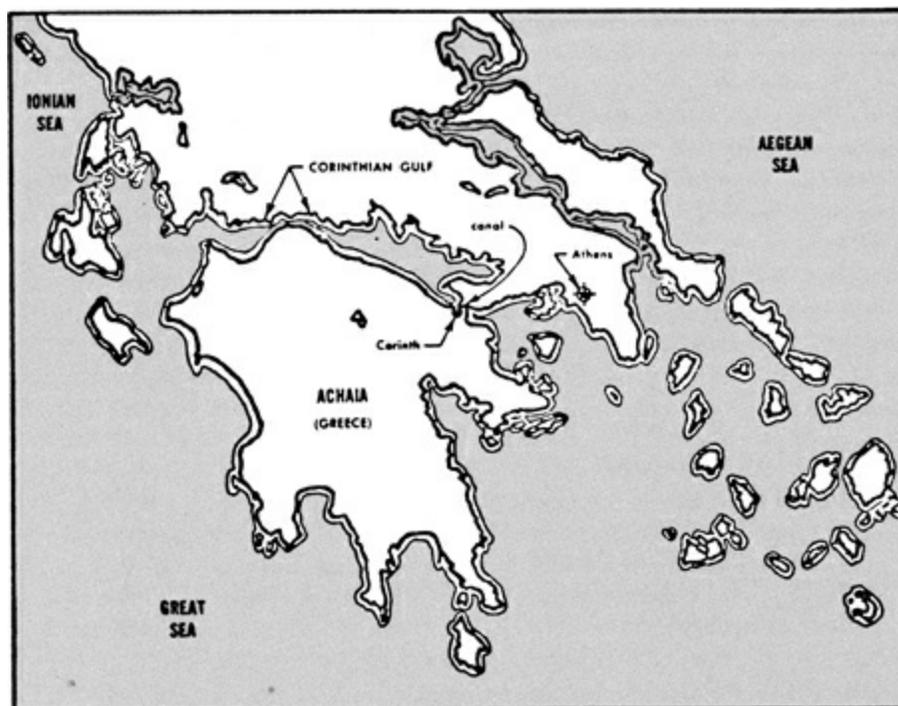
2 . *Geography*. Observe on Map R the strategic location of Corinth on the four-mile-wide isthmus between the Ionian and Aegean seas.⁴ Shippers moving cargo between Italy and Asia Minor via Corinth

avoided the dangerous voyage around the southern tip of Greece. Small ships were moved across the isthmus by tramway, or cargo of the larger ships was transferred to transports waiting at the eastern port.⁵

3 . *History.* Corinth's ancient history revolves around two events: (1) the destruction of the old city by the Roman general Mummius, 146 B.C.; and (2) the rebuilding of the city by Julius Caesar, with its gaining of status as a Roman colony, 46 B.C. How old, then, was the new city when Paul first visited it?

4 . *Population.* Estimates of size in Paul's day vary from 100,000 to 700,000. There was a mixture of races (Roman, Greek, Oriental) and a large distribution of mobile occupations (e.g., sailors and businessmen). A very large proportion of its population was composed of slaves.

## MAP R: GEOGRAPHY OF CORINTH, SHOWING CORINTHIAN GULF AND CANAL



5. *Political status.* Corinth was a Roman colony, the capital of the province of Achaia. Gallio was proconsul of the province during Paul's visit (Acts 18:12).

6. *Moral condition.* The depraved character of the old city of Corinth, exemplified by prostitute priestesses serving in the temple of Aphrodite, ⁶ goddess of beauty and love, was carried over into the new city of New Testament times. The very Greek word

*korinthiazomai* (“to act the Corinthian”) came to mean “to commit fornication.” One writer has described Corinth as “a seaman’s paradise, a drunkard’s heaven, and a virtuous woman’s hell.”⁷

## 7. *Activities.*

a. Commerce. Movement of shipping across the isthmus was Corinth’s number one business. Some of its own manufactured products included items of pottery and brass.

b. Education. Study of the arts and sciences flourished. There were studios of language and schools of philosophy. Yet Paul, raised in the environment of the university at Tarsus, and trained under the great teacher Gamaliel, was keen to detect an intellectualism that was both smug and superficial. (Read some of Paul’s references to knowledge and wisdom in such passages

as 1 Corinthians 1:20-21, 27; 2:1-8).

c. Sports. Corinth was a famous sports center, with its Isthmian Games (similar in some ways to the Olympics) held every two years. It is interesting to observe that corruption in sports events was widespread at that time.⁸ (Read Paul's references to sports in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

d. Religion. Corinth was a city of many gods and various cults. Judaism was one of its Oriental religions. The Jews' synagogue was Paul's favorite place of contact for reaching people with the gospel message when he first arrived in Corinth (see Acts 18:1-4).

## **B. THE FIRST CONTACT OF PAUL WITH THE CORINTHIANS**

Read Acts 18:1-18a for the historical

record of Paul's first evangelistic ministry in Corinth. This visit took place on the apostle's second missionary journey, A.D. 50. Answer the following questions on the basis of the Bible text.

1. Does the text indicate when Aquila and Priscilla were converted to Christ? Read these other New Testament references to this couple, and try to decide when they might have become believers (if they were not already believers when Paul first met them, Acts 18:2): Acts 18:18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19.

2. What different verbs of the Acts passage are used to describe Paul's *word* ministry (e.g., "reasoned," v. 4)?

3. To what different groups did Paul minister?

4. What were the different reactions to Paul's message? How many conversions

were there?

5. Account for Paul's action of verse 6.

6. What do you think constituted Paul's "teaching the word of God" (18:11)?

7. One of the important things Paul did while in Corinth was to write the two epistles to the Thessalonians.⁹ Read 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 for references to Paul's ministry at Corinth at this time. (Cf. 1 Thess. 2:15.)

## **C. THE FIRST CHURCH OF CORINTH**

The organized church at Corinth began around A.D. 50 as a small nucleus of believers, most of whom were Gentiles (e.g., Justus, Acts 18:7); and some of whom were Jews (e.g., Crispus, Acts 18:8). Their meeting place from the start might have been an upper chamber of the house of one

of the group, such as Crispus.

Most of the members were probably of the poorer or middle-class strata (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26 ff., which only suggests this observation).

The church members were slow to mature in their Christian faith and conduct (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1 ff.). That was part of the heavy burden borne by Paul, which he referred to as “the care of all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28). Apollos was the church’s pastor-teacher for part of the time between Paul’s second and third missionary journeys. (Read Acts 18:24—19:1. Also read the seven references to Apollos in 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:6; 16:12. The last reference concerns a proposed second tour of duty by Apollos in Corinth.)

First Corinthians 1:12 and 9:5 suggest only the *possibility* that Peter may have ministered to the church at Corinth.

## D. CONTACTS AFTER THE FIRST VISIT AND BEFORE THE FIRST EPISTLE

Two possible contacts that Paul had with the Corinthian converts after his first visit and before writing 1 Corinthians were these:¹⁰

1. A short visit to Corinth to combat an incipient opposition to the apostle's ministry and to correct other evils. Apparently his mission was not effective.¹¹ (Read 2 Corinthians 2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2. Note the reference to a forthcoming "third time" visit.)

2. A letter referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9. At least part of the letter was written to correct existing evils in the church. The letter is not part of the New Testament canon and was therefore not divinely inspired Scripture.¹²

### III. BACKGROUND OF 1 CORINTHIANS

#### A. TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN

Paul wrote this letter on his third missionary journey, toward the end of his three-year ministry in the city of Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8).¹³ The year of writing was A.D. 55. Read Acts 19:1-20 for a description of the very fruitful work he was doing at Ephesus, in the power of God, while in absentia he was trying to help the Corinthian church with its problems.

#### B. OCCASION

Paul was a traveling evangelist who took to heart the follow-up work of nurturing the young converts whom he had led to Christ. He learned of the Corinthians' problems

through reports (see 1:11 and 5:1) and inquiries (7:1, 25; 8:1; 11:2; 12:1; 15:1; 16:1) originating with members and leaders of the church (cf. 1 Cor. 16:17.) If he had already made a short visit since founding the church, he also knew of some of the problems firsthand.

### **C. PURPOSES**

Among Paul's purposes in writing one of his longest letters were these: (1) to identify the basic problems underlying the reports and inquiries; (2) to offer solutions by way of doctrine and example; (3) to give extended teaching on related doctrines; (4) to give at least a short defense of his apostleship; (5) to exhort the believers in the ways of a full, mature Christian life. One writer has called the book, "The Epistle of

Sanctification.”

## D. STYLE

Alford describes Paul’s style with these words:

The depths of the spiritual, the moral, the intellectual, the physical world are open to him. He summons to his aid the analogies of nature. He enters minutely into the varieties of human infirmity and prejudice. ... He praises, reproves, exhorts, and teaches. Where he strikes, he heals. His large heart holding all, where he has grieved any, he grieves likewise; where it is in his power to give joy, he first overflows with joy himself.¹⁴

## **E. AUTHENTICITY**

First Corinthians is one of the best-attested epistles as to authorship and unity of content.

### **IV. SURVEY OF 1 CORINTHIANS**

#### **A. FIRST READINGS**

By now you have established some patterns for surveying a Bible book, so all the various steps will not be repeated here nor in the chapters that follow. Be sure to include:

1. first quick scanning, followed by a slower scanning
2. observing of key words, phrases, atmosphere

3. assigning segment titles (For 1 Corinthians each chapter is a new segment, with these two changes: 11:2 replaces 11:1 as a beginning, and chapter 1 may be divided into two segments: 1:1-9 and 1:10-31.)
4. comparing the beginning and end of the book
5. looking for turning points, progressions, and climax, if any.

## **B. CORRELATIONS**

You can move out in various directions in your study from this point on. Some “search missions” are suggested below. Your ultimate aim, of course, should be to correlate all your observations into one overall picture of 1 Corinthians. (Note: Be sure to read every Bible reference cited

below.)

1. Look for groupings of chapters according to a common subject. A clue to this is Paul's use of phrases such as, "I have been informed" (1:11; 5:1) and "Now concerning" (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1 [cf. 11:2]). Actually, as to general structure, 1 Corinthians is one of the simplest of Paul's epistles. Justify the twofold outline shown on Chart 70: *acknowledging reports; answering inquiries*. What kinds of problems are discussed in chapters 1-6? What kinds of questions are discussed in chapters 7-15?

2. How do 1:1-9 and 16:1-24 serve as introduction and conclusion, respectively?

3. First Corinthians is one of the most practical of all Paul's epistles. Make a note of all the problems explicitly mentioned by Paul in the epistle. Group those according to common subject, and compare your

conclusions with the outlines of Chart 70.

4. After recognizing a problem in the Corinthian church, Paul offers solutions, including examples of his own personal experiences. As you survey the chapters of this letter, keep aware of these three subjects: problems, solutions, examples.

5. Go through the epistle and mark in your Bible every block of positive doctrine, contrasted with the discussions of the various evils of the Corinthian church. (The length of each block will vary from a paragraph to more than a chapter.) Note also where Paul gives personal testimony.

6. What chapters would you consider key chapters for the particular subjects they present?

7. What primary doctrines of the gospel appear from time to time throughout the epistle? Did you notice, for example,

references to the death of Christ? (Check a concordance for the twelve direct references to this subject under these words: blood, cross, crucified, died, sacrificed.)

8. How would you describe the style of this epistle? Writers have observed that it is the most varied of all Paul's epistles. It ranges from the informal, conversational style, to a "lofty and sustained solemnity."¹⁵ Did you observe in your reading such literary devices as logic, poetry, narration, exposition, and the frequent use of questions?

## **C. SURVEY CHART**

Study the survey chart, Chart 70. Observe the following:

1. There are three groups of problems. How do they differ from each other?

2. The three cited guides in the solution of problems are verses of chapter 15. How does each verse help in solving spiritual problems of Christians?

3. Why do you think Paul discussed questions about the resurrection body last in the letter?

4. Note the title on the chart. Someone has said that “no epistle tells us so much about the life of a primitive local church.” If a title was made to include the solutions to the church’s problems, a key phrase might be “Victory through Christ” (15:57).

## **V. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 1 CORINTHIANS**

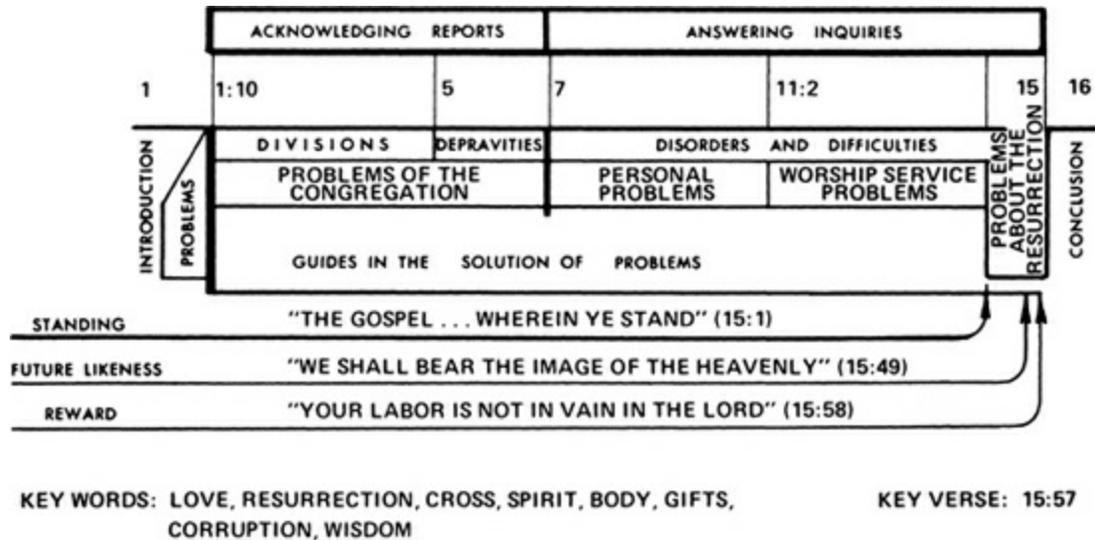
### **A. PROBLEMS OF A CONGREGATION (1:10—6:20)**

Paul deals with four main problems,

identified by the following five passages, in these chapters:

1. Divisions within the membership (1:10—4:21). How does 1:12 identify one quarrel?
2. Church's neglect of the problem of fornication (5:1-8).
3. Evil fellowship (5:9-13).
4. Lawsuits in the public courts (6:1-11).
5. Libertine attitude concerning fornication (6:12-20).

# CHART 70: 1 CORINTHIANS: PROBLEMS OF A LOCAL CHURCH



The severity of Paul's reproof (e.g., "I say this to your shame," 6:5) is an indication of the awfulness of the spiritual cancers that plagued the church he founded.

## B. MARRIAGE (7:1-40)

G. Campbell Morgan correctly observes that no attempt is made in 1 Corinthians to state the Christian doctrine of marriage in its fullness and completeness.¹⁶ Besides, false conclusions are easily made from

chapter 7 if the local Corinthian situation and the larger context of Paul's epistles are not recognized. Let us look at these briefly.

1 . *Local Corinthian situation.* We do not know exactly how the Corinthians' questions were worded. If we did, some of the difficult aspects of chapter 7 might disappear. For example, the Corinthians' former heathen exaltation of celibacy could have prompted them to ask Paul if celibacy for Christians was not the state that all Christians should cherish. To which Paul's reply was, "[True,] ... it is good for a man not to touch a woman, *[nevertheless,]* ... let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. [Because if this normal pattern for the human race is broken, fornication is inevitable]" (7:1).

Another local situation about which we can only speculate is the kind and extent of

“distress” (7:26) that was threatening the Corinthian Christians at that time. It could very well have been severe persecution, in which case Paul’s counsel to the Corinthians was to postpone marriage for the time being (e.g., 7:26-27).

In studying chapter 7 it must also be remembered that sexual immorality (“fornication”) was an evil threatening the very survival of the Corinthian church. That problem must have had much to do with how Paul answered the questions about marriage.

2 . *Paul’s full teaching on marriage.* A reading of all Paul’s letters reveals that the apostle commended marriage as a high and holy estate. Read, for example, Ephesians 5:22-23. In 1 Timothy 4:3 Paul speaks of “forbidding to marry” as a doctrine of demons (4:1). In 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 Paul

discusses the problems of mixed marriages with unbelievers. In 2 Corinthians 6:14 his advice is that the unmarried Christian can avoid such problems by not marrying an unbeliever. Many other references outside 1 Corinthians could be cited here.

### **C. CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (8.1—11:1)**

This long section of the letter concerns a delicate situation the material object of which is neutral or non-moral. The Corinthians' question was, May we as believers eat meat that has been offered in sacrifice unto idols (see 8:4)? Meat of itself is amoral, that is, neither right nor wrong. But could a Corinthian Christian go to a meat market sponsored by a heathen temple and buy meat that had been left over from a heathen sacrifice? Was this associating

himself anew with the former life of heathenism? Did the Corinthian believer have to consider what *other people* (especially immature believers) would think if he did that, even though both he and God knew that he had no intention of fellowship in the heathen circle? Those were some of the things that were on Paul's mind as he formulated this lengthy discourse on what must have been a stormy issue in the Corinthian congregation. Its application to similar problems of Christian living today is both clear and vital.

The outline of Chart 71 shows how Paul teaches and exhorts concerning the problem. Read the chapters and observe the *specific* things Paul wrote, within each group of *principles*.

## **D. SPIRITUAL GIFTS (11:2—14:40)**

After dealing with problems of worship and service concerning veiled women (11:2-16) and abused communion service (11:17-34), Paul writes three chapters about operations of the church in its gospel ministry.

- Chapter 12 is about spiritual gifts, or divinely endowed capacities for service.
- Chapter 14 compares two of these gifts (prophecy and tongues).
- Chapter 13 is the classic treatise on love, the grace that makes gifts fruitful.

Read 14:1 and observe how the subjects of each of the three chapters are represented by the verse. (Note: The order of chapters given above is a logical order. Scan the

three chapters and determine why Paul inserted chapter 13 in the middle.)

The lists of gifts found in chapter 12 are not exhaustive. Read Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:11, and keep those lists in mind as you study 1 Corinthians 12. Also read these related passages: Romans 1:11; 12:6; 1 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Timothy 1:6; Hebrews 2:4; 1 Peter 4:10.

In chapter 14 Paul compares two spiritual gifts that were being exercised in the church at Corinth: (1) prophecy — the divine gift of revealing the will of God, meeting the need that later was to be filled by the written New Testament; (2) tongues — the divine gift of expressing praises to God in words unintelligible to the hearers. The words are intelligible to those who have been given the gift of interpretation (12:10).

# CHART 71: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-11:1: HOW TO KEEP YOUR CHRISTIAN LIBERTY FROM BECOMING A STUMBLING BLOCK TO OTHERS (8:9)

		ATTITUDES — EXEMPLIFIED IN PAUL'S MINISTRY			ADMONITIONS	
8:1	8:7	<i>selflessness</i>	<i>subservience</i>	<i>subjection</i>	<i>free from idolatry</i>	<i>forgo your liberty</i>
9:1	9:13	9:19	9:24	10:1	10:11	10:14
PROBLEM STATED AND SOLUTION IDENTIFIED IN GENERAL	SOLUTION SPELLED OUT SPECIFI- CALLY	ATTITUDES WHICH ARE BASIC TO THE SOLUTION			ACTIONS WHICH ARE THE SOLUTION	
PRINCIPLES STATED		PRINCIPLES ILLUSTRATED			PRINCIPLES APPLIED	

The structure of chapter 14 is shown by Chart 72. Read the chapter through once, underlining strong words and repeated words. Note, for example, every reference to edification. What is the main point of each paragraph? Compare your observations on this with the keynotes shown on Chart 72.

The first four paragraphs (14:1-25) compare the gifts of speaking in tongues and prophesying and show how the latter gift excels.¹⁷

The two paragraphs of 14:26-36 give instructions regarding the order of the worship service, especially with reference to the two spiritual gifts.

## **E. LORD'S SUPPER (11:17-34)**

The fullest statement of the New Testament ordinance of the Lord's Supper appears in verses 23-34. It is quoted in practically every communion service. How is the "formula" of verses 23-26 related to the paragraph before (vv. 17-22) and after (vv. 27-34)?

## F. LOVE (12:316—13:13)

Henry Alford describes this chapter on love as “a pure and perfect gem, perhaps the noblest assemblage of beautiful thoughts in beautiful language extant in this our world.”¹⁸ All will agree that the beauty of this literary masterpiece is excelled by the importance of its message.

An outline suggested for this three-paragraph chapter is this:

Values of Love (13:1-3) —  
shown by its absence

Characteristics of Love (13:4-7)  
— shown by its presence

Abiding Nature of Love (13:8-  
13) — shown by comparison

How is this chapter related to its surrounding chapters (discussed earlier)?

## **G. RESURRECTION BODY (15:1-58)**

This chapter is a classic Bible passage on the doctrine of the resurrection body. When the Corinthians asked Paul questions about the resurrection, the apostle surely diagnosed those doubts as a main root of all their problems. Thus his conclusion to the resurrection chapter is also a conclusion to all the preceding chapters about problems.

The following background helps to explain why the doctrine of the resurrection-body was foreign to the Corinthians' thinking:

In general the Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul, but they did not accept the resurrection of the body. To them the resurrection of the body was unthinkable in view of the fact that they held the body to be the source of man's weakness and sin.

Death, therefore, was very welcome, since by it the soul would be liberated from the body; but resurrection was not welcome, because this would constitute another descent of the soul into the grave of the body.¹⁹

# CHART 72

## 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-40

"LET ALL THINGS BE DONE UNTO EDIFYING" (14:26b)

KEYNOTES →

		edification	clarity	spirit and understanding	the hearers			
		14:1	13	20	26	28	27	40
TONGUES AND PROPHECY COMPARED					ORDER AND PROCEDURE IN THE WORSHIP SERVICE		SUMMARY	
TONGUES	1. directed to God							
	2. content: mysteries							
PROPHECY	3. edification: self							
	1. directed to people							
	2. content: edification, exhortation, comfort							
	3. edification: church							

The following outline shows the approach Paul took in answering the Corinthians' questions.

### *The resurrection body (15:1-58)*

Question: "Is there a resurrection of the dead?" (15:12)

Answer: The Fact of the Bodily Resurrection (15:1-34)

1. Declaration: Christ was raised, 1-11

2. Argument: Saints shall be raised, 12-19

3. Declaration: Christ was raised, giving hope for the believer's future, 20-28

4. Argument: Christ was raised, giving meaning to the believer's present, 29-34

Question: "With what body are the dead raised?" (15:35)

Answer: The Nature of the Resurrection Body (15:35-57)

1. Supernatural body, 35-38

2. Heavenly image, 39-49

3. Incorruptible character, 50-57

Conclusion: "Be steadfast" (15:58)

## **VI. SUMMARY AND THEME OF 1 CORINTHIANS**

In 1 Corinthians Paul makes an honest diagnosis of the young church of Corinth, and he shows solutions for its problems and

shares testimony so that the young congregation that he founded can be restored to its former spiritual health.

The problems of the congregation as a group include disunity, sophisticated intellectualism, neglect of discipline of its members, evil fellowships, and civil lawsuits. Those are the problems “reported” to Paul by concerned believers in the church (1:10—6:20).

Then there are personal problems of the individual members, problems about which the church wrote Paul for his counsel (7:1—15:58). Those involve the responsibilities of marriage, the question of whether to marry or not to marry, and whether to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Paul also answers questions about the worship service, specifically about the place of man and woman in the service, abuses of the Lord’s

table, and an evaluation of spiritual gifts in the ministry of the gospel.

Paul devotes the last chapter of the main body of the epistle to the cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith: the resurrection. Every church has its problems, but what about man's most desperate plight — the appointment with death? Resurrection "in Christ" (15:22) is Paul's answer, and it is that truth that brings the apostle to the peak of the epistle, in the praise, "thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:57), coupled with the appeal to be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (15:58).

How would you identify the theme of 1 Corinthians, in one sentence? From that theme derive a title.

## **VII. KEY WORDS AND VERSES OF 1 CORINTHIANS**

What key words and verses did you observe in the course of your survey? Compare those with the ones listed on Chart 70. Related to the key word *cross*, there are fourteen direct references to Calvary in the letter, in words such as “crucified,” “died.” Hence the book has been called “the epistle of the doctrine of the Cross in application.”

## VIII. APPLICATIONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS

1. Two main values of studying 1 Corinthians are: seeing God’s diagnosis of our own spiritual maladies; and learning His prescriptions for cure. Write a list of some of the maladies and prescriptions that you consider to be crucial in the life of a local church today.

2. Try writing out your own reflections on the superlative quality of love, as measured by 1 Corinthians 13. Include the excelling

and distinctive characteristic of love that relates the Christian to other persons.

3. What do you think contributes to spiritual problems in the early months and years of a born-again believer's spiritual life? Why do spiritual problems often arise very early in the life of a newly organized local church?

## **IX. REVIEW QUESTIONS ON 1 CORINTHIANS**

1. Were the Corinthian letters written before or after Romans?

2. Distinguish between: local church, visible church at large, invisible church.

3. Describe the city of Corinth when Paul first visited it.

4. What does the word *korinthiazomai* mean literally, and how was it used?

5. Describe Paul's first activities in

founding the local church at Corinth.

6. Describe the first church at Corinth.

7. What two contacts did Paul have with the Corinthians after his first visit and before he wrote the first letter?

8. When and where was 1 Corinthians written?

9. Why did Paul write this letter?

10. Identify the main divisions of the structure of 1 Corinthians.

11. What are the three groups of problems discussed?

12. List key words, and identify a key verse of the letter.

13. Identify these by chapter number: marriage, spiritual gifts, love, resurrection body.

## **X. FURTHER STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS**

With the help of outside sources study further the phenomenon of speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*).²⁰ Concerning the situation at Corinth, there are two different views as to the exact nature of the tongues: (1) they were the same kind of utterances such as were spoken on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13) — languages foreign and unintelligible to the speakers, but native and intelligible to different groups of hearers; or (2) they were ecstatic utterances of a nonexistent language, understood by the listeners only through an interpreter.

Include in your studies these areas:

- a. the false and the true
- b. temporary gift or permanent gift
- c. recent spread of the “tongues movement” in the Christian world.

## XI. OUTLINE

1 CORINTHIANS: Problems of a Local Church	
INTRODUCTION	1:1-9
DIVISIONS	1:10—4:21
Party Strife	1:10-31
The Mysteries of God Revealed	2:1-16
The Unity of God's Servants	3:1-23
Paul's Defense of His Ministry	4:1-21
DEPRAVITIES	5:1—6:20
Licentiousness	5:1-13
Lawsuits	6:1-11
Libertinism	6:12-20
PERSONAL PROBLEMS	7:1—11:1
To Marry or Not to Marry	7:1-40
Boundaries of Christian Liberty	8:1—11:1
WORSHIP SERVICE PROBLEMS	11:2—15:58
Place of Women and Men	11:2-16
Observing the Lord's Supper	11:17-34
Spiritual Gifts	12:1—14:40
Doctrinal Questions: The Resurrection	15:1-58
CONCLUSION	16:1-24

## XII. BACKGROUND OF 2 CORINTHIANS

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians is the most personal of his writings. It is filled with personal testimonies and has been called his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* ("defense of his life").

### A. BIOGRAPHICAL SETTING

The background of the second Corinthian letter is closely involved with that of the

first. For this reason the complete sequence is summarized below, some of which is review. Observe how each letter fits into the chronology.

1. Founding of the Corinthian church, on Paul's second missionary journey, A.D. 50 (Acts 18:1-18a). Paul was about fifty years old. He remained at Corinth for about eighteen months, living with Aquila and Priscilla, and working part time in the tent-making business to support his evangelistic ministry.

2. Arrival at Ephesus on the third missionary journey, A.D. 52. Paul had these two contacts with the Corinthian church before writing 1 Corinthians from Ephesus:

a. A short visit to combat an incipient opposition to the apostle's ministry, and to correct other evils. His mission was apparently not effective. (Read 2 Corinthians

2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2. Note the reference to a forthcoming “third time” visit.)

b. A letter referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9. At least part of this so-called previous letter was written to correct existing evils in the church. The letter was noncanonical.

3. A three-year teaching and evangelistic ministry in Ephesus, on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:8, 10; 20:31; 1 Cor. 16:8), including a fruitful ministry (Acts 19:10-12, 17-20) and severe trials (Acts 19:9; 19:21—20:1; 20:31; 2 Cor. 1:8). *Paul writes 1 Corinthians* toward the end of this mission, around A.D. 55. Titus may have been the one to deliver the letter to Corinth. (If the short visit mentioned above was not *before* writing 1 Corinthians, it would be placed here.)

4. A “painful” letter to the church (2 Cor. 2:3-4; 7:8).²¹ This may have concerned an offense given to Paul in person during the

short visit cited above. (See 2 Cor. 2:5-11.) Titus may have been the bearer of this letter to Corinth.²²

5. Departure from Ephesus, and a ministry at Troas, discontinued when Paul could not find Titus (2 Cor. 2:12-13). See (2) on Map S. Was Paul ill at Troas? (See 2 Cor. 4:17 ff.)

6. To Macedonia, for a ministry there ((3) on Map S; Acts 20:1-2; 2 Cor. 2:13).²³ Troubles multiply (2 Cor. 7:5). Titus arrives from Corinth; he shares mixed news:

a. of a spiritual awakening in the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 7:6 ff.)

b. of problems still existing in the church (e.g., 2 Cor. 10:2, 10, 12; 11:4; 12:16, 20-21).

*Paul writes 2 Corinthians* from Macedonia to prepare the way for his third visit. Titus (with two companions) delivers the epistle to the church (2 Cor. 8:6, 16-24).

7. Paul's final visit to Corinth — three months of ministering (Acts 20:2-3). (See Romans 16:21-23 for names of Paul's associates at this time.) *Paul writes Romans*. He escapes a plot against his life (Acts 20:3) and continues on to Jerusalem (Acts 20:3—21:17).

## **B. THE WRITING OF 2 CORINTHIANS**

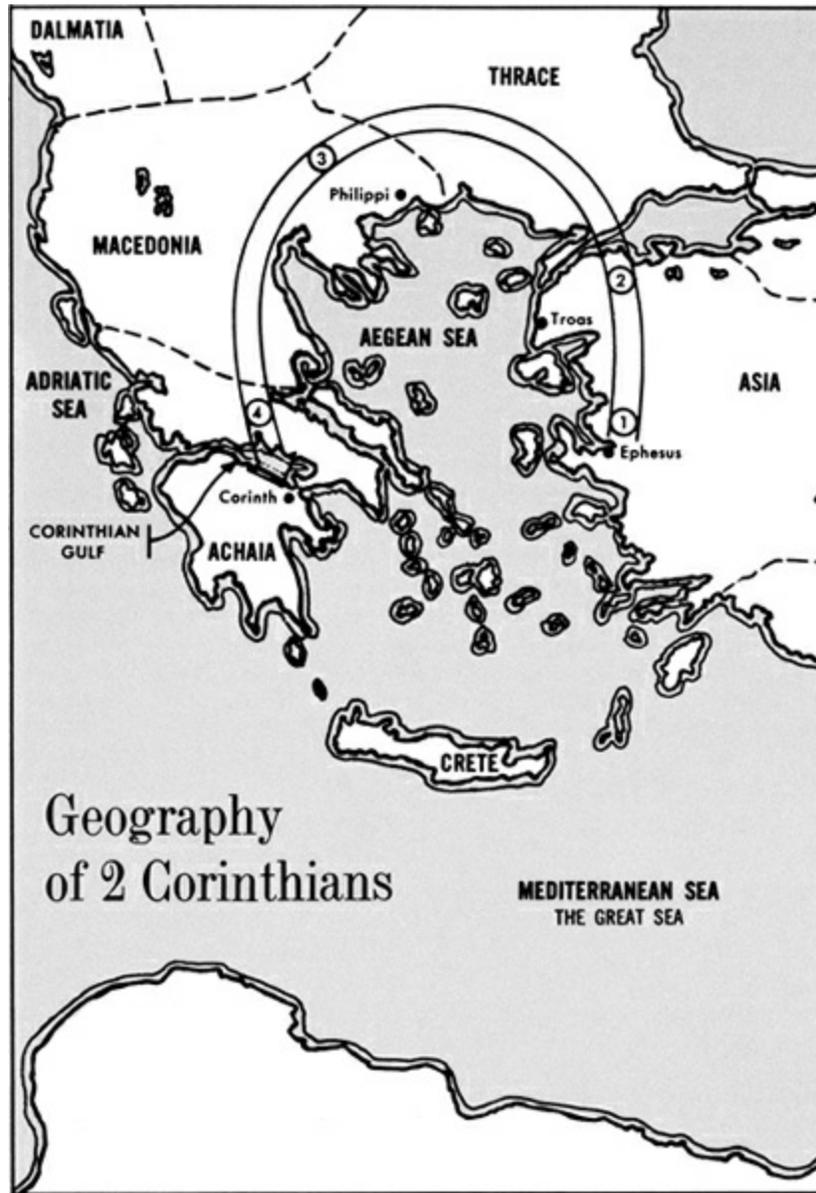
1. *Date*. A.D. 56 and 57, depending on how soon after 1 Corinthians (A.D. 55) the letter was written.

2. *Place written*. Macedonia (7:5). One tradition assigns Philippi as the city of origin.

3. *Original readers*. All the saints of Achaia (Greece) are included with those of Corinth in the salutation of 1:1. This may be explained partly by Paul's concern that news

of the opposition against him was spreading to regions beyond, and so he wanted his defense to reach those people as well.

# MAP S



4. *Purposes.* At least three main purposes can be seen in the epistle: a. to give instruction in doctrine and practical exhortations; b. to give further instructions for the offering being gathered for the poor saints in Jerusalem (e.g., 2 Cor. 9:1-5); c. to make an extended defense of Paul's

apostleship in view of false accusations by some in the Corinthian church (e.g., 2 Cor. 10:10; 11:13-15; 13:3).

5. *Style and characteristics.* Variety of style is very obvious in the epistle. The subject matter usually determines the style. For example, when Paul assumes the role of shepherd of the flock at Corinth, his style is placid and relaxed. When he defends his apostleship, his words rush along like a mighty torrent.

In this “most letter-like of all the letters of Paul,”²⁴ the apostle is intensely personal, revealing the intimate joys and fears of his tender heart. More is learned about the character and life of an apostle from this epistle than from any other portion of the New Testament.

Contrasts abound in the epistle: glorying and humiliation, life and death, sorrow and

consolation, sternness and tenderness. One is very much aware in reading 2 Corinthians that for Paul the Christian life means going all out for Christ, or it is not real life at all. The color gray cannot be detected in this book.

6. *Unity of the book.* Some modern critics hold that the original 2 Corinthians was not as long as it now stands (i.e., that chaps. 10-13 were not part of the letter).²⁵ It should be recognized, however, that in no ancient manuscript of this epistle is there “any trace of a division at any point in the letter, or any variation in the arrangement of the material; and in no early Christian writer is there any suggestion that the document is composed of parts of different letters, or that it was not all written at one time to meet one particular situation.”²⁶ In your survey studies you will be observing evidence of a structural unity in the company of diversity

of parts.

7 . *Compared with 1 Corinthians.* The following comparisons are suggested by W. Graham Scroggie:²⁷

## FIRST AND SECOND CORINTHIANS COMPARED

1 Corinthians	2 Corinthians
objective and practical	subjective and personal
insight into the character of an early church	insight into the character and ministry of Paul
deliberate instruction	impassioned testimony
warns against pagan influences	warns against Judaistic influences

### XIII. SURVEY OF 2 CORINTHIANS

#### A. FIRST SCANNING

Spend five to ten minutes scanning the entire letter, reading only the first two verses of each paragraph. What does this reveal about the *general* contents of the letter? Most of the New Testament epistles

have the customary opening and closing salutations. Observe the length of these in chapters 1 and 13.

## **B. A FIRST READING**

This is the one-sitting reading that can be completed easily in fifty minutes. Try reading aloud. Do not tarry over any of the details. Read to be impressed. Make mental notes, and record some of your impressions.

## **C. SEGMENT TITLES**

Observe on Chart 73 that 2 Corinthians is divided here into twelve segments (not including the introduction and conclusion). Mark the segment divisions in your Bible. Then read each segment, and assign a segment title to each.

The locations of segment dividing points not beginning with the first verse of a chapter are based on the following considerations:

**1:3-11.** This is an opening testimony of Paul. Actually, his testimony carries over into the next verses and paragraphs (in fact throughout the epistle), but there appears to be a new beginning at 1:12.

**1:12—2:13.** Observe the many references to Paul's *coming* to Corinth. This is the main reason for not making a new division at 2:1, but carrying the segment through 2:13.

**2:14—4:6.** This segment is about Paul's ministry *specifically*, such as preaching (4:5).

**4:7—5:10.** At 4:7 Paul begins to talk about the "outward man," "earthen vessels," the "body." The subject continues throughout the segment.

**5:11—7:3.** At 5:11 Paul returns to the

subject of ministry, especially the *message* of that ministry (“ministry of reconciliation,” 5:18).

7:4-16. Some Bibles make a new paragraph at 7:5 instead of at 7:4.²⁸ However, in view of the subjects *comfort* and *tribulation* in 7:4, and of the connective “for” in 7:5, it seems better to include 7:4 with the new division.

12:14—13:10. The common connecting phrase is “the third time” (12:14 and 13:1). This is the basis for including 12:14-21 with 13:1-10.

## **D. CORRELATION: SEEING HOW THE BOOK HOLDS TOGETHER**

Use the survey Chart 73 as the point of reference for the remaining studies.

1. *Main divisions.* Read chapters 8 and 9

and observe the common subject here. Refer to the survey, Chart 73, and note that this passage is the second of three main divisions in the epistle. Scan chapters 1-7 again, and look for testimonial and doctrinal passages. Then scan chapters 10-13 and observe how frequently Paul defends his apostleship. Read 13:3 for Paul's reasons for devoting four chapters to the subject of defending his ministry.

How are the three main divisions identified in various ways on Chart 73? It is difficult to find a logical development of the theme of each division that could be represented by any detailed outline.²⁹ The explanation of this absence of strict logical structure is to be found in the intimate, personal quality of the letter, one that pulsates with emotion. As someone has observed, "Feeling cannot be reduced to system; it vanishes under the dissecting

knife.”

2. *Paul's ministry.* What are the two main parts of the epistle on this subject? Read the segments of the division, “Vindication of Paul's Ministry.” Try to arrive at an outline of this division. Start by observing the main point of each segment.

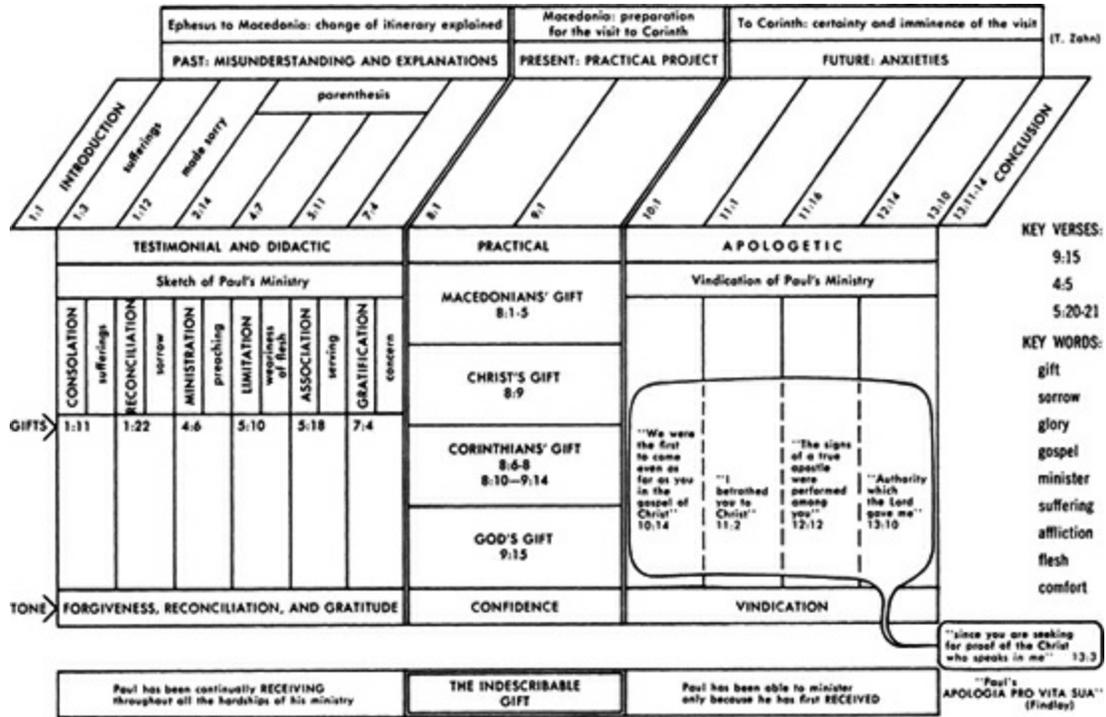
3. *Tone.* Be alert to change of tone as you move through the epistle. What does the chart show?

4 . *Biographical setting.* The three main divisions are related to the historical setting. Study the two outlines by T. Zahn that appear at the top of the chart, keeping in mind the setting discussed earlier. As we have seen, Paul sent this letter to prepare the way for his visit to Corinth, which he wanted to be a success.

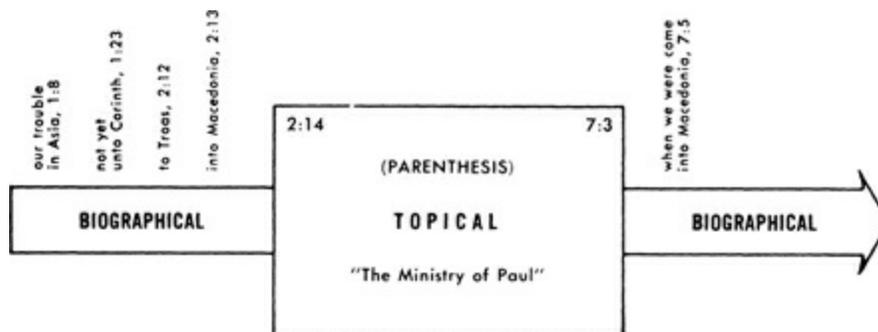
5 . *Testimony.* Much of 2 Corinthians is Paul's testimony. This is especially true of

the first division (1:3—7:16), where the apostle writes fully about his ministry. Note on Chart 73 the identification of a parenthesis (2:14—7:3). The biographical context of this topical section is shown on Chart 74.

# CHART 73: 2 CORINTHIANS: PAUL'S MINISTRY IN THE LIGHT OF THE INDESCRIBABLE GIFT



## CHART 74: PAUL'S MINISTRY



6. *Gifts.* The main subject of the central division (chaps. 8-9) concerns giving. Study the outline on the chart. Read the climactic last verse of chapter 9. Observe on the bottom of the chart the epistle's threefold outline on giving and receiving. What is the difference between a gift rejected and a gift received? Study the outline on "gifts" developed in chapters 1-7. (Read the Bible verses cited.) Observe that although Paul was very conscious of trials (e.g., sufferings, sorrow), he never lost sight of gifts from above, which helped and inspired him in the trial.

### XIV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 2 CORINTHIANS

## A. MINISTRY OF PROCLAIMING CHRIST (1:3—7.16)

Paul's first love was to preach the gospel of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. God gave him this passion when he was first saved. Preaching was not *his* choice, but *God's*. Acts 9:15 reports the clear statement of this divine call: "He is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel." Among Paul's reasons for sharing these things with the Corinthians at that time were:

1. Their first contact with him was through his preaching.
2. His apostleship (and therefore his apostolic preaching) was being challenged by some of them.
3. He wanted to magnify the Person of his

preaching, and clarify the methods of his preaching.

4. He wanted the Corinthians to learn important spiritual lessons applicable to laymen as well as to preachers, since both are witnesses of the gospel.

It is in the parenthesis of 2:14—7:3, noted earlier, that Paul teaches much about the Christian ministry. Chart 75 shows the subjects of the three segments.

# CHART 75: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-7:3: THE PARENTHESIS

THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL			
2:14	4:7	5:11	7:3
GLORIOUS NATURE of the Gospel		FRAIL BEARERS of the Gospel	
		BELOVED HEARERS of the Gospel	

Tenney breaks down this section into the following outline:³⁰

The Nature of the Ministry	2:14—3:18
The Sincerity of the Ministry	4:1-6
The Perseverance of the Ministry	4:7-15
The Prospect of the Ministry	4:16—5:10
The Sanctions of the Ministry	5:11-19
The Example of the Ministry	5:20—6:10
The Appeal of the Ministry	6:11—7:3

In the same section a study of ambassadorship (5:20) may be made:

*An ambassador for Christ* (5:11—7:3)

1. his motivations	5:11-15
2. his message	5:16-21
3. his marks	6:1-10
4. his fellowship	6:11—7:3

Every Christian is to minister in some way in God’s vineyard, as a witness of the gospel. Paul was a preacher-teacher-missionary, but his testimony about his experiences can be applied to any kind of Christian service, when the universal, timeless principles are identified.

## **B. CHRISTIAN GIVING (8:1—9:15)**

This passage is the New Testament’s classic treatise on Christian giving. The setting is that of a fund-raising project that the Corinthians had begun a year earlier.³¹ In his first letter Paul called this a “collection for the saints” (1 Cor. 16:1). Some of the Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem were poverty-stricken, and it was the apostle’s conviction that financial help at that time would carry them through the

critical experience. Paul was also wise enough to know that the spiritual benefits derived from the project by the donors would far outweigh the monetary worth of the gift itself. He saw here the implications of a *communion* of saints, and a reminder of the greatness of divine grace. It is no wonder then that he devoted such a large amount of the epistle to the mundane subject of fund-raising.

Various explanations have been offered as to what brought on this poverty situation at Jerusalem. Some of these are mentioned below:

Augustine suggests that the poverty at Jerusalem was the result of the community of goods (Acts iv. 32)... without careful organization of labour. ... But there were other causes. Jerusalem

had a pauperized population, dependent on the periodical influx of visitors. The Jewish world, from Cicero's time at least, supported the poor of Jerusalem by occasional subventions. As the Christian Jews came to be regarded as a distinct body, they would lose their share in these doles; and the "communism" of Acts iv. 32 was but a temporary remedy. Most of the converts were, therefore, poor at the outset. They were probably "boycotted" and otherwise persecuted by the unconverted Jews (1 Thess. ii. 14; Jas. ii. 6; v. 1-6), and their position would be similar to that of Hindoo Christians excluded from their caste, or Protestants in the West of Ireland.³²

The setting is far removed from all of us,

but the timeless principles that are involved bridge all the gaps. Observe in the passage the two supreme examples: Christ's gift (8:9) and God's gift (9:15).

### **C. CREDENTIALS OF PAUL'S MINISTRY (10:1—13:10)**

Paul devotes four chapters (or thirty percent) of the entire letter to vindicating his apostolic ministry. At one point in this section he states bluntly why such a vindication is necessary: "since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me" (13:3). Not all the Corinthians were guilty of such suspicion or antagonism. In fact, most of them were *with* Paul, and were anxious to support his ministry in every way (read 7:16). The instigators of opposition to Paul were men from outside the Corinthian

fellowship (cf. 11:4) who were trying to lure some of those Christians away from their loyalties. “These were of the Judaistic agitators who dogged the footsteps of Paul across Asia Minor and into Europe, impugning his message and attacking his person.”³³ As long as there was this thorn in the group, Paul would do everything he could to remove it and the festering that it threatened.³⁴

We can understand the urgency of such an apologetic stand before the entire Christian world of the first century. A false gospel (11:4) and the true were being broadcast simultaneously around the world, and people were asking, Who are the gospel’s true ministers, and who are the false? Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians gave the answer, not only to the church at Corinth, but to people everywhere, of all time. As you survey these four chapters, look

especially for the credentials of a true witness for Christ in the great work of the gospel.

## **D. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES**

This letter is the only source of the following unique experiences of Paul:

1. escape from Damascus, 11:32-33
2. his revelations and visions, 12:1-6³⁵
3. his thorn in the flesh, 12:7
4. five Jewish scourgings; two Roman scourgings; three shipwrecks; many perils, 11:23-27.

## **E. OTHER IMPORTANT SUBJECTS**

Other important subjects discussed by Paul in 2 Corinthians include:

1. the Old and New covenants contrasted (chap. 3)
2. Christ's substitutionary atonement (5:21)
3. the gospel of reconciliation (5:18-20)
4. separation from worldliness (6:14—7:1).

What key truths are taught in these passages: 4:7-12; 4:16-18; 5:1-10; 5:17-21; 6:4-10; 8:9; 9:8; 11:23-33; 12:1-10; 13:14?

## **XV. KEY WORDS, VERSES AND THEME FOR 2 CORINTHIANS**

Note the key words listed on Chart 73, p. 287. Each of the words *glory* and *minister* (and their cognates and synonyms) appear about twenty times in the letter.

Read in your Bible the key verses cited on the chart. Did you observe other key verses

in the epistle?

Note that the title on the chart reflects the two main subjects of the epistle: *ministry* and *gift*. In your own words, state the theme of 2 Corinthians.

## **XVI. APPLICATIONS FROM 2 CORINTHIANS**

A large variety of spiritual applications may be made of this letter because it is so personal. What practical truths are taught about these:

1. suffering and trial of Christians
2. death
3. ambassadors for Christ
4. Christian giving
5. how to deal with false accusation and false teaching?

## **XVII. REVIEW QUESTIONS ON 2 CORINTHIANS**

1. Where was Paul when he wrote 2 Corinthians?
2. Why did Paul write this letter?
3. Describe the letter, in regard to general contents and style.
4. Compare 1 and 2 Corinthians.
5. The structure of 2 Corinthians is of how many main divisions? Identify the contents of each.
6. Why did Paul write so much to vindicate his ministry?
7. What were some of the credentials which he submitted for himself?
8. What is meant by “apologia pro vita sua”?
9. Name key words of the letter.
10. Quote a key verse.

## **XVIII. FURTHER STUDY OF 2 CORINTHIANS**

Using outside sources, study the interesting experiences of Paul as recorded in 12:1-6 (visions and revelations) and 12:7 (thorn in the flesh).

## XIX. OUTLINE

2 CORINTHIANS: Paul's Apostolic Ministry	
SKETCH OF PAUL'S MINISTRY	1:1—7:16
Comfort in Tribulation	1:1-11
Maintaining Good Relations with Fellow Christians	1:12—2:13
Ministry of Proclaiming Christ	2:14—4:6
God's Treasure in Common Clay Vessels	4:7—5:10
An Ambassador for Christ	5:11—7:3
Joy in Tribulation	7:4-16
APPEAL ABOUT GIVING	8:1—9:15
Macedonians' Gift	8:1-9
Corinthians' Gift	8:10—9:15
VINDICATION OF PAUL'S MINISTRY	10:1—13:14
Authority and Approval of a True Ministry	10:1-18
True and False Apostles	11:1-15
Credentials of a True Ministry	11:16—12:13
"Prepare for My Visit"	12:14—13:14

## XX. SELECTED READING FOR CORINTHIAN LETTERS

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Hodge, Charles. *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. iii-xxi.

Hughes, Philip Edgcumbe. *Paul's Second*

*Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament, pp. xv-xxxvi.

Morris, Leon. *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, pp. 15-23.

Tasker, R. V. G. *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, pp. 15-38.

## COMMENTARIES

Broomall, Wick. “The Second Epistle to the Corinthians.” In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

Johnson, S. Lewis. “First Corinthians.” In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

Lenski, R. C. H. *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the*

*Corinthians.*

Morris, Leon. *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians.*

Plummer, Alfred. *Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians.* The International Critical Commentary.

Robertson, A., and Plummer, A. *First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians.*

## **OTHER RELATED SOURCES**

Vincent, Marvin R. *Word Studies in the New Testament.*

Vine, W. C. *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.*

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1. This observation holds only in the large, overall sense. For example, there is much

interpretation in the gospels and Acts, just as there is much application in Romans and much interpretation in the Corinthian letters.

2. Most Bible versions, including NASB, do not distinguish between the visible church and invisible church by the printing of the word *church*. (This is true also of the original Greek autographs.) In all of those versions the translator used the small letter *c*. The student must determine from the context what church is meant.

3. If Chart 69 included events of the last days, it would recognize Paul's prophecy of the rebirth of Israel (cf. Rom. 11:26).

4. For the geographical setting of Corinth on Paul's three missionary journeys, see Map L, p. 207.

5. For an excellent description of the sights that Paul saw on his first visit to Corinth, consult Charles F. Pfeiffer and Howard F. Vos, *The Wycliffe Historical Geography of*

*Bible Lands*, pp. 477-87.

6. This Greek goddess was identified with the Roman goddess Venus.

7. Joseph M. Gettys, *How to Study 1 Corinthians*, p. 10.

8. Pfeiffer and Vos, *Wycliffe Historical Geography*, p. 485.

9. There was probably an interim of a few months between the writings of the two epistles.

10. Different views are held on this obscure subject, because of the relative silence of the New Testament. You might want to consult various authors for a full discussion.

11. This unrecorded visit is placed before 1 Corinthians by A. T. Robertson and A. Plummer, *First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, pp. xxi-xxv; and by Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 2:52-54. The visit is placed after 1 Corinthians by Merrill Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, p. 298; and

by S. Lewis Johnson, “First Corinthians” in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1228.

12. Paul obviously wrote many letters in his lifetime besides those that were inspired.

13. See Acts 20:31; see Acts 19:8, 10 for the time element.

14. Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 2:57.

15. Ibid.

16. G. Campbell Morgan, *The Corinthian Letters of Paul*, p. 65.

17. Observe in the lists of [chapter 12](#) how the gift of tongues is always cited last: 12:10, 28, 30.

18. Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 2:57.

19. S. Lewis Johnson, “First Corinthians” in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1255. Among the Greek philosophers, Epicureans denied any existence beyond death; Stoics held that death brought a merging of the

soul in deity, and so a loss of personality; Platonists absolutely denied bodily resurrection. It is possible also that some of the Jewish converts of the Corinthian church had been influenced by the Sadducees' denial of resurrection (cf. Acts 23:8).

**20.** Condensed descriptions are given in Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, pp. 859-60; Merrill F. Unger, *Linger's Bible Dictionary*, pp. 1107-8; John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*. Various books and articles are available on this subject.

**21.** Some view the letter referred to by "I wrote" (2 Cor. 2:4) as being 1 Corinthians, and the sinning brother as the one of 1 Corinthians 5:1-5.

**22.** S. Lewis Johnson, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians" in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1228.

**23.** Paul's *original* plan (cf. 2 Cor. 1:15-16)

was to go from Ephesus to Corinth directly by sea, then to Macedonia, then back to Corinth (thus a “second benefit” for the Corinthians, 2 Cor. 1:15), finally on to Jerusalem. His changed plan (Acts 20:3; 1 Cor. 16:5-8) was to go first to Macedonia, then to Corinth, then to Jerusalem via Macedonia. The reason for delaying his visit to Corinth was to “allow the Corinthians by God’s help to remedy the evils, and then to arrive in their midst.” (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, p. 858). One consequence of this change was that the Corinthians charged Paul with not being a man of his word (2 Cor. 1:17).

24. R. V. G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, p. 10.

25. For an able defense of the unity of the full text of 2 Corinthians, consult Tasker, pp. 23-35.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

27. Adapted from W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 2:142-43.
28. Observe, for example, how 7:5 picks up the narrative that had been temporarily suspended at 2:13. It is for this reason that the section 2:14—7:4 is often viewed as a parenthesis in the epistle.
29. A simple outline is given in Alfred Plummer, *Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, pp. xx-xxi.
30. Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, p. 300.
31. The interval of one year is cited in 8:10 and 9:2. It has been pointed out by some, however, that the Greek text translated “a year ago” should read “last year” (NIV), which would make the interval something less than a year. (See R. V. G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, p. 123.)
32. A. T. Robertson and A. Plummer, *First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, p. 382.

33. W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 2:139.

34. Read the following passages, which reveal something of the dark side of the Corinthian scene at this time: 11:3-4; 12:20-21; 13:5-7, 11.

35. Consult commentaries for identification of “a man” in 12:2.

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## 13 Galatians: Set Free from Bondage

The epistle to the Galatians was Paul's first God-breathed (*theopneustia*) writing, delivered to the churches of Galatia during the decade of his missionary labors.¹ (See Chart 1, p. 20.) We have already surveyed Romans and the Corinthian letters of this period. Recall from your study of [Chapter 1](#) that James and Galatians were probably the first New Testament books to be written (James A.D. 45; Galatians, A.D. 48). In our surveys of these letters we shall observe that both concerned themselves with the subject of *works*. But each book stressed a different, though not contradictory, aspect of that common subject. James was addressed to the error of loose an-tinomianism (from *anti*, "against" and *nomos*, "law"), which said that because a person is saved by grace through faith, works thereafter are not important.

(Read James 2:14-26.) Galatians was addressed to the error of what might be called *Galatianism*, which said that one is *saved* through faith and *perfected* by the keeping of the law, thus salvation is by faith *plus* works. Stated positively, Galatians teaches *liberation by the gospel*; James teaches *compulsion of the gospel*. This is the comparison shown on Chart 62, p. 244. It is easy to see from this why a study of Galatians made in conjunction with a study of James brings out the stable, balanced New Testament teaching on the place of *works* in the doctrine of salvation.²

From the above description of the emphasis of Galatians it is understandable why Martin Luther, released from the legalistic shackles of the Roman church, embraced this letter as his favorite Bible book. This attraction has been shared by multitudes before and after Luther. One

writer has called the epistle “The Magna Charta of Spiritual Emancipation.”

## I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

Review Paul’s three missionary journeys ([Chapter 10](#), especially Chart 59, p. 237), and note especially the cities of Galatia that he visited on the first journey (Map N, p. 220). Locate the cities on Map T. Did Paul visit these cities again on his later journeys? Did he ever visit cities in north Galatia for an evangelistic ministry, as far as the Bible record is concerned?

Read Acts 13:1—14:28, which is Luke’s reporting of Paul’s first missionary journey. Study especially the ministries and events at the four Galatian cities shown on Map T. These are the cities where Paul won converts and founded the churches to which he wrote Galatians. Note: Paul’s return trip

on the first missionary journey (Acts 14:21-27) might be called a second visit to the people. Observe that as of Acts 14:23, churches in the area were already being established.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. AUTHOR**

The writer is identified in the text as “Paul, an apostle” (1:1; cf. 6:11). Read Galatians 1:2 and observe that other Christians joined Paul in greeting the Galatian churches: “all the brethren who are with me.”

### **B. ORIGINAL READERS**

The text identifies the original readers as

“the churches of Galatia” (1:2; cf. 3:1), hence the title, “Galatians.” The other places in the New Testament where the reference to “Galatia” appears are these: Acts 16:6; 18:23; 1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Timothy 4:10; 1 Peter 1:1.

It is interesting to observe that this is the only Pauline epistle addressed as such to a *group* of churches. Some of Paul’s epistles (e.g., Ephesians) were intended to be circulated among churches, even though one church was designated as the original recipient.³

Where were the “churches of Galatia” located? Two different views are held on this: (1) the North Galatian view — churches of northern cities, supposedly founded on Paul’s second missionary journey when he passed through the northern districts of Asia Minor; (2) the South

Galatian view — churches founded on Paul's first missionary journey to such southern cities as Lystra and Derbe. (See Further Study for brief descriptions and defenses of each of these views.)

# MAP T



The position taken by this book is that the “churches of Galatia” were located in the southern cities evangelized by Paul on his first missionary journey. The following suggestions for orientation are geared to this position.

Study Map T, which shows the geography of Galatians. Note again the locations of these cities: Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Try to fix their locations in your mind in order to help you *visualize* the setting of the Bible text that you will be surveying.

It is generally believed that most of the Galatian believers were of Gentile background. How is that supported by the following verses in Galatians: 4:8; 5:2; 6:12?

What do the following verses tell you about the Galatian churches and about Paul's relationship to them: 1:6-7; 1:8-11; 3:1-5; 4:12-15; 4:19-20; 5:7-9?

### **C. DATE AND PLACE WRITTEN**

The date of Galatians depends on which view of its recipients — North Galatian or

South Galatian — is correct. In accord with the latter view, Paul wrote Galatians after his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14) and before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). If the Jerusalem Council had already convened, Paul would no doubt have referred to its decisions in his letter, since both the Council and the letter addressed the same problem. The Jerusalem Council was held in A.D. 49, so A.D. 48 may be assigned to the epistle. The epistle of James (A.D. 45) was probably the only other New Testament book predating Galatians.

Paul may have written the letter at Antioch of Syria, Jerusalem, or between the two cities.

## **D. SETTING**

The first opposition that the Gentile

Christians of Galatia encountered after their conversion was persecution from Jewish unbelievers of their own hometowns (cf. Acts 13:45-50; 14:21-23). Apparently the Christians withstood those attacks, for Paul does not refer to such a problem in his epistle. Satan changed his tactics against the Galatians and used Jewish Christians from without (probably from Jerusalem) to cast a pall of doubt over Paul's evangelistic ministry among the Gentile Galatians. "Where the blustering storm of opposition failed the subtle influences of persuasion had met with more success."⁴

It all happened very fast. Soon after Paul left the cities of Galatia on his first missionary journey, Judaizers arrived and told the new converts that they had not heard the *whole* gospel (1:6-7). Those troublemakers taught that salvation was by (1) faith in Christ, *plus* (2) participation in

Jewish ceremonies (e.g., circumcision). In other words, the Gentile converts of Galatia were not saved if they had not also become Jews. Read the following verses of Galatians, and note the various false doctrines taught by the opponents of Paul: 1:6-9; 2:16; 3:2-3; 4:10, 21; 5:2-4; 6:12. Also record how each of the following verses identify those false teachers: 1:7; 3:1; 4:17; 5:10, 12.

Why do you think it was difficult for many Jews in Paul's day to accept the doctrine of *salvation through faith alone!* One writer answers with these words, "Two thousand years of Jewish tradition were in their bones."⁵ What were some of the ingredients of that tradition (e.g., forefathers, the Temple)? Read Acts 6-7 to see how one Jew, Stephen, saw the deeper significance of the sacred Jewish institutions, as they pointed to a Messiah not only on the throne of David but also on the throne of the universe.⁶

## **E. PURPOSES**

Some of Paul's main purposes in writing this epistle were:

1. to expose the false teachings of the Judaizers who were undermining the faith of the new converts
2. to defend Paul's apostleship, which was being challenged by the Judaizers
3. to emphasize that salvation is through faith alone, not faith plus law
4. to exhort the Galatian Christians to live in the liberty brought by Christ (5:1) and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23).

## **F. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EPISTLE**

Distinguishing marks of the epistle include the following items.

1. *Many contrasts.* These will be seen in your survey study.

2. *Strong statements.* Paul was justifiably incensed over the destructive work of the troublemakers. Twice in the opening chapter he writes, “Let him be accursed.” “Every sentence is a thunderbolt” is one writer’s view of the epistle. William Neil describes Paul here as “a man with a brilliant mind, a trenchant controversialist, a fearless fighter ... a man whose life was ‘hidden with Christ in God.’”⁷

3. *Clear distinction between faith and works as the condition for salvation.* The book has been used of God to bring spiritual awakening to such men as Martin Luther and John Wesley. Luther said this of Galatians: “It is my epistle; I have betrothed myself to it: it is my wife.”

4. *Classic treatment of Christian liberty.* This

is why, as cited earlier, the epistle has been called “The Magna Charta of Spiritual Emancipation.”

5. *No congratulations or words of praise.* It was not that there was nothing commendable about the Galatians’ spiritual lives. The epistle was written under strain of urgency, over a situation of emergency. Paul would be having personal interaction with the churches later, when he could inspire them through commendation.

## **G. GALATIANS IN RELATION TO OTHER NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS**

We have already compared Galatians and James. Two other interesting comparisons are made below.

1. *Galatians and Romans.* The subject of works is prominent in Romans as well as in

Galatians. Romans exposes the error of legalism, which says that a person is saved by works. The subject of justification by faith appears often in both epistles. (Read Galatians 2:16-17; 3:11, 24; 5:4; Romans 3:20, 24, 28; 5:1, 9.) The large subject of salvation is treated more fully in Romans. It has been said that Galatians is the “rough block” of what appears in more finished form in Romans, written eight years later.

2. *Galatians and 2 Corinthians*. Much of 2 Corinthians is devoted to a defense of Paul’s apostleship (e.g., 2 Cor. 10-13), because Paul’s opponents were stirring up the Corinthian believers by challenging his credentials as an apostle. In the first two chapters of Galatians Paul defends his apostleship, which was challenged by the same kind of troublemakers. When you are surveying Galatians 1-2, recall the *apologia* chapters of 2 Corinthians 10-13.

### **III. SURVEY**

#### **A. PREPARING TO SURVEY**

1. Visualize the young Christians of a church of Galatia about to read Paul's letter for the first time. Keep in mind the antecedents of the epistle:

- a. Paul's first missionary journey
- b. conversion of residents of Galatia
- c. Paul returns to home base, Antioch
- d. troublemakers and false teachers harass the Galatian Christians.

2. Take a casual look at Galatians in your Bible, observing such things as number and length of chapters.

#### **B. FIRST READING**

Read the entire book in one sitting. Aim here to get the feel of the book. Approach the text, as much as possible, with “an innocence of the eye,” that is, as though you had never seen it before. What are your impressions?

Scan the book for the general content of its chapters. Is there an opening salutation in the first chapter? What would you consider to be the concluding section of the letter?

How do the first two chapters differ from the others as to content? Which group has more commands: chapters 3-4, or 5-6?

What key words, phrases, and subjects of the epistle have stood out as prominent so far in your survey? How would you describe the atmosphere of the book?

## **C. INDIVIDUAL SEGMENTS AND**

# PARAGRAPHS

Refer to Chart 77, page 302, and note that Galatians is here divided into eight segments, including the introduction and conclusion. Each segment is a group of paragraphs. Because Galatians has only six chapters, we will begin this phase of survey with the paragraph units. The aim here is to identify the main subject of each paragraph without tarrying over any details.

Refer to Chart 76 and note the set of paragraph divisions (i.e., chapter-verse reference). Mark those divisions in your Bible. Then read each paragraph, and assign a paragraph title.⁸

## D. IDENTIFYING GROUPS OF SEGMENTS AND PARAGRAPHS

Now read your entire group of paragraph titles. Could any of those be grouped together under a common subject? You may or may not see any groupings from your paragraph titles. Do not hesitate to glance back at the Bible text for clues to groups.

Think next in terms of segments. Do you see any ways to group segments according to common subject?

What part of the epistle is mostly practical?

What part is mostly doctrinal?

What part is mostly autobiographical?

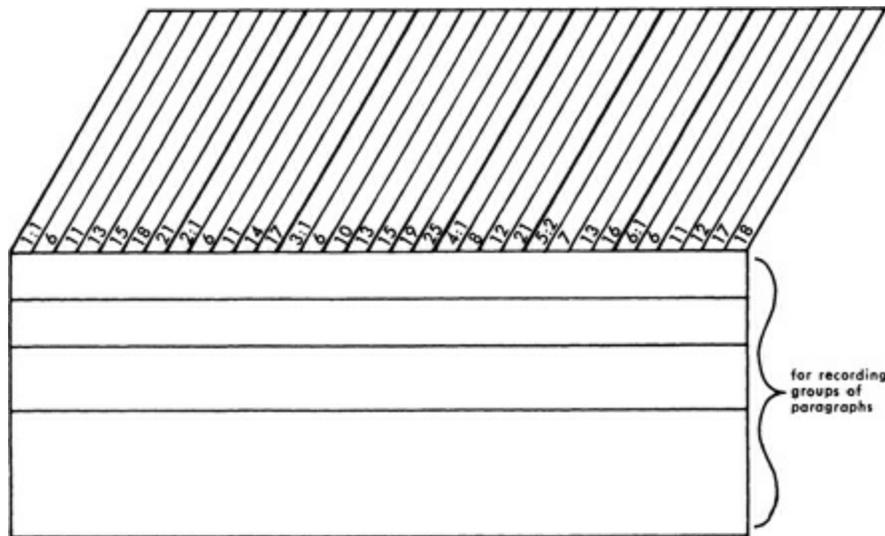
## **E. SURVEY CHART**

Study Chart 77, which shows the structure of Galatians. Note the following:

1. The epistle is clearly divided into three

parts of two chapters each. Observe that the practical section follows the doctrinal. Paul always bases his applications on firmly established doctrinal truths.

# CHART 76: PARAGRAPH TITLES OF GALATIANS



2. A new division is made at 5:2 in order to show 5:1, with its theme of liberty, as a concluding verse to the previous section about liberty (e.g., note the word *free* in 4:26, 30-31).

3. The first ten verses of the letter are seen here as the introduction. Some versions and commentaries consider only 1:1-5 or 1:1-9 as the introduction. What are the functions of the paragraph 1:6-10?

4. The conclusion of the epistle is identified as 6:11-18. If it were not for verse 11, can you see why only 6:17-18 might be

considered as the conclusion?

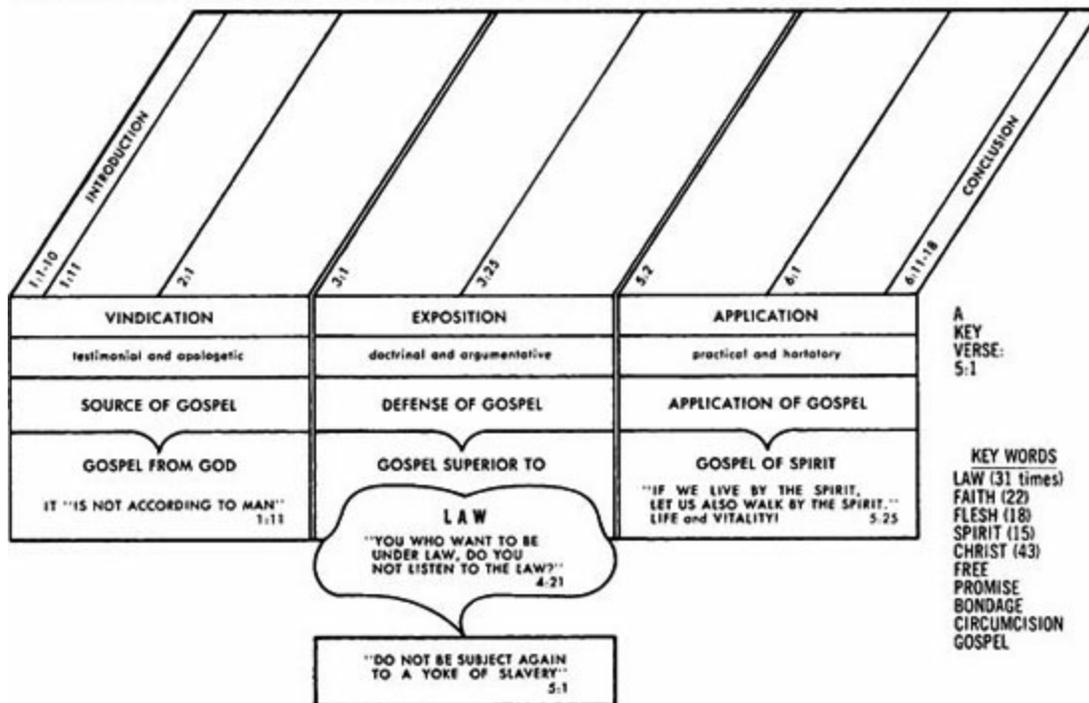
5. Observe how each of the three divisions of the letter is identified, in the different outlines. Compare the outlines with your own observations of groups of paragraphs.

6. The title “Set Free from Bondage” reflects the key verse 5:1, with its reference to a “yoke of slavery.” What is the practical command of 5:1?

# CHART 77

## GALATIANS SET FREE FROM BONDAGE

"Magna Charta of spiritual emancipation" Favorite epistle of the Reformers.



## IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

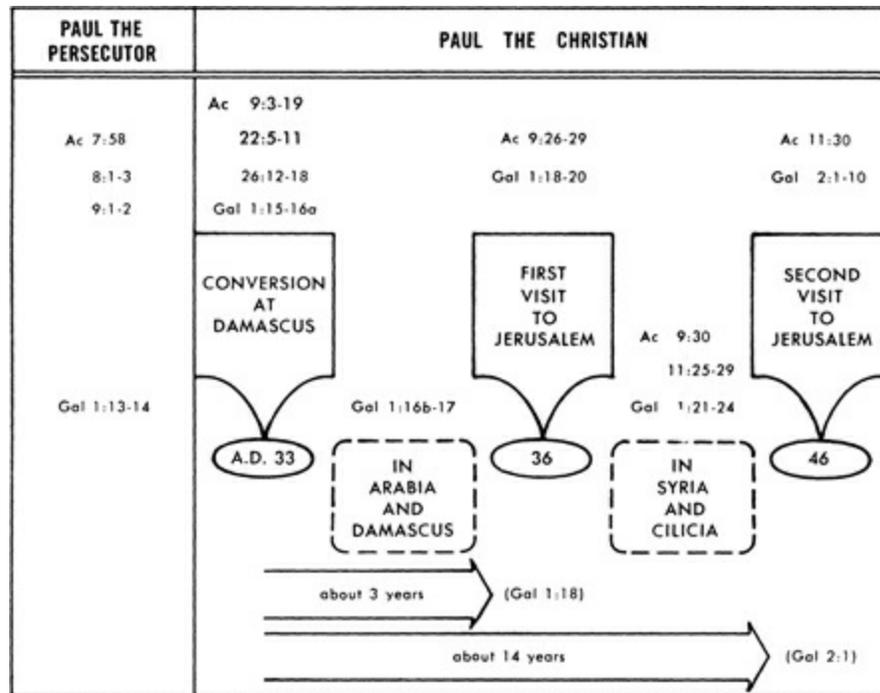
### A. PAUL'S TESTIMONIES (1:1—2:21)

The first two chapters of Galatians record various testimonies of Paul, as summarized below. Paul's main purpose in sharing those testimonies was to show that God, not man, was the source of his calling to the ministry.

1. *Divine source of Paul's message (1:1-24).*

Read the chapter and note the various ways Paul emphasizes that his message was by revelation from God, and not by instruction from man. Refer to Chart 78 for help in the biographical notes of the passage.

# CHART 78: THE CHRONOLOGY OF GALATIANS 1:11-2:10



2. *Human endorsement of Paul's mission* (2:1-10). In this passage Paul shows that his mission to the Gentiles (of which the Galatian churches were a part) was wholeheartedly endorsed by the Jewish leaders of the Jerusalem church. As you read the text, observe how Paul did that.

3. *Confrontation with Peter* (2:11-21). This is the concluding passage in the two-chapter testimonial section of the epistle. The fact of Paul's encounter with Peter served to

support his proof that he was not preaching the gospel under the rule of anyone, including the apostles from Jerusalem. One can appreciate why Paul was so deeply disturbed over the problem about Jewish laws for Christians, when even a pillar of the church, like Peter, would compromise on the issue.

Paul's confrontation with Peter probably took place soon after Paul had returned to Antioch from Jerusalem. It was the third meeting of Paul and Peter, and not a pleasant one.

a. First meeting (at Jerusalem, A.D. 36). Paul became acquainted with Peter, and visited with him for fifteen days (Gal. 1:18).

b. Second meeting (at Jerusalem, A.D. 46). Paul and Peter joined "right hands of fellowship" in the ministry of the gospel, Paul as apostle to the Gentiles, and Peter as

apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:1-10).

c. Third meeting (at Antioch, A.D. 46-47). Paul publicly rebuked Peter for being two-faced in his relations with Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Read Galatians 2:11-21. According to 2:14a, what was Paul's sharp indictment of Peter? How does Paul identify what should be the true interpretation of the gospel by a Jewish Christian, like himself (2:15-16)? How do verses 17-21 teach that salvation is by Christ, but not by Christ *and* the law?

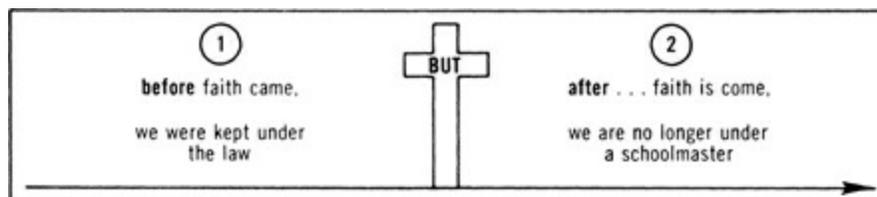
## **B. FAITH AND LAW COMPARED (3:1—5:1)**

The middle section of Galatians is its doctrinal core, where Paul shines as a theologian instructed by God. In 3:1-24 he compares faith and law as they relate to

justification, and in 3:25—5:1 he writes about the believer's freedom from law, in Christ. Chart 79 shows an outline of this section.

The word *law* appears fourteen times in 3:1-24. Read 3:10-24, which is a classic New Testament passage on the purposes of the law. What are the law's ministries? What does the law *not* do? How is the law compared to faith in 3:23 and 3:25? See the accompanying diagram.

## LAW, BEFORE AND AFTER THE CROSS

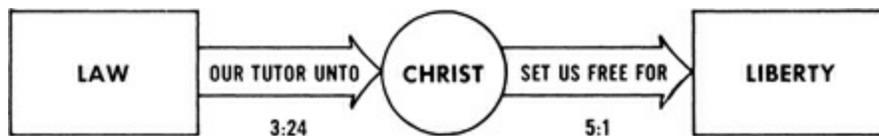


# CHART 79: GALATIANS 3:1–5:1

Justification is by faith in Christ alone, as shown by:					
①	②	③	④		⑤
THE CHRISTIAN'S NEW EXPERIENCE	GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM	THE LIMITED MINISTRY OF THE LAW	THE CHRISTIAN'S NEW STANDING	PARENTHESIS (4:12-20)	ILLUSTRATIONS FROM OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY
3:1	3:6	3:19	3:25	4:12	4:21 5:1
FAITH AND LAW COMPARED			FREEDOM IN CHRIST		

The apostle never suggests in any of his writings that God's law and Christian freedom are contradictory or unmixable. In 3:24 and 5:1 he shows that they are intimately related. The accompanying diagram illustrates this.

## LAW AND LIBERTY



The Jewish agitators in the Galatian churches were luring the new Gentile converts back to the yoke of legalistic

bondage. Paul wanted to show the Galatians that their newfound emancipation from the law brought them into a new and intimate relationship to God, through His dear Son.

### **C. WALKING BY THE SPIRIT (5:2-26)**

The key repeated word of this segment is *Spirit*. Paul's appeal for walking by the Spirit is based on the truth of the believer's standing: "If we live by the Spirit" (5:25). It is in the context of this passage that the familiar verses are found listing the "fruit of the Spirit" (5:22-23).

### **V. KEY WORDS, VERSES AND THEME**

Observe the list of key words shown on Chart 77, page 302. Does the frequent repetition of some words indicate something of Paul's method of writing this letter?

Galatians is clearly a book of contrasts. Note how many of the key words appear in the contrasts of Chart 80.⁹

# CHART 80: CONTRASTS IN GALATIANS.

CHAPTER	The Lower	The Higher
1—2	lost in Adam all die physically in Adam another gospel (false) man's reasoning	saved in Christ all live spiritually in Christ the genuine gospel God's revelation
3—4	law works curse of death condemnation by works servants in bondage (defeat) old covenant (symbolized by Hagar)	grace faith blessing of life justification by faith sons in freedom (victory) new covenant (symbolized by Sarah)
5—6	living in the flesh works of the flesh falling from grace world or self the object of glorying	walking in the Spirit fruit of the Spirit standing firm in grace the cross the sole object of glorying

What key verses did you observe in your survey of Galatians? Compare your choices with the following list: 1:15-16; 2:16a; 2:20; 3:3; 3:13; 3:24; 4:4-6; 5:1; 5:22-23; 5:25; 6:2, 5; 6:15.

In your own words, state a theme for Galatians.

## VI. APPLICATIONS

Some of the areas of application to be derived from Galatians are shown here:

1. One's salvation. What really are the

conditions for salvation that a person must fulfill?

2. One's Christian growth (sanctification). Does this come by self-effort? What is the source of strength?

3. One's liberty. What are the believer's privileges of freedom in Christ? Is the church of Christ supposed to be uniform in custom and habit in all respects? Did Paul urge Gentile Christians to act like Jewish Christians, or Jewish Christians to act like Gentile Christians?

4. Are there boundaries and limitations in this Christian freedom? If so, what are they?

5. Is the phrase "keep standing firm" of 5:1 a suggestion of boundary in Christian living? What about the common New Testament phrase "in Christ"?

## **VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Recall some of the high points of Paul's life. Where does the writing of Galatians fit in?

2. Where were the churches of Galatia located?

3. When did Paul first meet the Galatians? Did he have any part in the founding of the local churches in the different cities?

4. Why is it held that Paul wrote Galatians *before* the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15?

5. Why did Paul write to the churches of Galatia so soon after completing his evangelistic mission to them?

6. What was the local setting that brought on this letter?

7. Name four main purposes of the epistle.

8. What are some of the distinguishing marks of the epistle?

9. Compare Galatians with James,

Romans, and 2 Corinthians.

10. Identify by outlines the three divisions of this epistle.

11. Quote a key verse.

12. Name five key words of Galatians.

## VIII. FURTHER STUDY

1. Study further the comparisons of law and Spirit in Scripture. Use outside sources, including an exhaustive concordance and *Naves Topical Bible*. The accompanying Chart 81 suggests some areas of study.

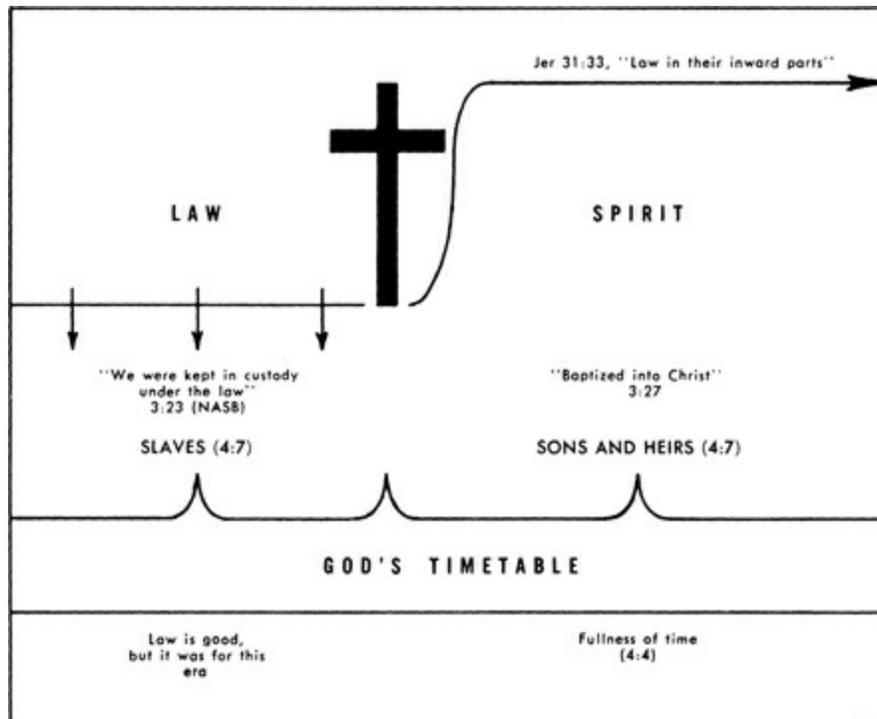
2. Refer to outside sources for arguments used to support the North Galatian and South Galatian views.¹⁰ Background and summary are given below.

*The North Galatian and South Galatian Views*

In Paul's day the term *Galatia* had two connotations. One was ethnic, and the other was provincial. A summary of the historical background will explain the reason for the differences:

- 250 B.C. Migratory Celtic tribes (Gauls) moved in from the west and north and settled down in Asia Minor, mostly in the northern half.
- 189 B.C. The people were conquered by the Romans.
- 25 B.C. Augustus made the region a Roman province, calling it Galatia (after "Gaul").
- A.D. 41 The original boundaries were extended southward to include such cities as Derbe and surrounding areas.

# CHART 81: LAW AND SPIRIT IN GODS TIMETABLE



Here are the two views and some arguments that are advanced to defend each:

1. “Churches of Galatia” were churches in the northern regions.

a. This is “ethnic” Galatia, using the term in a *popular* sense.

b. The churches were founded on Paul’s second or third missionary journey (see Acts 16:6; 18:23).

c. This area was the true Galatia, in race and language.

d. There were more Gentiles in the northern cities, hence the problem referred to in Galatians would more likely exist there.

e. The early church Fathers understood the term “Galatia” to mean the northern region.

2. “Churches of Galatia” were churches in the southern regions.

a. This is “provincial” Galatia, with the term used in an *official* sense.

b. The churches were founded on Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13-14).

c. We know of no churches existing at this early date in the northern parts of Galatia.

d. Barnabas, who accompanied Paul on the first journey but not on the second, is

mentioned more than once in Galatians 2, as if he were well known to the readers (2:1, 9, 13).

e. The letter was written *before* the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), and therefore before the second missionary journey; otherwise Paul would surely have referred to the Council's decree favoring Gentile Christian freedom from the Mosaic law, which is the main problem being addressed in Galatians.

f. This is the view generally held today.

## IX. OUTLINE

GALATIANS: Set Free from Bondage	
SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL	1:1—2:21
Introduction	1:1-10
Paul's Message from God	1:11-24
Confirmation by Jerusalem Leaders	2:1-10
Confrontation with Peter	2:11-21
DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL	3:1—5:1
Faith and Law Compared	3:1-24
Freedom in Christ	3:25—5:1
APPLICATION OF THE GOSPEL	5:2—6:18
New Walk of Christians	5:2-26
Obligations Attending Christian Liberty	6:1-18

## X. SELECTED READING

# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Harrison, Everett F. “The Epistle to the Galatians.” In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, pp. 1283-85.

Hendriksen, William, *Exposition of Galatians*. In his New Testament Commentary series, pp. 3-25.

Ross, Alexander. “The Epistle to the Galatians.” In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 1089-92.

# COMMENTARIES

Cole, R. A. *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*.

Lightfoot, J. B. *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*.

Luther, Martin. *A Commentary on St.*

# *Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.*

## **OTHER RELATED SOURCES**

Goodwin, Frank J. *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul.*

Stalker, James. *The Life of St. Paul.*

Tenney, Merrill C. *Galatians: The Charter of Christian Liberty.*

- 
1. The date of writing Galatians is an unsettled question, as is noted later in the chapter. This book follows the position of the early writing.
  2. If these two letters were the first two books to be written, it is interesting to observe that this balance was the first message to the early church.
  3. In 2 Corinthians 1:1 Paul addresses the

church at Corinth *and* “all the saints who are throughout Achaia.”

4. C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 7.

5. William Neil, *The Letter of Paul to the Galatians*, p. 4.

6. Stephen was probably a Hellenistic Jew speaking the Greek language and adopting Greek customs. The speech of Acts 7 was delivered to an audience in Jerusalem about 15 years before Galatians was written.

7. Neil, *Paul to the Galatians*, p. 89.

8. A paragraph title has the same kind of function as a segment title. It is a word or short phrase, taken directly from the Bible text, which represents a main subject of the paragraph.

9. List is adapted from Merrill F. Unger, *Ungers Bible Handbook*, p. 659.

10. For support of the South Galatian view, see Robert Gundry, *A Survey of the New*

*Testament*, pp. 260-62; Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, pp. 265-67; and D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, pp. 79-83. For support of the North Galatian view, see Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 259-64; and W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 2:148-50.

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# 14 *Ephesians: Christ and the Church*

Each of Paul's letters is classified in one of two groups: (1) *early*, written during the years of the missionary journeys; and (2) *later*, written after Paul's arrest at Jerusalem (Acts 21). Ephesians is one of the later letters, of a smaller group known as the "prison epistles." All of the epistles we have studied so far are of the early group.

## I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

It will help you prepare to study Ephesians if you first become acquainted with the prison epistles as a group and think about what it meant for Paul to experience imprisonment while writing.

### A. THE GROUP OF PRISON EPISTLES

The prison epistles were among Paul's later letters written during the apostle's first imprisonment in Rome. Study Chart 82 and observe the following:

1. There are two groups of New Testament epistles: Pauline and general. How many general epistles?

2. What early Pauline letters have we not studied yet?

3. How many groups of later epistles are there?

4. Name the prison epistles. The order shown on the chart is the probable order of writing.¹ The identification Christological indicates the general theological content of the letters, namely the Person and work of Christ.²

5. 2 Timothy was also written from prison, but it is not of the group *prison epistles*.

# CHART 82: THE PLACE OF THE CHRISTOLOGICAL EPISTLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

NEW TESTAMENT							
HISTORY	EPISTLES				APOCALYPSE		
MATTHEW	Pauline			General		REVELATION	
	EARLY	LATER		JAMES			
MARK	during missionary journeys	after arrest at Jerusalem					
LUKE	GALATIANS	FIRST IMPRISONMENT ("prison epistles")	RELEASE	SECOND IMPRISONMENT	HEBREWS		
JOHN		CHRISTOLOGICAL		PASTORAL	JUDE		
ACTS	1 THESSALONIANS	COLOSSIANS		1 TIMOTHY			1 PETER
	2 THESSALONIANS						2 TIMOTHY
	1 CORINTHIANS	EPHESIANS		TITUS			1 JOHN
	2 CORINTHIANS	PHILEMON		2 TIMOTHY			2 JOHN
	ROMANS	PHILIPPIANS					3 JOHN

## B. PAUL THE PRISONER

All four of the prison epistles contain direct references to Paul's imprisonment. Read Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Philippians 1:7, 13; Colossians 4:3, 18; Philemon 10, 13, 22, 23. Paul had previously experienced being jailed (2 Cor. 11:23), but the first Roman imprisonment was of long duration

and involved extensive ministry outreach. Read Acts 28:16-31 for Luke's reporting of some activities from part of that period.

### **C. PLACE OF WRITING**

It is generally held that the prison epistles were written at Rome, during the imprisonment of Acts 28. Some advocate either Caesarea or Ephesus as the place of writing.³

### **D. ORDER OF WRITING**

Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon were written first, dispatched at the same time by the same messengers. (Read Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-9; Philemon 12.) Philippians was written at a later time. (The date will be discussed when that epistle is

studied later.)

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. AUTHOR**

Twice in the text of Ephesians, Paul is identified as the author. Read 1:1 and 3:1. Internal evidences of style and content, as well as the external witness of tradition, support this observation.

Paul was about sixty-five years of age when he wrote the letter. He referred to himself as “the aged” when he wrote to Philemon at this same time.

### **B. DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING**

A date assigned to the writing of Ephesians is A.D. 61. This is based on Paul’s

writing the epistle during his first imprisonment in Rome, which lasted at least two years (A.D. 61-62). At that time he also wrote Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians, as noted above. Read Acts 28:30-31. Were circumstances favorable to Paul to meditate, study, and write during this imprisonment? John Bunyan wrote the classic *The Pilgrim's Progress* while in prison. Have you read of other "prison masterpieces"? How do you account for such a phenomenon, from the human standpoint? Of course, in the case of a canonical book like Ephesians, God was the originator and user of the writing's setting.

## **C. DESTINATION**

1. *Main views.* There are two main views regarding the original destination of

Ephesians.

a. The church of Ephesus. This view is supported by the reading of 1:1, and by the traditional title assigned the epistle by the early church Fathers: “To Ephesians” (Greek, *Pros Ephesious*). Also, such verses as 4:17 and 6:21-22 point to a *specific* church as being addressed, whatever that church was.

b. A circuit of various unspecified churches. This view is based mainly on the fact that some important ancient manuscripts omit the phrase “at Ephesus” (Greek, *en Epheso*) in 1:1.⁴ Also, the epistle as a whole lacks the usual Pauline personal greetings, and so appears to be a circular letter.⁵

Each of the above views has its strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps the answer is found in combining the two views. In the words of one writer, “The epistle was written to the

Ephesians and addressed to them, but ... the Apostle intentionally cast it into a form which would make it suitable to the Christians in the neighboring churches and intended that it should be communicated to them.”⁶

Refer to a detailed map of Asia Minor (Map V, p. 337) for the location of the churches of some cities near Ephesus that would have read Paul’s letter sooner or later. Read Acts 19:8-10; 20:31 for references to Paul’s three-year ministry to people living in Ephesus and the regions round about.

2. *The city of Ephesus.* The Christians living in and around Ephesus to whom Paul wrote this sublime epistle were cosmopolitan and well informed about world affairs. This is because of the city’s strategic location. Ephesus was recognized as the “first” city of

the province of Asia, even though Pergamum, ninety miles to the north, was its capital. Try to imagine some of the native characteristics of the congregation at Ephesus from the following brief notes about the city.

a. Commerce. Ephesus was one of the three leaders of international trade, the other two being Alexandria of Egypt and Antioch of Syria. Note on Map E, p. 64, the city's trade-oriented location.

b. Arts and sciences. The city was a haven for philosophers, poets, artists, and orators. Corinth, across the Aegean Sea, was one of its rivals in those disciplines.

c. Religion. The worship of Diana (Greek, *Artemis*) was the dominant religion of this area. The temple of Diana was world famous. Read Acts 19:23-27, noting among other things from the passage that

Demetrius boasted that “all of Asia and the world” worshipped Diana (19:27). Many of the Ephesians also identified with the imperial cult of Augustus and with various forms of magic (cf. Acts 19:13-19; Eph. 6:12). When you study Ephesians try to recall from time to time that its original readers were converts from the darkness of those idolatries.

3 . *The church at Ephesus.* Read the following passages for what they reveal concerning the Ephesian church. Look for such things as first converts, leaders, and organizational growth.

a. Pentecost converts from Asia. A.D. 30 — Acts 2:9

b. Before Paul’s extended campaign at Ephesus. A.D. 52 — Acts 18:18-21; 18:24-26

c. During the extended campaign, A.D. 52-56 — Acts 19

d. Paul recalling the past. Acts 20:17-27

e. Charge to the Ephesian elders, A.D. 55-56 — Acts 20:28-38

f. Charge to Timothy, A.D. 64 — 1 Timothy 1:3

Also read Acts 19:17-20 for one glimpse of this group before and after their conversion (A.D. 55). Little did the Christians know then that the bonfire of their heathen books would bring forth out of its ashes an object of spiritual gold — one short book of Ephesians — just six years later.

Most of the Ephesian congregation were Gentile converts, though the number of Jewish Christians was not small. Note the two references to “Jews and Greeks” in Acts 19:10, 17. Because their conversion took place in A.D. 55 and Ephesians was written in A.D. 61, the people of the congregation were relatively young in the Lord when they read

Paul's letter for the first time. The church itself served as a "mother church" to the others of the province. By the time the apostle John became a spiritual shepherd of the Asian Christians toward the end of the first century, the Ephesian church was regarded as the headquarters of Christian missions, having succeeded Antioch of Syria (which had succeeded Jerusalem). Observe in Revelation 1:11 the location of the name Ephesus in the list of the seven churches. Does the location suggest something to you?

## **D. OCCASION AND PURPOSE OF EPHESIANS**

Ephesians does not give a clue concerning any specific problem in the Ephesian church to which the epistle might have been directed. By "specific problem" is meant

such things as heresy (e.g., Colossians); internal strife (1 Corinthians); false accusations (2 Corinthians); false doctrine (Galatians). But when Paul wrote Ephesians he still must have been thinking of such evils as doctrinal heresy threatening the neighboring church at Colossae, which he specifically refers to in his letter to the Colossians. (Observe on Maps ? and V, pp. 64 and 337, how close Colossae was to Ephesus.) No church is ever immune to doctrinal defilement, so it could be that the apostle's positive teachings in Ephesus on the pure knowledge of Christ were directed at the same kinds of problems that were vexing the Colossian church. Also, the Christians at Colossae would eventually be reading Ephesians, as it made the rounds of the churches of Asia. Hiebert writes on this: "Judging from its close relation to Colossians, it appears that the conflict which

caused the writing of Colossians likewise called forth this epistle. The Colossian conflict revealed to Paul the need for a fuller statement of God's program for the universe as it centers in Christ in His relationship to the Church."⁷

No doubt there were individual problems in the Ephesian church. But the basic need for the young Christians there was to grow spiritually in the Lord, by (1) an increasing awareness of their relationship to Him and His ministry to them through the Spirit, and (2) the day-to-day experience of walking in that light. Paul was inspired to address this epistle to that basic need for spiritual growth. The letter still serves the same function today for the children of God.

## **E. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Ephesians is a book of grand superlatives. It is the sublimest of all Paul's epistles and has been called "The Grand Canyon of Scripture." There are very few personal notes and biographical references and, as noted earlier, controversies and problems are not discussed here. Paul is not thereby ignoring the practical mundane issues, as though they were unimportant. (At least half the epistle is practical in purpose.) Rather, the apostle has a vision of the heavenly realm, and in the quiet and calm of his imprisonment he is inspired by the Spirit to share that with his readers.⁸ Philip Schaff describes this aspect of the epistle:

It certainly is the most spiritual and devout, composed in an exalted and transcendent state of mind, where theology rises into worship, and meditation into oration. It is the Epistle of the

Heavenlies. ... The aged apostle soared high above all earthly things to the invisible and eternal realities in heaven. From his gloomy confinement he ascended for a season to the mount of transfiguration. The prisoner of Christ, chained to a heathen soldier, was transformed into a conqueror, clad in the panoply of God, and singing a paeon of victory.⁹

The distinctive language and style of Ephesians reflects the richness and depth of its message. Someone has observed that the letter contains forty-two words (e.g., “obtained an inheritance,” 1:11) not found in any other New Testament book, and forty-three not used by Paul in his other writings. One of the prominent features of Paul’s style in Ephesians is its long sentences, described

as follows by one writer: “The sentences flow on as it were in the full strong tide, wave after wave, of an immense and impetuous sea, swayed by a powerful wind, and brightened and sparkling with the golden rays of a rising sun.” This suggests something of the excitement and inspiration in store for all who study the Bible text.

# CHART 83: COLOSSIANS AND EPHESIANS COMPARED

COLOSSIANS	EPHESIANS
CHRIST AND THE COSMOS	CHRIST AND THE CHURCH
Emphasis on Christ Head of the Church	Emphasis on the Church Body of Christ
MORE PERSONAL; LOCAL	LESS PERSONAL; LOFTY
COMBATS ERROR DIRECTLY	COMBATS ERROR INDIRECTLY
TONE: intensity and tumult of a battlefield	TONE: calmness of surveying the field after victory

## F. RELATION TO OTHER NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

1 . *Prison epistles*. We have already seen that the four epistles — Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon — were written about the same time. This would account for at least some of the similarities of these books. Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians were written to local churches of those cities; Philemon, although written particularly to a personal

friend of Paul, was also addressed to the church that met in Philemon's house (Philem. 2; cf. Col. 4:15), which was in or near Colossae.

2. *Ephesians and Colossians*. Ephesians and Colossians have been called twin epistles because of their many likenesses. Phrases of 78 of Ephesians' 155 verses are very similar to phrases in Colossians. This is explained by the same general purpose for which both epistles were written: to show the relationship between Christ and His church as assurance and correction to young Christians growing and maturing in the Lord.

But the two epistles are far from being *identical* twins. Some differences are shown on Chart 83.

3 . *Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians*. You have just finished surveying Galatians,

which Paul wrote about thirteen years before he wrote the prison epistles. In your first reading of Ephesians you will quickly detect many differences between the letters, including one of tone. Chart 84 compares Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians.

# CHART 84: GALATIANS, EPHESIANS AND PHILIPPIANS COMPARED

	GALATIANS	EPHESIANS	PHILIPPIANS
STYLE	mainly logical and argumentative	doctrinal and hortatory	informative and consoling
A MAIN SUBJECT	SALVATION	CHRIST	LIFE OF JOY
PURPOSE	CORRECTIVE	INSTRUCTIVE	INSPIRATIONAL
TONE	sharp, rebuking	calm, victorious	tender, joyful

## III. SURVEY

### A. FIRST READING

1. Scan the letter of Ephesians in one sitting.
2. Write down your first impressions of the book.
3. What is the atmosphere of the book as a whole?
4. List a few key words and phrases that

stand out as of this reading.

## **B. PARAGRAPHS AND SEGMENTS**

1. Before reading the letter again, mark paragraph divisions in your Bible at the following verses: 1:1, 3, 15; 2:1, 11, 19; 3:1, 14, 20; 4:1, 7, 14, 17, 25; 5:3, 6, 15, 21, 25; 6:1, 5, 9, 10, 14, 18, 21, 23.

2. Now read the letter paragraph by paragraph. Assign a title for each paragraph. Doing this exercise helps you get an initial momentum in survey study.

3. Is there an introduction and conclusion to the letter? What are the verses?

4. Did you notice any major turning point in the book? If so, where?

5. Add to the list of key words and phrases, which you began earlier in this

study.

6. Did you observe any personal references, such as names of people?

7. Where in Ephesians do prayers of Paul appear?

## **C. OBSERVING THE STRUCTURE OF THE LETTER**

Now you will want to see how the various parts of Ephesians are related to each other. Two key things to look for in this structure study are (1) main turning point and (2) groupings of paragraphs.

1. *Main turning point.* You probably have already observed that there is a change in the epistle at the end of Chapter 3. How is this supported by the following:

a. the content of 3:20-21

b. the last word of 3:21

c. the first two words of 4:1

d. the general content of chapters 4-6 as compared with 1-3? (For example, which chapters are predominantly practical?)

2. *Groupings of paragraphs.* Some groups of paragraphs are not always easy to detect in the early stages of study. What subject appears in the paragraph 5:21-24, and continues into the next paragraphs? Where then does a new general subject begin? Identify the group beginning at 5:21 with a title. Try to identify other groups in the epistle.

How does the paragraph 6:10-20 serve as a concluding paragraph to the epistle (not counting the paragraph 6:21-24)?

## **D. SURVEY CHART**

Chart 85 is a survey chart of Ephesians. Refer to it after you have completed most of your overview of the contents and structure of the letter. Observe the following on the chart:

1. Ephesians is divided into two main parts. Which is mainly doctrinal, and which is mainly practical?

2. “Our Heritage in Christ” is related to “Our Life in Christ” by the word *therefore* (see 4:1). What is the practical lesson suggested by this?

3. Note the two sections *we in Christ* and *Christ in us*. Scan chapter 1 for the many appearances of the phrase “in him” (and similar phrases). Then read 3:20 (cf. 3:17) for the phrase “works within us,” which anticipates the development of the theme *Christ in us* in the chapters to come.

4. The passage 3:2-13 is shown as a

parenthesis in chapter 3. Read the chapter and observe why 3:2-13 is parenthetical.

5. Observe the commands shown at the top of the chart (e.g., *know*). Read each verse in the Bible text. Relate the command words to the outlines shown below them on the chart. Compare these outlines with your own studies made so far.

## **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

### **A. PRAYER AND PRAISE**

The opening passage 1:3-14 has been called a “hymn of grace.” How does the following outline represent the doctrines of the hymn?

Salvation: The Father planned it  
(1:4-6)

Salvation: The Son paid for it

(1:7-12)

Salvation: The Spirit applied it  
(1:13-14)

Two notable prayers appear at 1:15-23 and 3:14-21.

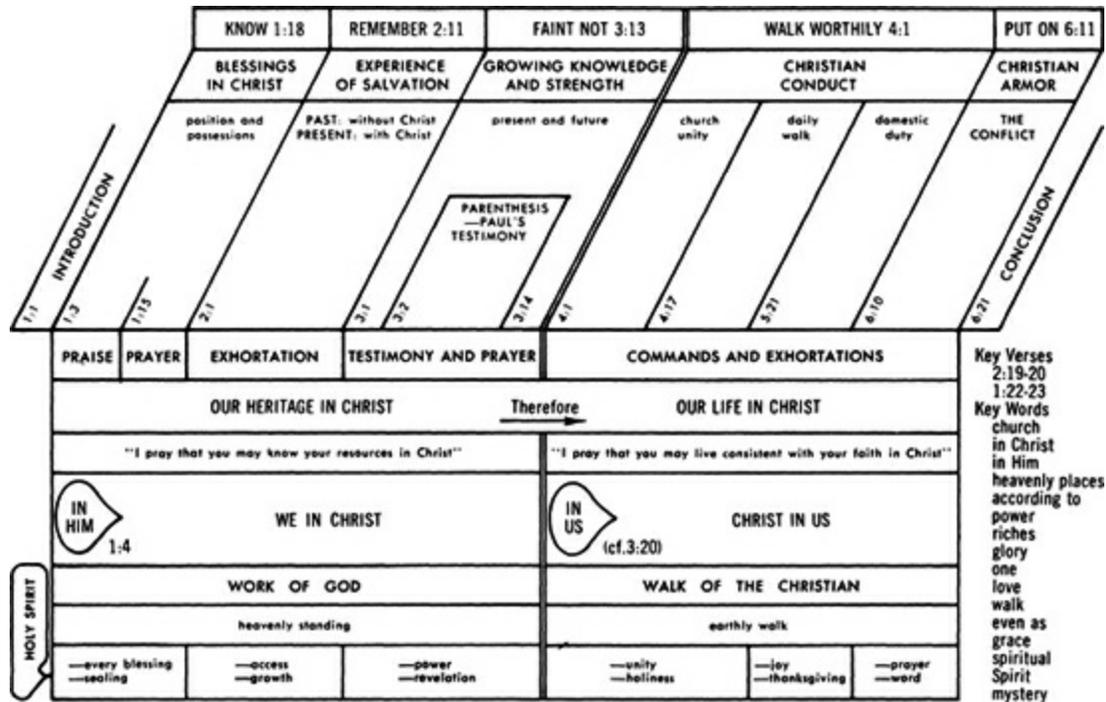
1. *Prayer of 1:15-23.* This prayer is closely related to the hymn of 1:3-14. That hymn was Paul's testimony of praise to God for the boundless spiritual blessings in Christ. The prayer of 1:15-23 is the apostle's intercession for saints, that they may know the extent of their blessings in Christ. So in 1:3-14 the appeal to the reader is for a heart of praise; in 1:15-23 the appeal is for a spirit of wisdom. The Christian who earnestly covets and cultivates both of these is the maturing Christian, growing daily in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

*Prayer of 3:14-21.* Read the prayer. Compare it with 1:15-23.

## **B. DOCTRINE**

Ephesians is a storehouse full of many doctrines of the Christian faith, as already noted. Observe where the following appear in the letter:

# CHART 85: EPHESIANS: CHRIST AND THE CHURCH



1. Salvation: as a deliverance *from*, and deliverance *unto*.
2. Union with Christ: an inscrutable yet real relationship.
3. The church universal: as the Body of Christ, who is its Head.
4. Holy Spirit: the source of every blessing and power in the Christian life.
5. Will and work of God: for man's benefit and God's glory.

6. What doctrines are taught by these oft-quoted passages: 2:4-10; 2:19-22?

## C. PRACTICE

At least half the epistle is devoted to the practical walk of the believer in Christ. The Christian's *walking* (4:1) and *standing* (6:11) are based on his *sitting* (2:6). His life in Christ (chaps. 4-6) is drawn from his heritage in Christ (chaps. 1-3).

Chapters 4-6 are the chapters of the plains and the cities where Christians reveal by their deeds who they really are. In 1:1—3:21 the apostle has written much about the Christian's heavenly standing; now he says some things about the believer's earthly walk. In the first half of Ephesians the emphasis is on the Christian's position *in Christ*. Now the spotlight turns on Christ's

living *in the Christian*.

The armor passage of 6:10-17 is a classic Scripture portion describing the weaponry of the Christian's spiritual warfare. Paul has just finished telling Christians how they ought to conduct their lives, giving them command upon command that must be obeyed if God is to be glorified. Now he speaks as a general to his army troops and, pointing to the arsenal of the superhuman armor, he assures them of victory if they will but use the divine resources.

## V. KEY WORDS AND VERSES

1. *Key words*. There are many key words in Ephesians (Chart 85). If you had to limit the list to ten, which ones would you choose?

2. *A key verse*. Look for a verse that represents the theme of the letter. You may

find more than one.

3. *Main theme.* In your own words, what is the main theme of Ephesians?

4 . *Title.* Assign a title to Ephesians to coincide with the main theme you have determined. Note the one given on Chart 85.

## VI. APPLICATIONS

What three different areas of a Christian's life are suggested by the outline: church unity, 4:1-16; daily walk, 4:17—5:20; domestic duty, 5:21—6:9? Write a list of applications derived from these parts of the epistle.

Add other important applications to the list.

Read Revelation 2:1-7 for a brief description of the Ephesian church's spiritual state thirty-five years after Paul

wrote Ephesians. What are your reflections?

## VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How old was Paul when he wrote Ephesians? Where was he when he composed the letter?

2. Regarding to whom Ephesians was originally sent, what are the two main views? What are your conclusions?

3. How would you describe the average member of the church at Ephesus in the year A.D. 61?

4. Reconstruct the story of how the Ephesians were first saved, and how the local church came to be organized.

5. Do you think the message of Ephesians was too deep for the young converts at Ephesus? Who should be reading and studying Ephesians today?

6. What relationship was there between the church at Ephesus and churches in surrounding cities (e.g., Colossae)?

7. What were some of Paul's reasons for writing this letter to the churches of Asia?

8. What are some of the main doctrines taught in Ephesians?

9. Identify some of the letter's characteristics, such as style and tone.

10. Compare Ephesians and Colossians. How do you account for the many likenesses?

11. From what you have learned in your survey of Ephesians, how can this epistle realistically help Christians today?

## **VIII. FURTHER STUDY**

You may want to make an extended study of different subjects that appear throughout

the epistle. Topics suggested for such study are listed below:

1. Paul as seen in the epistle. For example, see 3:1, 8, 13; 6:19-20.
2. The Ephesian Christians as seen in the epistle. See 1:15; 2:11; 3:13; 4:1 ff.; 6:10 ff.
3. God the Father.
4. God the Son.
5. God the Holy Spirit (see the outline on Chart 85).
6. The “heavenlies.”
7. The subjects of faith, hope, love, prayer, power.
8. Eternity.

## **IX. OUTLINE**

EPHESIANS: Christ and the Church

OUR HERITAGE IN CHRIST

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom

Once Dead, Now Alive

Paul's Testimony and Prayer

OUR LIFE IN CHRIST

Preserving Church Unity

Daily Walk of Christians

Conduct in the Christian Home

The Christian's Armor

1:1—3:21

1:1-14

1:15-23

2:1-22

3:1-21

4:1—6:24

4:1-16

4:17—5:20

5:21—6:9

6:10-24

## X. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, pp. 254-82.

Westcott, B. F. *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, pp. xix-lxviii.

### COMMENTARIES

Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Ephesians*.

Hodge, Charles. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*.

Martin, Alfred. “The Epistle to the Ephesians.” In *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

## OTHER RELATED SOURCES

Baxter, J. Sidlow. *Explore the Book*, Vol. 4.

Miller, H. S. *The Book of Ephesians*.

Moule, H.C.G. *Ephesian Studies*.

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1. The order that we are following in the surveys of this study guide is the canonical order, which is also the order of appearance in our Bible.
  2. Philemon is a very personal note, with no direct, formal theological teaching.
  3. See D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, pp. 205-11, for a

discussion of this.

4. Main examples are the two primary uncials, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus (fourth century), and the Chester Beatty papyri (third century).

5. An exception is 6:21.

6. D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, p. 266.

7. Ibid.

8. The word *heaven(s)* appears four times, and *heavenly places* (or *heavenlies*) four times, in Ephesians.

9. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 1:780.

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# ***15Philippians: Life in Christ***

Philippians was probably the last of the four prison epistles to be written, but in the New Testament canon it is placed second, following Ephesians. It is the brightest and most joyful of all Paul's writings, and one of its ministries has been to rejuvenate the spiritual life of multitudes of Christians.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

Review the things learned in [Chapter 14](#) about the prison epistles. Recall that Paul wrote Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon at the same time, and shortly thereafter he wrote to the church at Philippi.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. AUTHOR**

Paul was the author of this epistle. He names his colaborer Timothy (Timotheus) in the salutation of 1:1 because Timothy was with him when he wrote the letter. (Cf. Col. 1:1; Philem. 1.)

## **B. DESTINATION**

1. *The city of Philippi.* The opening verse of Philippians identifies its destination as a congregation of the city of Philippi. Let us first consider the city itself.

a. Geography. Refer to Map V, page 337, which shows the geographical setting of the prison epistles. Observe the following:

(1) Philippi was a city of the province of Macedonia.

(2) The city is just inland (about ten miles) from the coastal town of Neapolis. (Read Acts 16:11-12, which records Paul's

stopover at Neapolis on his first visit to Philippi.)

(3) Observe that Philippi is located on the Egnatian Way, a major overland route of Macedonia. When Paul sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi from Rome (2:25), the trip no doubt was via the Appian Way through Italy (see map), followed by an eighty-mile boat trip across the Sea of Adria, then the land journey on the Egnatian Way.

(4) Observe other coastal cities that Paul visited after leaving Philippi on his second missionary journey: Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth.

b. Name. In 350 B.C. the city was named Philippi, after Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great. Its former name was *Krenides* (Little Fountains).

c. Political status. The city became a Roman colony in 42 B.C. "It was a miniature

Rome ... exempt from taxation and modeled after the capital of the world.”¹ Luke recognized its popular acclaim by calling Philippi “the chief city of that part of Macedonia” (Acts 16:12).²

d. Population. Estimates range from 200,000 to 500,000 residents, as of Paul’s time. Most of those were Greeks, with a smaller contingent of Jews and Romans. Read Acts 16:13 and observe where Paul held his first evangelistic meeting in the city. Might this suggest that there was no synagogue (Jewish place to worship) in the city, since Paul usually had his first public contacts with the people in the synagogue?

One writer has described the typical citizen of Philippi thus: “The Macedonians, like the old Romans, were manly, straightforward and affectionate. They were not skeptical like the philosophers of Athens,

nor voluptuous like the Greeks of Corinth.”³

e. Economics. Philippi was a relatively wealthy city, known for its gold mines and exceptionally fertile soil. A reputable school of medicine was located there. It is interesting to associate this latter fact with the view held by many that Philippi was Dr. Luke’s hometown.

2. *The church at Philippi.* When Paul wrote Philippians, the congregation at Philippi was about ten years old. Here is a thumbnail sketch of the congregation:

a. Origins. Among the first converts were Lydia and the town’s jailer. Read Acts 16:13-15 and 16:23-34, respectively, for the account of those conversions. Observe among other things that the other members of the two families were also saved at that time. Luke identifies Lydia as “a worshiper of God” (Acts 16:14), which indicates that

she was a proselyte to the Jewish religion when Paul first met her. The first meeting place of the new Christians at Philippi was probably the home of Lydia (Acts 16:15, 40).

b. First church of Europe. Philippi is commonly referred to as the birthplace of European Christianity, since the first converts of any known organized missionary work in Europe were gained here. The occasion was Paul's second missionary journey of A.D. 49-52, as recorded in Acts 15:36—18:22. The year of Paul's first contact at Philippi was around A.D. 50.

c. Membership and organization. Most of the congregation were Greeks, though the fellowship included some converted Jews. The average family was of the middle class, of moderate financial means. By the time Paul wrote the epistle, the church had an

organizational structure that included the church offices of bishops (overseers) and deacons. (Read Philippians 1:1.)

d. Early days. When Paul left the new Philippian converts after his first ministry in Philippi, his companion Luke remained behind, and no doubt helped in a follow-up ministry of encouraging and instructing the new Christians. Read the following passages which support this observation:

*Acts 16:10-13*: Luke joins Paul's missionary party at Troas to go to Macedonia, as indicated by the repeated pronoun "we." (Luke was the author of Acts.)

*Acts 16:40; 17:1-4*: Luke is not part of Paul's party that left Philippi. Conclusion: Luke must have remained behind.

*Acts 20:5-6*: Luke rejoins the group when Paul passes through Philippi on the last part of his third missionary journey, about six

years later (A.D. 56).

## **C. PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING**

Paul wrote Philippians from his prison quarters at Rome, around A.D. 61-62.⁴ Read Acts 28:16-31 for Luke's report of those two years of imprisonment.

## **D. PURPOSES**

Paul had two main reasons for writing to the church at Philippi at this time. One was circumstantial; the other was instructional.

1 . *Circumstantial*. Read the following passages and observe what message Paul wanted to relay to the Philippians: 2:19-24; 2:25-30; 4:2-3; 4:10-19.

2. *Instructional*. All of Paul's epistles fulfill

the purposes as described in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Some of the things the apostle wanted to share with the saints at Philippi were:

a. encouragement to put Christ first in everyday living. Possibly nowhere else in the New Testament is the Christ-centered life more vividly portrayed than in this letter. Read 1:20-21 and 3:7-14.

b. appeal to beware and to correct spiritual problems (e.g., 4:2-3).

c. instruction in Christian doctrines (e.g., 2:6-11).

## **E. CHARACTERISTICS**

Philippians has been called Paul's love letter to the saints at Philippi because its informal, personal style reveals so much of the apostle's affectionate character. The

epistle contains less censure and more praise than does any other epistle.

Because Paul's purpose in writing was more practical than doctrinal, no detailed outline is apparent in the structure of this personal letter. However, Paul does teach about the doctrines of the Person and work of Christ in the epistle.

Paul does not quote the Old Testament in the letter, and the vocabulary includes sixty-five words that are not found in any of Paul's other epistles.

## **F. PLACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Each of the twenty-seven New Testament books has particular functions in the volume of Scripture. Refer to Chart 62, page 244, and note that Philippians is identified as a Christological letter. How is it compared

with Philemon? (Compare it also with Ephesians and Colossians on the chart.)

H. C. G. Moule has compared Philippians with other Pauline writings in this way:

Looking at the other epistles, each with its own divine and also deeply human characteristics, we find Philippians more peaceful than Galatians, more personal and affectionate than Ephesians, less anxiously controversial than Colossians, more deliberate and symmetrical than Thessalonians, and of course larger in its applications than the personal messages to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.⁵

### **III. SURVEY**

## **A. FIRST READING**

Read Philippians in one sitting, without lingering over any details. After this scanning, answer the following:

What are your main impressions?

What is the general atmosphere of the letter?

Were you conscious of any organized outline as you read?

Did you observe any turning points in the epistle? If so, where?

What strong words or phrases stand out in your mind as of this reading?

## **B. SUBSEQUENT READINGS**

Mark paragraph divisions in your Bible at these locations: 1:1, 3, 12, 27; 2:1, 5, 12, 19,

25; 3:1, 15; 4:1, 4, 8, 10, 21. Then read the letter again, more slowly than the first time. Assign paragraph titles.

Scan the epistle again, looking for *groups* of paragraphs with similar content. For example:

1. Which paragraphs contain mainly Paul's testimonies regarding his experiences?
2. Which paragraphs record the ministries of colaborers of Paul?
3. Which paragraphs contain warnings?
4. Which paragraphs are mainly hortatory (containing exhortations and commands)?
5. Which paragraphs are mainly about personal relationships between Paul and the Philippians?
6. Look for other groupings.
7. Compare the opening and closing salutations of the letter.

On the basis of these groups, and other individual clues, have you been able to detect any general outline of content in the epistle? (Some Bible students feel there is no organized structure as such in Philippians, partly because of the letter's very personal nature. The survey, Chart 86, will suggest some general patterns, which may be seen in the epistle without forcing an outline on it.)

### **C. SURVEY CHART**

The survey shows something of the structure and highlights of Philippians. Observe the following:

1. A main division is made at 1:27, instead of at 2:1. Read the Bible text and note that paragraph 1:27-30 is more similar in content to 2:1-4 than it is to 1:12-26.

2. A main division is made at 4:2 instead

of at 4:1. Read 4:1 and observe that it serves better as a conclusion to what goes before than as an introduction to what follows.

3. The content of the epistle can be categorized under the headings of three key ideas: testimony, examples, and exhortations. Compare this with your earlier study of groups of paragraphs.

4. The four-part outlines are of a topical nature (i.e., life in Christ, motives in life, Spirit, joy). Each outline shows how the particular topic appears in at least one verse of each of the four segments. The subheadings that represent the title “Life in Christ” are: *Christ our LIFE*, *Christ our PATTERN*, *Christ our GOAL*, and *Christ our SUFFICIENCY*.

5. Note the title assigned to Philippians, “Life in Christ.” How do the outlines on the chart support that title?

## IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

Some of the main subjects that appear in Philippians are: (1) joy in Christ — the words *rejoice* and *joy* appear seventeen times in the epistle; (2) unity of believers in Christ — key passages are 1:27—2:18 and 4:1-9; (3) keeping *above* hard circumstances of every day life; (4) growing in the Lord; (5) the gospel — the word appears nine times in the letter.

Favorite passages memorized by many Christians include 1:21-26; 3:7-11; 3:12-16; 4:4-7; 4:8; 4:11-13; 4:19.

Two important passages of Philippians are briefly discussed below.

### A. CHRIST'S EMPTYING (2:5-11)

This paragraph is one of the most glorious

passages in the entire Bible. It is a doctrinal book in miniature, teaching truths about the Person and work of Christ. It is a handbook of Christian living, summing up Christian behavior in one sublime, opening appeal.

The passage is usually referred to as the kenosis passage, named after the key Greek word *ekenosen* (“emptied,” v. 7). The unstated question of the text is, Of what did Jesus empty Himself when He came to earth? Those who hold that Jesus of Galilee was only human answer that Jesus emptied Himself of deity. The marginal note of the *New American Standard Bible* gives the interpretation that Jesus “laid aside His privileges.” Compare this with the interpretation that Jesus surrendered the *independent* exercise of some of His relative attributes (e.g., “not my will, but thine, be done”).⁶

Read the passage. What is its main subject? What is the opening, practical exhortation? How do the words *humiliation* and *exaltation* represent the two parts of the paragraph?

## **B. CHRIST OUR GOAL (3:1—4:1)**

Chapter 3 is the mountain peak of Philippians, challenging and inspiring its Christian readers with the highest of goals (e.g., 3:14).

# CHART 86: PHILIPPIANS: LIFE IN CHRIST

A KEY VERSE 1:21 KEY WORDS: Day of Christ In Christ Rejoice Gospel Spirit Mind Love Joy All	TESTIMONY	EXAMPLES	EXHORTATIONS	KEY VERSES
	1:1 <i>(divine imprisonment)</i> For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain (1:21).	1:27 Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27). Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus (2:5-11)	3:1 Rejoice then that I count all things to be loss (2:8). That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection (3:10). Forgetting what lies behind, I press toward the goal (3:12, 14). Citizenship in heaven (3:20).	
Christ our LIFE	Christ our PATTERN	Christ our GOAL	Christ our SUFFICIENCY	Life in Christ
GLORIFY CHRIST (1:20)	BE LIKE CHRIST (1:27)	GAIN CHRIST (3:8)	BE CONTENT IN CHRIST (4:11)	Motives
SUPPLY of the SPIRIT 1:19	FELLOWSHIP in the SPIRIT 2:1	WORSHIP by the SPIRIT 3:3	GRACE through the SPIRIT 4:23	Spirit
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE — AN ABIDING JOY (2:17-18)				
REJOICE: in fellowship of saints (1:3-11) over afflictions (1:12-30)	REJOICE: in the ministry for the saints (2:1-18). in fellowship of Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30).	REJOICE: that your hopes are in Jesus (3:2-16). that your citizenship is in heaven (3:20).	REJOICE: always over all things (4:4-9). in bounties of God's people (4:10-19).	J O Y

Read the segment with these three different parts in mind:

Commands — 3:1-3

Testimonies — 3:4-14

Appeals — 3:15—4:1

Observe the goals Paul writes about. How is Christ related to each?

Throughout Philippians the Person of

Jesus Christ is central. There can be no rejoicing outside of Him. He is the Christian's life (1:21), his supreme example (2:5-11), his great goal (3:10), and his gracious provider (4:13). No wonder Paul's passion and goal was "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings" (3:10).

### **C. CHRIST OUR SUFFICIENCY (4:2-23)**

The structure of Philippians may be seen as a threefold unit:

PRESENT 1:1 ATTITUDES	1:27 AIMS AND ASPIRATIONS	PRESENT 4:2 SUFFICIENCY 4:23
--------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------------

How is each subject related to each other, and to the general scope of the Christian life?

Read 4:2-23 and observe different references to the Christian's sufficiency in

Christ. How do these assurances affect the believer's aims and aspirations?

## **V. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

Write a list of key words and phrases that best represent Paul's emphases in this letter. Then identify a theme, and choose a key verse that reflects that theme.

Chart 86 shows 1:21 as a key verse. One writer has commented on this verse: "This outlook on life transformed misery into melody, prisons into palaces, and Roman soldiers into souls to be won for Christ."⁷

## **VI. APPLICATIONS**

Have you ever wondered what the author of a New Testament book was thinking about during the minutes after he finished writing? Here is how one writer has

reconstructed the scene in Paul's prison quarters after the apostle had finished dictating his Philippian letter:

The voice is silent; the pen is laid aside. In due time the papyrus roll, inestimable manuscript, is made ready for its journey. And perhaps as it now lies drying, the Missionary and his brethren turn to further conversation on the beloved Philippian Church, and recall many a scene in the days that are over ... and they speak again of the brightness of the Philippian Christian life, and the shadows that lie on it here and there; and then, while the Praetorian sentinel looks on in wonder, or perhaps joins in as a believer, they pray together for Philippi, and pour out their praises to the Father and the Son, and

anticipate the day of glory.⁸

That was almost two thousand years ago. Only God knows how many lives the letter has touched since. Like all Scripture, it is always new, always contemporary. Has it spoken to your heart? Write a list of applications that you have derived from the letter in the course of your survey.

What does Philippians teach about these experiences and areas of Christian living:

- joy in Christ
- sufficiency in Christ
- industry and rewards
- justifiable motives?

## **VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What made the geographical location of

Philippi a strategic one?

2. How would you describe a typical citizen of this Macedonian city?

3. What was Paul's first contact in Philippi?

4. What picture do you have of the Philippian congregation when Paul wrote the epistle?

5. How many years had intervened between the first conversions at Philippi and the writing of the letter?

6. What was Luke's interest and ministry in Philippi?

7. Where was Paul when he wrote Philippians? What persecution had he experienced in Philippi on his first visit to the city? Relate these two observations to the keynote of *joy* in the epistle.

8. What were Paul's purposes in writing

Philippians?

9. List some of the main subjects discussed in the letter.

10. What is the prevailing tone of Philippians?

11. Is much censure or rebuke found here?

12. What chapters of the epistle are identified by each of the following different kinds of content: testimony, examples, exhortations?

## VIII. FURTHER STUDY

1. The doctrine of the Person of Christ is a major doctrine of the New Testament. With the help of outside sources, such as a book on doctrine, study the following:

a. the humanity of Christ: Was it real and perfect? Did Jesus have to be *human* in

order to make man's salvation possible? If so, why?

b. the deity of Christ: Was Jesus truly God? Did Jesus have to be *God* to make salvation possible? If so, why?

c. Jesus as God-man: How could Jesus be truly God and truly man at the *same time!*

2. Make an extended study of *joy* as that experience is written about in other parts of Scripture. Among other things, aim at a biblical definition of genuine joy.

3. Spend further time studying what Philippians reveals about Paul and about the Christians at Philippi. For the latter, refer to such verses as 1:5, 27, 29-30; 3:2; 4:2, 10, 14-18.

## IX. OUTLINE

## X. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, pp. 283-304.

Martin, Ralph P. *The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians*, pp. 15-54.

Scroggie, W. Graham. *Know Your Bible*, 2:220-28.

### COMMENTARIES

Davidson, F. "The Epistle to the Philippians." In *The New Bible Commentary*.

Moule, H.C.G. *Philippian Studies*.

Mounce, Robert H. “The Epistle to the Philippians.” In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

## OTHER RELATED SOURCES

Bruce, F. F. *The Letters of Paul: Expanded Paraphrase*.

Robertson, A. T. *Paul’s Joy in Christ*.

Tenney, Merrill C. *Philippians: The Gospel at Work*.

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1. Robert H. Mounce, “The Epistle to the Philippians,” in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1319.

2. Actually, Amphipolis was the capital of the district that included Philippi.

3. Quoted in J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, 6:181.
  4. References to the “palace” (1:13) and “Caesar’s household” (4:22) are evidence that the letter came from Rome.
  5. H.C.G. Moule, *Philippian Studies*, p. 5.
  6. Cf. Henry C. Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*, p. 296.
  7. John Phillips, *Exploring the Scriptures*, p. 239.
  8. H.C.G. Moule, *Philippian Studies*, pp. 253-54.
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## ***16Colossians: Christ Is All and in All***

Colossians is another of Paul's four prison epistles, similar in many ways to his letter to Ephesus. The church addressed was very small and inconspicuous, but the letter itself had all the credentials of a message from God. Its readers could not help but notice that it magnifies the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Those who study the book today discover new insights into the depths and riches of intimate fellowship with Christ, who "is all, and in all" (3:11).

### **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

You have just completed your survey of Philippians, whose setting and tone are very different from those of Colossians. Prepare yourself mentally to expect differences, keeping in mind that diversity of peoples, church situations, and experiences brings on

such differences.

Refer to Chart 1, page 20, again and note when Colossians was written — almost midway in the writing series of the twenty-seven books.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

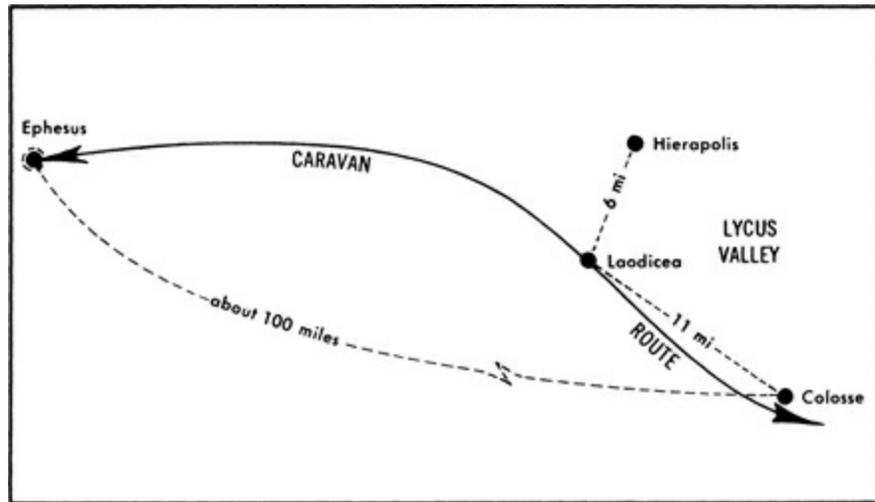
### **A. AUTHOR AND DESTINATION**

Colossians 1:1 identifies the author as Paul, and recognizes Paul's co-worker Timothy in its greeting. Verse 2 identifies the readers as "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae." Paul also directed the Colossian church to share the letter with the church at Laodicea (4:16; cf. 2:1). The title of the book, "Colossians," is derived from the destination.

## B. THE CITY OF COLOSSAE

See Map U (Environs of Colossae) and note that Colossae was one of the “tri-cities” of the Lycus Valley. This area was about one hundred miles inland from Ephesus. (See also Map V for the larger setting.) Five centuries before Christ, Colossae was hailed as “the great city of Phrygia.” By Paul’s time, it was just a small town. A main reason for the change was the rise of the neighboring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis, when the trade route between Ephesus and the Euphrates Valley was diverted away from Colossae.¹

## MAP U: ENVIRONS OF COLOSSE



When Paul wrote Colossians, there was a Christian congregation meeting in each of these three cities (4:13).

The inhabitants of Colossae were mainly Greeks and Phrygians, with an unusually large Jewish population. The area was famous for its soft wool.

### C. THE CHURCH AT COLOSSAE

An exact and full picture of the Colossian church cannot be determined from Scripture, but the following description

shows a pattern. Paul's evangelistic and teaching ministry at Ephesus, on his third missionary journey, may have had much to do with the founding of the church at Colossae.² From Colossians 1:3-4 (cf. 2:1) some conclude that the people of the congregation for the most part were strangers to Paul. Epaphras, who possibly was one of Paul's Ephesian converts, might have been founder of this church (1:7) as well as of the churches of Laodicea and Hierapolis (cf. 4:13). At any rate, he was a key member of the Colossian congregation (4:12).

## MAP V



Colossians 4:17 suggests that Archippus was the church's pastor when Paul wrote the epistle. (Cf. Philem. 2.) The church assembled in the home of Philemon, who was one of its active members (4:9; Philem. 1, 5-7). How large the group was, we do not know. Most of the members were of Greek background. The others were converted Jews.

## D. PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING

Paul wrote this epistle from prison at Rome, around A.D. 61. As noted earlier, his letters to Philemon and the Ephesians were written and delivered at the same time. Tychicus and Onesimus were the bearers of the letters. (See Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9; Philem. 12, 23-24.)

## **E. OCCASION FOR WRITING**

The immediate occasion for writing this letter was heresy in the church at Colossae. Epaphras reported to Paul the false views and evil practices in the church at that time. (Cf. 1:7-8). The section 2:8-23 describes those rather explicitly, though Paul does not name or identify any heresy itself. Among the heresies involved were: (1) a Judaistic legalism, involving circumcision (2:11; 3:11), ordinances (2:14), foods, holidays,

and so forth (2:16); (2) a severe asceticism (2:16, 20-23); (3) worship of angels (2:18); and (4) glorification and worship of human knowledge (2:8).

Paul very ably challenged and exploded those heresies on a positive note, by a pure presentation of countertruths about the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Read Philemon 23 to learn what may have befallen Epaphras after delivering his report to Paul.

## **F. THEME AND TONE**

The main theme of Colossians is well represented by the text, “Christ is all, and in all” (3:11). As someone has said, “Paul does not preach a system nor a philosophy, but a person — Jesus Christ.” The deity of Christ, the efficacy of His death on the cross, His

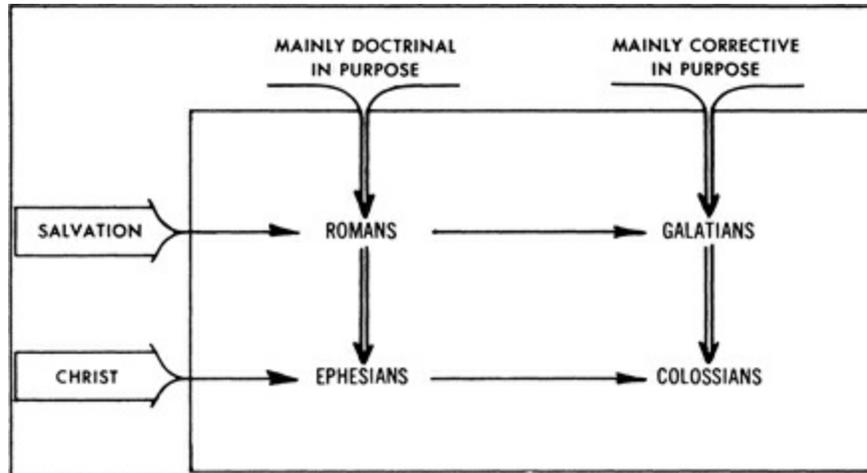
sovereignty and supreme lordship, and His continuing mediatorship, are all part of Paul's doctrinal message, because these were the very doctrines being denied by the false teachers. Other important subjects appearing in the epistle will be observed in our survey study.

The tone throughout the epistle is forthright, positive, bold. Paul takes the offensive, not the defensive position. He would agree wholeheartedly with the comment that "the only safeguard against a false intellectual system is a strong and positive Christian theology." But there is a tone of compassion in the epistle as well, as Paul breathes the spirit of tender love and joy in the midst of sorrow and affliction.

## **G. RELATION TO OTHER NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS**

Review the comparisons of Ephesians and Colossians made earlier (Chart 83, p. 317). The place of Colossians in the foursome of Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians may also be noted. What comparisons does Chart 87 make?

# CHART 87: DOCTRINAL AND CORRECTIVE EPISTLES



## III. SURVEY

### A. FIRST SCANNING

Scan the entire epistle in one sitting. List your general impressions.

Do you feel any atmosphere in the letter? Do any words or phrases stand out?

### B. PARAGRAPH TITLES

Mark the following paragraph divisions in

your Bible, and then on paper record a title for each paragraph: 1:1, 3, 9, 13, 21, 24; 2:1, 4, 8, 16, 20; 3:1, 5, 12, 18; 4:2, 7, 10, 15, 18.

Record any new impressions and observations of the letter.

## **C. STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK**

Read through the epistle a few more times, looking for:

1. organization of content (e.g., introduction, main body, conclusion)
2. kinds of content (e.g., doctrine, practice)
3. any pivot, or climax
4. a prominent theme.

## D. SURVEY CHART

Chart 88 is a survey chart of Colossians. After you have looked it over at least in a general way, follow the study suggestions given.

1. Note on the chart the opening and closing benedictions. Also note the two sections identified as *mainly personal*. Read the Bible passages involved, to justify these descriptions. The section called *mainly doctrinal* begins at 1:13 because a major concentration on the subject of Christ is introduced here (“His beloved Son”), to be developed in the verses that follow.

In the survey studies suggested below you will want to find out why major divisions on Chart 88 are also made at 2:4; 3:5; and 4:7. Justify the other observations made below, always by referring to the Bible text.

2. Note the three parts of the main body of the epistle. *Polemical* means that which refutes errors of doctrine. *Hortatory* as used here includes both exhortation and command.

3. Read 2:4 and observe how in this verse Paul begins to write about false teachers who were threatening the Christians at Colossae. Read also the opening phrases of 2:8, 16, 18. What errors or false teachings do you see referred to in the section 2:4—3:4?

4. Note on the chart that the hortatory section begins at 3:5. Read paragraph 3:1-4. You will observe that this paragraph is also of a hortatory nature. But it is included in the previous section (*polemical*, 2:4—3:4) because it is closely related to paragraph 2:20-23. (For example, compare the first phrases of 2:20 and 3:1.)

5. The concluding personal section begins at 4:7, because here Paul begins to bring in personal notes and salutations.

6. Colossians is basically of three kinds of writings: doctrinal, practical, and personal. Note the outline at the top of the chart showing this.

7. Study the other outlines that represent the content of the major divisions of Colossians.

#### **IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

##### **A. THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION (1:3-12)**

The letter begins on a bright, cheerful note, typical of Paul's writings. There is no clue here that a heavy burden concerning problems at Colossae lay on the apostle's

heart, yet that was the very reason for the letter itself.

# CHART 88: COLOSSIANS: CHRIST IS ALL AND IN ALL

	MAINLY PERSONAL	MAINLY DOCTRINAL	MAINLY PRACTICAL	MAINLY PERSONAL
	1:1 OPENING BENEDICTION 1:3 We give thanks We pray 1:13 Exposition of the Person and work of Christ	2:4 Examples of heresies 1. legalism (Judaism) 2:11-17 2. worship of human mind 2:8 3. angel worship 2:18 4. asceticism 2:20-23 3:5 Exchanges in Christian's conduct PUT OFF / PUT ON 1. in personal life 3:5-17 2. in domestic life 3:18-4:1 3. in relation to the world 4:2-6	4:7 NOTES AND SALUTATIONS fellow bond slave 4:7 fellow-prisoner 4:10 fellow-worker 4:11 4:11b CLOSING BENEDICTION	
Tone	personal	doctrinal	polemical	hortatory
Theme	CHRIST YOUR INHERITANCE 1:12	CHRIST YOUR INDWELLER 1:27	CHRIST YOUR SUFFICIENCY 2:10	CHRIST YOUR MOTIVATION 3:17
Topic	true doctrine		false doctrine	Christian living

This segment is of two paragraphs:

Thanksgiving 1:3-8

Intercession 1:9-12

Read each paragraph, and observe what constituted Paul's thanksgiving and intercession.

## B. PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST (1:13

## —2.3)

A major burden of Paul in writing this epistle was to exalt Jesus as God and Savior. The reason for this is that one of the heresies at Colossae was the worship of angels, with its denial of Christ's deity. Before Paul exposed such heresies specifically (2:4—3:4), he chose first to proclaim the positive countertruths about the Person and work of Christ.

The passage itself is the major doctrinal section of the epistle. Read the Bible text and record everything written about:

1. who Christ is (Person)
2. what Christ does (work)

A key phrase of this passage is “in Him all things hold together” (1:17). The statement is sometimes referred to as the Colossian

law. The phrase “all things” no doubt refers to every realm, including the spiritual and physical. Concerning the latter, it is interesting that the physical scientist is baffled by his observation that the atoms of the universe remain intact, when all the physical laws say some of their parts (electrons, protons) are mutually repellant. In one scientist’s words, “Some inflexible inhibition is holding them relentlessly together.”³ The Scripture of Colossians 1:17, by the hand of Paul, reveals that Christ is the binding force of all things.

### **C. HERESIES EXPOSED (2:4—3:4)**

Paul here writes specifically about the heresies that threatened the life of the churches of the Lycus Valley. He does not name individual persons or groups as such.

But it is very clear that he has false teachers in mind, from such phrases as “that no one may delude you” (2:4); “that no one take you captive” (2:8); “let no one act as your judge” (2:16).

1. Chart 89 shows what were probably the bases for the speculative doctrines of the Colossian heresy. Observe the following:

a. The false religionists attempted to solve the problem of the great gulf. What was that problem?

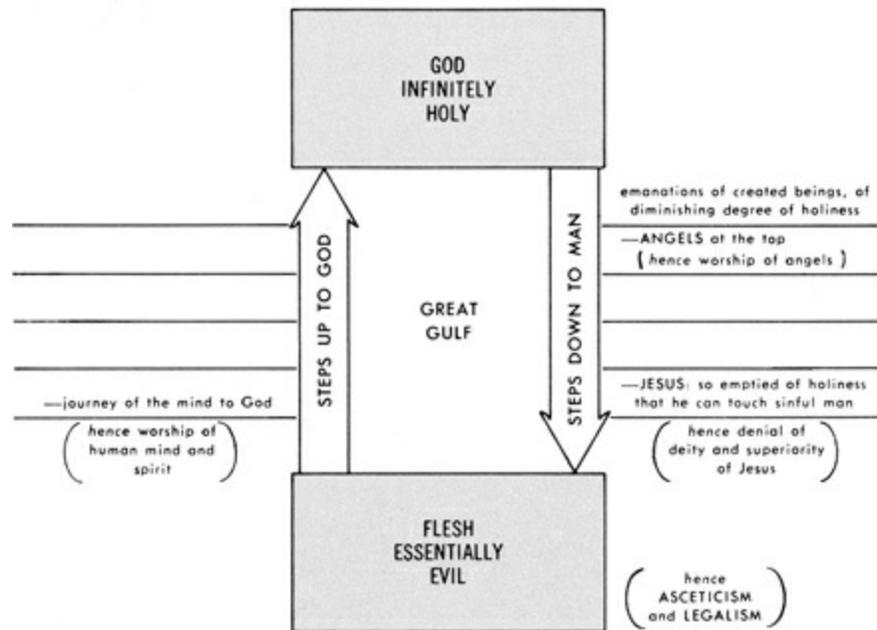
b. Two solutions were suggested:

(1) God reaching man by way of emanations from Himself, each successive emanation being of less holiness. How was Jesus regarded, as compared with angels?

(2) Man reaching God in the realm of mental activity.⁴ Why was mind and spirit worshiped?

c. Since flesh was regarded as essentially evil, asceticism and legalism were the consequences. What is asceticism? Does the Bible teach that flesh *itself* is evil?

# CHART 89: TEACHINGS OF THE COLOSSIAN HERESY



Read 2:4—3:4. What verses refer directly or indirectly to each of the following heresies shown on Chart 89: worship of angels; denial of deity of Christ; speculation; deification of human knowledge; asceticism; Judaistic legalism?

As correctives for the heresies, what different truths about Christ does Paul teach in the passage?

**D. CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION (3:5—4:6)**

Up to this point in the letter, Paul has written about doctrine: first, true doctrine (1:1—2:3); then, false doctrine (2:4—3:4). Now in the typical Pauline pattern, he directs attention to practical Christian living.

Observe references in the passage to specific conduct and specific groups. Follow this outline as you read:

### *Christian living*

1. in personal life 3:5-17
2. in domestic life 3:18—4:1
3. in relation to the world 4:2-6

## **E. THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIANS (4:7-18)**

Read the passage and observe especially the references to Christian fellowship. For example, how is the word *fellow* used in

verses 7, 10, and 11?

## V. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES

In your own words identify the theme of Colossians. Note the list of key words shown on Chart 88. How does each word relate to the epistle's theme? Add to the list other key words you noted as you surveyed the letter.

What key verse is cited on Chart 88? What other key verses represent the theme of Colossians?

## VI. APPLICATIONS

Many practical truths of Colossians derive from two intimate relationships that the believer has with Christ:

1. *death* — “you have died with Christ” (2:20)

2. *resurrection* — “you have been raised up

with Christ” (3:1).

Read the entire epistle again, observing the various applications that derive from the above truths.

## VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How large a city was Colossae in the days of Paul? How far was it from Ephesus?

2. Did Paul have anything to do with the founding of the church at Colossae? If so, what?

3. Name some active members of the congregation. Who may have been the pastor when Paul wrote Colossians?

4. Was Paul acquainted with most of the congregation by sight?

5. Where were the two nearest churches located?

6. Where was Paul when he wrote

Colossians, and when did he write?

7. What was the immediate occasion for writing this letter?

8. What serious problems threatened the Colossian church?

9. What approach did Paul use in writing to the church?

10. Whom else besides the Colossians did Paul want to read the letter?

11. What is the main theme of Colossians?

12. Compare the theme and purpose of Colossians with each of the following: Ephesians, Galatians, Romans.

13. What are the different kinds of content in the epistle? Can you recall the outline and show where each new section begins?

14. Does Paul here follow his usual pattern of writing about doctrine, as a foundation, *before* giving appeals for

Christian living?

15. What title is assigned to Colossians on the chart?

16. Try to complete this outline:  
Christ Your Inheritance; _____; _____;  
_____; _____.

17. What are some key words and key verses of Colossians?

## **VIII. FURTHER STUDY**

1. Read through the entire epistle and note the times Christ is mentioned (either as Christ, or by other names and titles). Make a list showing what Paul writes about Him in each instance. This study will support the conclusion that the fundamental thought of Colossians is Christ, the Head of all things.

2. Note all the names of people referred to in the epistle and what Paul writes about

each.

3. With the help of outside sources study the false gnostic philosophy of the first centuries, as it appeared in various forms.

## IX. OUTLINE

COLOSSIANS: Christ Is All and in All	
OPENING BENEDICTION	1:1-2
TRUE DOCTRINE	1:3—2:3
Thanksgiving and Intercession	1:3-12
Person and Work of Christ	1:13—2:3
FALSE DOCTRINE	2:4—3:4
Heresies Exposed	2:4—3:4
CHRISTIAN LIVING	3:5—4:18
Christianity in Action	3:5—4:6
Personal Greetings	4:7-18 _a
CLOSING BENEDICTION	4:18 _b

## X. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Guthrie, Donald. "Colossians." In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 1139-41.

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# COMMENTARIES

Ellis, E. Earle, “The Epistle to the Colossians.” In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

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# OTHER RELATED SOURCES

Robertson, ?. T. *Paul and the Intellectuals*.

Vincent, Marvin R. *Word Studies in the New Testament*.

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1. Laodicea was known as “the metropolis of the valley,” and Hierapolis, “the sacred city.”

2. The journey (A.D. 52-55) is recorded in

Acts 18:23—21:17. Read especially 19:10, 26.

3. Karl K. Darrow, *Atomic Energy*, quoted by D. Lee Chesnut, *The Atom Speaks*, p. 67.

4. This was one form of the heresy now referred to as Gnosticism.

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# *17 The Thessalonian Epistles*

## *1 Thessalonians: The Lord Jesus Is Coming Again*

## *2 Thessalonians: He Has Not Come Yet*

Christ's first coming to earth was a crucial event in world history; His second coming will be the climactic event. He came the first time to die and be raised to life. When He comes again, it will be to gather to Himself those saved by His death. Paul sums up all the joys and glories of this ingathering by saying simply, "And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). It had to be a thrilling experience for the apostle to write the Thessalonian letters¹ and share such a message.

Of Paul's letters, 1 and 2 Thessalonians focus especially on the theme of Christ's

return. Here, the apostle not only gives the details of prophecy but he also shows how Christians should be living day by day in light of the Lord's return. That practical emphasis will be evident as you study the epistles.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

Before you begin to read the Thessalonian letters, answer the following questions on the basis of your present knowledge and interpretation of eschatology (doctrine of last things):

1. Will Jesus return to this earth? If so, what signs or events will precede His coming?

2. Will the saints be raptured (caught up) to heaven before Christ returns to the earth? If so, will there be a period between such a rapture and His coming to earth?

3. What will Christ do when He returns?

4. For how long will Christ remain on earth? Then what?

## **II. BACKGROUND OF THE THESSALONIAN LETTERS**

### **A. THE CITY OF THESSALONICA**

1. *Name.* The city was originally named Therme. When it was refounded by Cassander, around 315 B.C., he named it Thessalonica, after his wife.

2. *Location.* Study carefully the location of Thessalonica, as shown on Map V, page 337. Note the city's strategic position as a seaport and on the Egnatian Way, which was the principal east-west trade and military route between Rome and Asia Minor.² How does this strategic location shed light on 1 Thessalonians 1:8?

Observe the other two important cities of this part of Macedonia, Philippi, and Berea, which Paul visited on his second missionary journey. Why did Paul concentrate much of his missionary tours in key cities of the Empire?

Note the location of Corinth on the map. It was from here that Paul wrote both of the Thessalonian letters.

3 . *Population.* The population of Thessalonica in Paul's day has been estimated as around 200,000 (about half its present population). Of this number most were Greeks, but there was also a fairly large Jewish segment in the city. From the following description, try to visualize Paul's impressions of the bustling city as he first entered it on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1):

With overland caravans thronging

its hostelries, with its harbor filled with ship's bottoms from overseas, with old salts, Roman officials, and thousands of Jewish merchants rubbing shoulders in its streets, Thessalonica presented a cosmopolitan picture. It is very suggestive that the Jewish opponents of Paul should have called Paul and his co-workers "world-topplers" (Acts 17:6).³

4. *Government.* Thessalonica was made the capital of the province of Macedonia in 148 B.C. It gained the status of a free city in 42 B.C. and elected its own government officials. (Note the reference to city rulers in Acts 17:6.)

5. *Commerce.* As noted earlier, the city was a strategic trade center, with connections by land and sea. This determined its commercial "personality." It

was a very prosperous city.

6 . *Religion.* Idolatry was the common religion of most of the Greeks. Nearby Mount Olympus, viewed daily by the people, stood as a symbol of the gods. In ancient times, it was at the summit of Mount Olympus that Zeus was believed to gather together all the gods of Greece for a council.

The Jewish community of Thessalonica was either large or influential, or both, as seen from the action of Acts 17:5. The Acts account records that Paul's first evangelistic preaching was done in the city's synagogue (Acts 17:1-4).

There was also a large Roman segment of the populace, with a strong nationalistic devotion to the emperor Caesar (cf. Acts 17:7).

## B. THE FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF THESSALONICA

### 1 . *Paul's evangelistic campaign.*

Thessalonica was the second major city visited by Paul for an evangelistic ministry on his second missionary journey (Philippi was the first). Read Acts 17:1-10 for Luke's brief account of this ministry. Observe the following:

a. Upon arriving at the city, Paul first shared the gospel with the Jews in the synagogue. That was his customary procedure. How long did that mission continue?

b. Paul based his ministry on the Scriptures. What does the phrase "reasoned with them" (Acts 17:2) reveal about Paul's method of communicating the gospel to the Thessalonians?

c. Paul tried to establish three basic truths, in this order:

- (1) Christ (the promised Messiah, Redeemer) had to suffer and die.
- (2) Christ had to rise from the dead.
- (3) The Jesus whom he preached was this Christ.

If you had only the Old Testament today, as Paul had then, how would you support each of the above three truths, from those Scriptures? For a starting point, see Isaiah 53.

d. Immediate results of Paul's ministry (Acts 17:4-5):

- (1) Some Jews were converted.
- (2) A great multitude of devout Greeks believed.
- (3) A substantial number of leading women believed.
- (4) The Jews who rejected Paul's message stirred up a riot.
- (5) Paul was forced to leave the city.

e. Paul's later contacts with the Thessalonian Christians:

- (1) Twice Paul was hindered from returning to Thessalonica soon after his first visit (1 Thess. 2:17-18).
- (2) He sent Timothy to minister in his place (1 Thess. 3:1-2).
- (3) He wrote the two epistles.

(4) The apostle made at least two other visits to the area on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:1-4; 2 Cor. 2:12-13). Also, he may have visited the Thessalonian church after his first Roman imprisonment.

## 2. *Founding and constituency of the church.*

The church at Thessalonica was only an infant when Paul wrote the letters, but its fame was widespread because of the miraculous transformation of lives from idolatry to Christianity. From the very beginning, the newborn believers banded together in a Christian fellowship. What evidences of such a fellowship do you see implied in Acts 17:4, 6, 10? When Paul wrote to the group only a few months later, he addressed them as “the church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thess. 1:1). No doubt, the organization of the local church was simple at first. We do know the church had leaders,

however, as shown by 1 Thessalonians 5:12.

Most of the church's members were Gentiles, converted from idolatry (cf. Acts 17:4; 1 Thess. 1:9). Some were Jews (Acts 17:4). From 1 Thessalonians 4:11, it has been concluded that for the most part, the people were of the common working class. (See Acts 17:46 for a notable exception.) As young converts, the Christians at Thessalonica were a real joy and inspiration to Paul, and were reliable and devoted followers of Christ. The bright tone of the two epistles confirms this.

### **III. BACKGROUND OF 1 THESSALONIANS**

#### **A. AUTHOR**

Twice, Paul identifies himself by name in the epistle: at 1:1 and 2:18. The title *apostle*

does not appear in this letter or in 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, or Philemon. Some have suggested the reason for this is that any question of Paul's authority does not enter into the discussions of these epistles.

Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy are included in the opening salutation (1:1). Both were intimate co-workers with Paul. Read the following verses concerning each man:

1. Silas: Acts 15:22, 27, 32, 40; 16:19-20; 1 Peter 5:12

2. Timothy: Acts 16:1-3; Philippians 2:19-22; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 4:9, 21.

## **B. PLACE AND DATE WRITTEN**

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth, where the apostle spent eighteen months on the second missionary journey, soon after

leaving Thessalonica (Acts 18:1, 11). (Refer to Appendix B, pages 518-19, and fix in your mind the chronology of Paul's life and ministry. Note, among other things, when and where the apostle wrote each of his epistles.)

The date of writing 1 Thessalonians was around A.D. 52.⁴ The epistle was among the earliest of Paul's inspired writings.⁵ About how old was Paul when he wrote this letter? How old was he when he was saved? (See Appendix B.)

## **C. OCCASION AND PURPOSES**

We have already observed that when Paul was hindered from visiting the Thessalonians (2:17-18), he partly made up for this by doing two things: sending Timothy to minister to them in his place

(3:1-5); and writing this epistle after receiving Timothy's report about the church (3:6-13). (Read 3:10 for another thing that Paul, being absent from the Thessalonians, did on their behalf.) This then was the occasion for writing 1 Thessalonians.

Paul had various purposes in mind in writing the letter. Some of the more important ones were:

1. to commend the Christians for their faith (3:6)

2. to expose sins (e.g., fornication, 4:3; and idleness, 4:11) and correct misapprehensions (e.g., about the second coming of Christ, 4:13-17)

3. to exhort the young converts in their new spiritual experience (e.g., 4:1-12)

4. to answer false charges against Paul. Such charges may have sounded like these:

a. Paul was a money-making teacher, attracted by the rich ladies who attended his meetings. For Paul's replies, read such verses as 2:3, 9-10.

b. Paul was a flatterer, with selfish goals in mind. Read 2:4-6.

c. Paul was afraid to appear in person in Thessalonica again. Read 2:17-20.

## **D. CHARACTERISTICS**

Paul's letters to the Thessalonians have the marks of typical New Testament epistles. They are like a doctor's diagnosis and prescription, blended together in one package. Some of the characteristics of 1 Thessalonians that stand out are:

1. It is intimate, heart-to-heart.
2. Its tone is gentle, affectionate, "a classic

of Christian friendship.”

3. The epistle is simple, basic.

4. There is an air of expectancy, especially concerning Christ’s return.

5. The epistle gives one of the earliest pictures of the primitive New Testament church.

6. There are no quotations from the Old Testament. (We may recall here that most of the Thessalonian Christians were Gentiles, not Jews.)

7. There is not the usual abundance of doctrine in this epistle (4:13-18 being a notable exception).

8. Paul’s style of writing in this epistle is very informal, personal, and direct.

9. Much may be learned about Paul in 1 Thessalonians from the way he wrote and what he emphasized. Tact, love, and

humility are three qualities that appear often in the epistle.

## **E. PLACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

As noted earlier, the Thessalonian letters were among the earliest of Paul's New Testament writings. Refer to Chart 1, page 20, and note what books were written just before and after those letters.

## **IV. SURVEY OF 1 THESSALONIANS**

### **A. FIRST READING**

Scan the epistle once for first impressions. Then answer the following questions:

1. Is this a long epistle?
2. Is it more practical than doctrinal?

3. Are there many personal references?

4. Did you sense any particular tone or atmosphere in the letter?

5. Does Paul seem to have one specific purpose in writing?

6. What are your personal impressions of the book?

## **B. PARAGRAPH SURVEY**

1. Read the letter again, a little more slowly. Begin to underline words and phrases that strike you as you read.

2. Make a list of the key words and phrases, and add to the list while you continue your studies.

3. Mark paragraph divisions in your Bible, with each paragraph beginning at these verses: 1:1, 2, 6; 2:1, 7, 13, 17; 3:1, 6, 11;

4:1, 9, 13; 5:1,6, 12, 23,25, 28.

4. Read the paragraphs, and assign a paragraph title to each.

5. What are your new impressions of the epistle? What parts stand out prominently?

### **C. OBSERVING THE STRUCTURE**

Now begin to see how the nineteen paragraphs (thought units) of 1 Thessalonians merge together to communicate Paul's message. Things to look for are suggested below.

1 . *Introduction and conclusion.* Read the first and last paragraphs of the epistle. What verses would you identify as the introduction and the conclusion?

2. *Blocks of similar content.* Go through the epistle again, and see if you can find any

groups of paragraphs that are of similar content, of such kinds as doctrine, exhortation, personal reflections, and biography. Make a note of those.

3. *Turning point.* Sometimes a book has a turning point, such as a change from doctrine to practice. Do you detect any such change in 1 Thessalonians?

4. *High points and climax.* Occasionally, an epistle will reach a high point, or high points, in the course of the writing. A doxology at such a place is often a clue to this. Do you observe any peaks in 1 Thessalonians? Would you say that there is a definite climax toward the end of the epistle? If so, where specifically?

5. *A prominent doctrine.* Observe the references to Christ's return at the end of each chapter. What paragraphs in the epistle deal especially with this event of end times?

## D. SURVEY CHART

Chart 90 is a survey chart of 1 Thessalonians, showing the basic structure of the epistle and outlines of various topics. Study this chart very carefully.

Observe the following on the chart:

1. The salutation of 1:1 and the assorted verses of 5:23-28 are viewed here as the introduction and conclusion, respectively.

2. A major division appears at 4:1, dividing the epistle into two main parts. What two outlines show this twofold division? (Note: the first word of 4:1 is “finally,” which suggests a change in Paul’s train of thought at this point.) Review the survey study made thus far to check whether these twofold outlines represent the epistle’s general content.

3. You have already observed that Paul

devotes much space to descriptions of his ministry to the Thessalonians. Note the outline that shows three aspects of that ministry. The segment division shown at 2:17 is based on this observation. Read the paragraphs before and after 2:17 to justify a main division at this point.

Study also the two related outlines that appear just below the *ministry* outline.

4. One of the prominent subjects of the letter is the Lord's return. It was noted earlier that each chapter ends with a clear reference to this future event. The fivefold topical outlines shown on the survey chart are organized around this observation of the five chapter endings. These outlines also reflect the general content of each of the chapters. For example, the word *salvation* for chapter 1 refers to the Thessalonians' conversion, the experience that accounted

for their hope of Christ's return (waiting "for His Son from heaven," 1:10). Study the topical outlines on this theme.

5. Observe on the chart that the title given to the epistle is about the Lord's return. The title is worded this way to anticipate the title that will be assigned later to 2 Thessalonians, which is, "He Has Not Come Yet." Note also the key verse.

## **V. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 1 THESSALONIANS**

The prominent subjects of 1 Thessalonians reflect Paul's purposes in writing. Some of the major subjects are in the following list.

1. The second coming of Christ. The key doctrinal passage of the epistle is 4:13-18, on the rapture of the church.

2. Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians' faith and endurance.

3. Encouragement to the church members in their afflictions.

4. Doctrines of various subjects, such as the following:

God the Father	Pastoral responsibility
The Lord Jesus	Gospel
(Note the full title "our Lord Jesus Christ" at 1:3; 5:9, 23, 28.)	Way of salvation
The Holy Spirit	Believers
	The world
	Satan

5. Exhortations to holy living.

Some of the prominent subjects cited above are described more fully in the pages that follow.

## **A. LORD'S RETURN**

In our survey study, we observed various references in 1 Thessalonians to Christ's second coming. The first of these appears at 1:10. There are different views concerning

Christ's second coming. Some hold that His coming will be of two phases; others, that it will involve just one phase. Chart 91 shows the premillennial view of two phases, the first called the *rapture*, when Christ will come *for* His saints; and the second called the *revelation*, when Christ will come *with* His saints to this earth, to set up the millennial kingdom. The chart shows the sequence of future world events as interpreted by the view of a rapture *before* the Tribulation (hence the name, pre-tribulation).⁶ Keep this sequence in mind whenever you study references to Christ's second coming. (The sequence will be studied further in later chapters.)

# CHART 90: 1 THESSALONIANS: THE JESUS IS COMING AGAIN

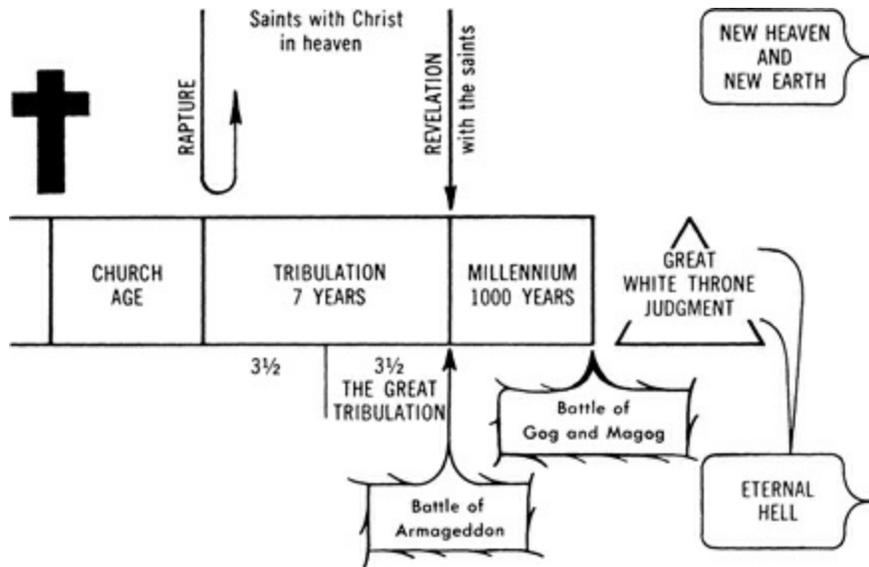
KEY VERSE: "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:23b).

KEY WORDS:

Lord brethren (17 times)  
sanctification  
affliction  
coming  
gospel  
word  
day

			LOOKING BACK			LOOKING FORWARD						
			RE: THESSALONIANS' CONVERSION AND TESTIMONY	RE: PAUL'S SERVICE								
1:1	1:2	SALUTATION	You turned (1:9)	We greeted (2:9)	We endeavored to see you (2:17)	We sent Timothy (2:21)	4:1	FINALLY WE BESECH	5:1	WE BESECH	5:23-28	CONCLUSION
PERSONAL AND HISTORICAL						DIDACTIC AND HORTATORY				—(twofold outline)		
MINISTRY TO THE THESSALONIANS IN PERSON			MINISTRY IN ABSENTIA			MINISTRY BY EPISTLE				—(threefold outline)		
WORD AND POWER OF THE SPIRIT			ESTABLISHING AND COMFORTING			CALLING AND CONDUCT	4:13 COMFORT	5:12 SUNDRY COMMANDS				
(1:3)	FAITH		LOVE			HOPE						
Chap. 1 SALVATION	Chap. 2 SERVICE		Chap. 3 SANCTIFICATION		Chap. 4 SORROW	Chap. 5 SOBRIETY			—(fivefold outline) SECOND ADVENT			
EXEMPLARY HOPE of young converts	MOTIVATING HOPE of faithful servants		PURIFYING HOPE of tried believers		COMFORTING HOPE of bereaved saints	INVIGORATING HOPE of diligent Christians			HOPE OF CHRIST'S RETURN			
									REFERENCE IN LAST VERSE OF EACH CHAPTER			

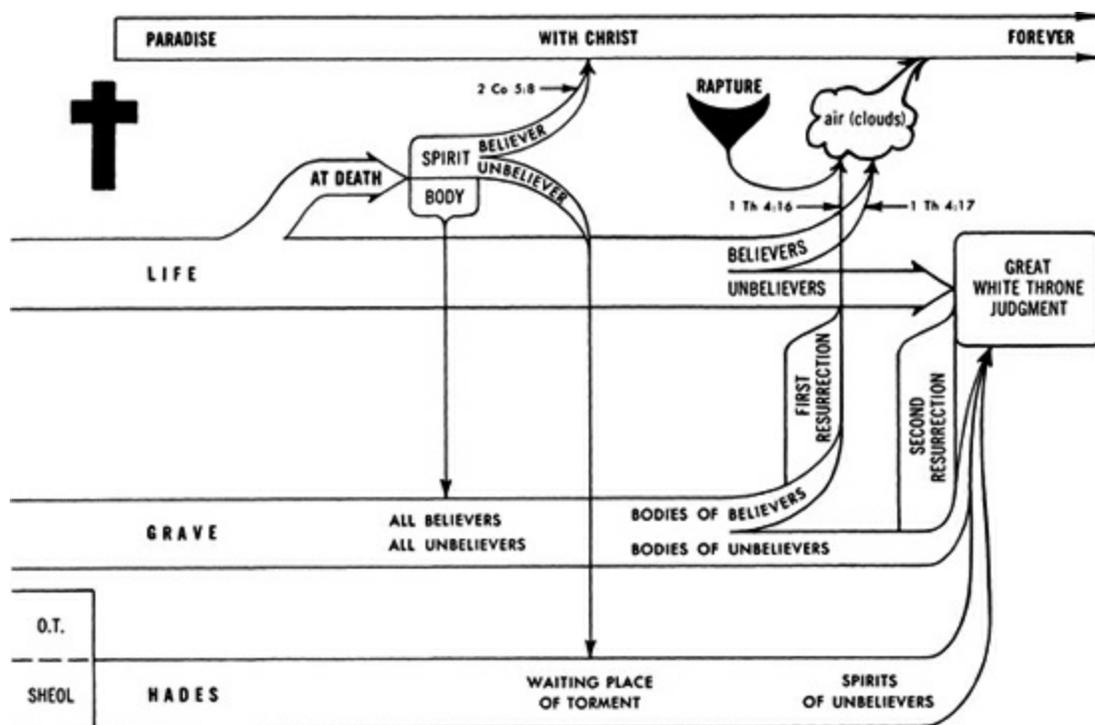
# CHART 91: PREMILLENNIAL SCHEME OF WORLD EVENTS



The classic New Testament passage on the rapture of the church is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. The word *rapture* is not found in the Bible, but it very appropriately represents the phrase “caught up” of 4:17. (The Latin translation of the Greek word is *rapiemur*, hence our word *rapture*.)

Read the paragraph, and observe what it teaches about (1) the comfort of rapture truth, (2) the basis of rapture truth, and (3) the events of the rapture.

# CHART 92: INTERMEDIATE STATE OF MAN BETWEEN DEATH AND RESURRECTION



Paul wrote about the rapture mainly to comfort Thessalonian Christians who had been recently bereaved by the death of loved ones. (Read 4:13.) They did not have doubts that those would some day be resurrected. But they were grieving because they thought their loved ones would miss experiencing the glorious events attending Christ's return. Their big questions were, *When* will we be resurrected, and *How* will it happen? Study Chart 92 concerning the

intermediate state of people between death and their resurrection, as background for this rapture passage. Read the various verses cited on the chart.⁷

In your survey of 1 Thessalonians you observed that at or near the end of each chapter there is a reference to Christ's return. Read the passages again, and note why Paul refers to the event in each passage.

## **B. PAUL'S MINISTRY (1:1—5:28)**

The enemies of Paul had driven him from the city of Thessalonica with the hope of aborting his evangelistic mission (see Acts 17:5-15). Apparently, the enemies pursued with other tactics as well, such as slanderous rumors about Paul's personal life, motives, and methods in his evangelistic campaigns. This would account for Paul's devoting so

much space in this short epistle to defend his ministry. Just what the apostle said about himself is the main subject of chapters 1 and 2.

Review the threefold ministry of Paul to the Thessalonians, as shown on Chart 90. Observe the following in the Bible text:

1. *Ministry in person* (1:2—2:16). Observe the repeated pronoun “you” in chapter 1, and “we” (referring to Paul) in chapter 2. Both chapters are Paul’s testimonies. What are his main points?

2. *Ministry in absentia* (2:17—3:13). Paul regrets that he cannot be with the Thessalonian Christians in person for the time being. What two things does he do for them?

3. *Ministry by epistle* (4:1—5:28). At 4:1 Paul begins especially to exhort the Thessalonians concerning their behavior in

daily living. Paul never wrote a letter without appealing for Christian conduct that magnified Christ and pleased God. The apostle here reminds the Thessalonians that he had earlier instructed them about these things when he was with them. Now, he writes, “keep on” living in that way, but “doing still better” (4:1, Berkeley). Healthy Christian living is not static; it is always dynamic. Christians are to keep growing, moving, abounding. As someone has said, “There is no finality in practical holiness while the Christian remains on the earth.”

## **VI. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES FOR 1 THESSALONIANS**

How would you identify the theme of 1 Thessalonians? Observe the theme identified on Chart 90 as a title. Note the key words and verse shown also on the chart. Compare

these with your own choices made on the basis of your survey.

## **VII. APPLICATIONS FROM 1 THESSALONIANS**

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians abounds in practical applications. Reflect on the things you have learned here about the following:

1. the comfort and hope of Christ's return
2. endurance in affliction
3. faithful Christian service
4. maturing as a Christian.

## **VIII. REVIEW QUESTIONS ON 1 THESSALONIANS**

1. On what missionary journey did Paul first visit Thessalonica? Name two nearby cities evangelized about the same time.
2. What was the strategic location of

Thessalonica?

3. Describe the average Thessalonian in Paul's day.

4. What was the religious situation in Thessalonica when Paul arrived at the city?

5. What were the main points of Paul's first sermons in the synagogue? What were the results of this ministry?

6. Where was Paul when he wrote 1 Thessalonians? Why did he write the letter?

7. Name some prominent subjects in this epistle.

8. What are some of the letter's characteristics?

9. When did Paul write 1 Thessalonians, as compared with his other epistles?

10. What key doctrinal passage appears in this letter?

11. Where does the second division of a

twofold outline of the letter begin? What is the opening word of this division?

12. What subject is common to the end of each chapter?

13. In what chapters does Paul write much personal testimony about his ministry?

14. Where is the classic rapture passage?

## **IX. FURTHER STUDY OF 1 THESSALONIANS**

1. Using outside sources as guides,⁸ study what the Bible teaches about the following:

- a. the rapture of the church
- b. the Millennium
- c. the Great Tribulation
- d. Christ's return to earth (epiphany, revelation).

2. Study the different views regarding the time of the rapture (i.e., before, during, or

after the Great Tribulation on earth). One of the main differences between premillennialists who believe in a rapture before (pre) the Tribulation period and premillennialists who hold to a rapture after (post) that Tribulation period arises out of the interpretation of the *action* aspect of the rapture (4:17). Pretribulationists believe that at the rapture, the Lord does not come to the earth, but only to the air and clouds above the earth, and that He returns to heaven immediately with the raptured saints. This view sees in the sharp phrase “caught up” the meaning of being transported from one place to another, which in this case is from earth to heaven. (Cf. Acts 8:39; 2 Cor. 12:2, 4; Rev. 12:5.) Posttribulationists, on the other hand, believe that the saints will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, but that they will immediately escort Him to earth. F. F. Bruce

gives the background of such a view:

When a dignitary paid an official visit or *parousia* to a city in Hellenistic times, the action of the leading citizens in going out to meet him and escorting him on the final stage of his journey was called the *apantesis*; it is similarly used in Mt. xxv. 6; Acts xxviii. 15. So the Lord is pictured as escorted to the earth by His people — those newly raised from death and those who have remained alive.⁹

## X. OUTLINE

1 THESSALONIANS: Jesus Is Coming Again	
LOOKING BACK	1:1—3:13
A Dynamic Local Church	1:1-10
A Successful Christian Worker	2:1-16
Ministering to Christians at a Distance	2:17—3:13
LOOKING FORWARD	4:1—5:28
The Life That Pleases God	4:1-12
The Lord's Return	4:13—5:11
The Believer's Walk	5:12-28

## XI. BACKGROUND OF 2 THESSALONIANS

A couple of months after Paul had written his first letter to the Thessalonian church, various circumstances led him to write again. This later epistle has been described as “a second prescription for the same case, made after discovering that some certain stubborn symptoms had not yielded to the first treatment.”¹⁰ But the epistle is more than that. It answers new questions that have been raised, and it extends Paul’s earlier instruction and exhortation to deeper and higher levels. The keynote of the Lord’s second coming, as taught in 1 Thessalonians, is also the keynote here. The importance of such a doctrine in the lives of the Thessalonian believers is emphasized.

Much of the background of this epistle is common to that of the first letter. Review the earlier section before studying the new descriptions given below.

## **A. AUTHOR**

Paul identified himself by name in 1:1 and 3:17. The vocabulary, style, doctrine, and atmosphere all indicate that this epistle is as Pauline as the first letter.

## **B. ORIGINATION AND DATE**

Both of the Thessalonian epistles were written from Corinth, during Paul's eighteen-month stay there, on his second missionary journey. The second letter followed the first by no more than a few months, or around A.D. 52. This was before the flare-up at Corinth, recorded in Acts 18:5-17.

## **C. IMMEDIATE OCCASION AND PURPOSES**

Whoever delivered Paul's first letter probably remained at Thessalonica long enough to view the conditions at the church and to bring back a report to Paul. The good parts of the report are the subjects of Paul's commendations in 2 Thessalonians. A negative report was that the Christians were believing the false word that the "day of the Lord" had already come, and therefore the end of all things was upon them. This even caused some of the believers to give up their daily occupations and professions, in anticipation of the shout and trump of heaven heralding the Lord's return. Those were some of the things that Paul wanted to write about in a second, brief letter. So the purposes of the letter were (1) commendation and (2) doctrinal and practical correction.

## **D. THE TWO EPISTLES COMPARED**

Some of the main differences of the two epistles are shown on Chart 93. These will become apparent as you survey 2 Thessalonians.

# CHART 93: FIRST AND SECOND THESSALONIANS COMPARED

1 THESSALONIANS	2 THESSALONIANS
describes how the Thessalonians received the Word of God	mentions their progress in faith, love, and patience
teaches the imminency of the Lord's return	corrects misapprehensions about that event
comforts and encourages the saints	assures coming judgment on Christ's foes
concerns the church	concerns Satan, Antichrist, and the world
presents outstanding eschatological passage in 4:13-18	presents outstanding eschatological passage in 2:1-2
tells about the <b>parousia</b> (coming, presence)—4:15	tells about the <b>apocalypsis</b> (revelation)—1:7
presents the Day of Christ (cf. Phil 1:10)	presents the Day of the Lord (2 Th 2:2)

It will be seen from these comparisons that the two epistles differ mainly over which phase of the Lord's return is in view. In 1 Thessalonians, the first phase (rapture) is the main subject. In 2 Thessalonians, attention is focused on the second phase (revelation). In order to see if the above distinctions are justified it would be necessary for you to analyze carefully the text of the Thessalonian letters. Such analysis is beyond the scope of these survey studies. As a background for examining whether the two epistles are emphasizing

two different phases of the Lord's coming, differences between those two phases are shown on Chart 94.[11](#)

## **XII. SURVEY OF 2 THESSALONIANS**

### **A. FIRST READINGS**

1. Before you read the letter, observe its length. Compare it with that of the first epistle. Also compare the opening and closing verses of both epistles.

2. What are your first impressions after reading the whole epistle in one sitting?

3. Does this letter appear to be intimately related to the first one? If so, in what ways?

4. Do you sense a prevailing tone or atmosphere?

5. What key words and phrases stand out?

# CHART 94: RAPTURE AND REVELATION COMPARED

FIRST PHASE (RAPTURE)	SECOND PHASE (REVELATION)
Christ comes to claim His bride, the church	Christ returns with the bride
Christ comes to the air	Christ returns to the earth
the tribulation begins	the millennial kingdom is established
translation is imminent	a multitude of signs precede
a message of comfort is given	a message of judgment is given
the program for the church is emphasized	the program for Israel and the world is emphasized
translation is a mystery	revelation is predicted in both Testaments
believers are judged	Gentiles and Israel are judged
Israel's covenants are not yet fulfilled	all of Israel's covenants are fulfilled
believers only are affected	all people are affected
the church is taken into the Lord's presence	Israel is brought into the kingdom

## B. PARAGRAPH UNITS

1. Read the epistle paragraph by paragraph, using the following divisions (each reference is the beginning verse of the paragraph): 1:1, 3, 5, 11; 2:1, 5, 13, 16; 3:1, 6, 16. Mark the divisions in your Bible.
2. Assign a title to each paragraph.
3. Make a list of some of the main subjects of the letter.

4. Note every reference in the text to the second coming of Christ. Mark those in your Bible.

5. Where is the most concentration of practical exhortation?

6. Scan through the epistle and note the places of Paul's prayers of benedictions in behalf of the Thessalonians.

## **C. STRUCTURE OF THE LETTER**

1. What verses serve as the introduction? the conclusion?

2. What is the first word of chapter 3? What does this suggest concerning the structure of the epistle? Relate to this what you observe about the last two verses of chapter 2.

3. How does 2:1 introduce what follows?

4. What is the main general content of each of the three chapters? Use this observation to formulate, in your own words, what Paul is communicating in the letter.

## **D. SURVEY CHART**

Chart 95 is a survey chart of this epistle, showing the broad structure of the three chapters as they make up the whole unit. Study this chart carefully, comparing its outlines and observations with your own. Observe the following on the chart:

1. The epistle is basically of three parts, one chapter per part. Study the various outlines of content and purpose. Where is the *exhortation* section?

Here is another comparison of the three chapters (note the different time element in

each):

Chap. 1 — before the rapture:  
persecution (tribulation)

Chap. 2 — before the revelation:  
Antichrist (man of sin)

Chap. 3 — how Christians  
should live now

2. Note the focal point: “The day of the Lord has not come yet!” Observe how it relates to what goes before and to what follows. Refer to the Bible text to confirm this.

3. Where does Paul write specifically about persecutions and afflictions? Relate this to the chart’s phrase “Don’t be disturbed.”

4. Where does Paul write much about the man of sin? Relate this to the manifestation of the Lord of glory (chap. 1).

5. Note the outline at the bottom of the chart that relates to the subject *Lord's return*. How are the points developed in the sections of the epistle?

6. Note the different exhortations and commands shown on the chart. What others did you observe in your survey?

7. Compare the title given to this epistle with that of 1 Thessalonians. How do the two titles reveal two different instructional purposes of the epistles?

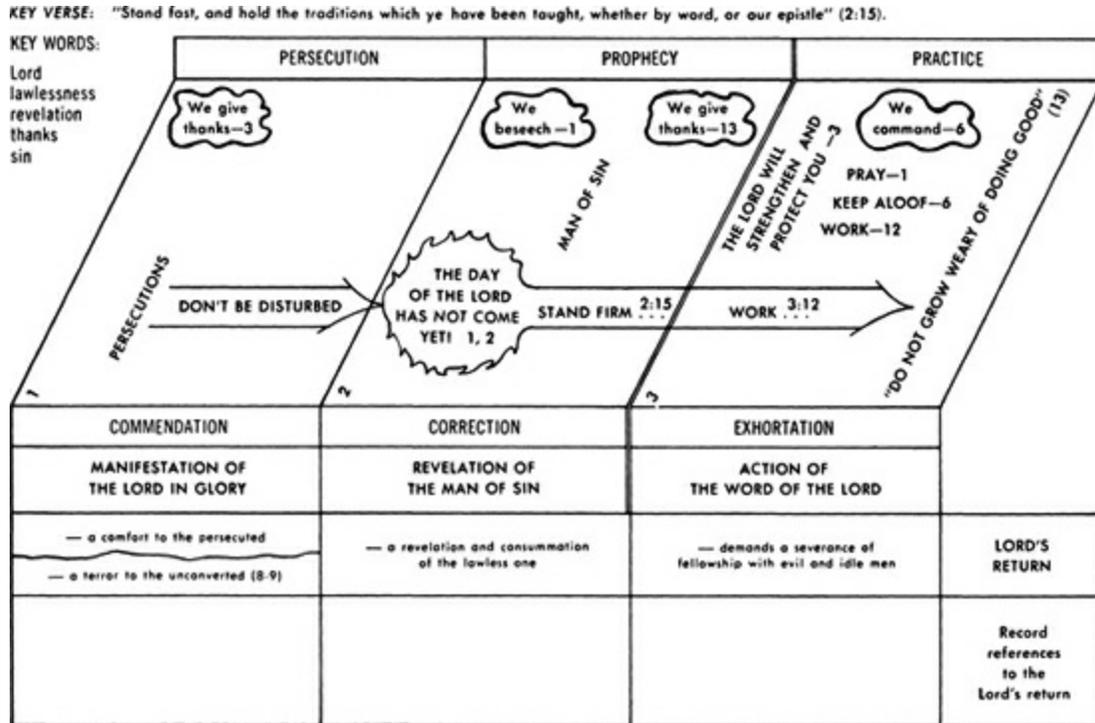
### **XIII. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 2 THESSALONIANS**

#### **A. BEFORE THE RAPTURE: PERSECUTION (1:3-12)**

Paul's second Thessalonian letter begins on a bright note, commending the saints for their perseverance and faith in severe trials

(1:4). Chapter 1 is background to the problem specifically mentioned in 2:2: *persecution* before the *rapture*. Just how the two are related is discussed below.

# CHART 95: 2 THESSALONIANS: HE HAS NOT COME YET



Recall the key prophetic passage of Paul's first letter (4:13-18). Paul very clearly foretold the sudden (though not necessarily immediate) event of the rapture of the saints. Then he wrote about the coming, unannounced "day of the Lord," which shall bring destruction and travail (5:1-5). Whether the Thessalonians interpreted these two "comings" as happening at different times, they did associate tribulation with the day of the Lord. When a letter forged with

Paul's signature reached them with the message that the day of the Lord had arrived,¹² they were prone to believe it, because of the severe persecution they were going through. But that raised a real problem: If the day of the Lord had already arrived, what about the rapture that Paul had foretold in his letter? Had it taken place, and were they left behind? So in chapter 1 Paul interprets the meaning and purpose of persecution and affliction for saints before the rapture (cf. Heb. 10:32-39).

The word *tribulation(s)* appears twice in this passage. It should not be confused with *the* Tribulation period (or the Great Tribulation period), which shall transpire between the rapture and the revelation (Matt. 24:21) (cf. Chart 91, p. 356). Read the following verses where the word has reference to various kinds of trials that Christians are called upon to endure in their

daily walk: John 16:33; Romans 5:3; 12:12; 2 Corinthians 1:4; 7:4; Ephesians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:4.

Ultimate judgment of all unbelievers will fall at the great white throne judgment (Chart 91). Read Revelation 20:11-15 for the description of that most awesome and tragic event. That is the background to verses 8-10 of this Thessalonian passage.

## **B. BEFORE THE REVELATION: ANTICHRIST (2:1-17)**

Chapter 2 is the crux of the second letter. Here Paul treats the problem vexing the Thessalonian Christians. The passage contains one of the New Testament's fullest descriptions of the activity and defeat of Antichrist, called the "man of lawlessness [sin]" in 2:3. (See Chart 96.) The chapter's

main point is that the day of the Lord will not come until the Antichrist has first been revealed and worshiped as God by the world.

This is the background of Paul's instructions in chapter 2:

1. In the first letter, Paul instructed the Thessalonians to expect a sudden rapture, when deceased and surviving believers would be caught up to be with Christ forever (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

2. In the same letter, Paul wrote that the day of the Lord — a time of judgment for unbelievers — would come upon the unbelieving world unannounced, “just like a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:1-3).

3. After receiving that letter, the Thessalonians had continued to be sorely persecuted for their faith. False teaching was circulating that the day of the Lord had

already come and brought the Thessalonians' tribulations. The church's natural questions were, Did not Paul write and say that we would be raptured? How, then, could the day of the Lord be upon us?

4. So Paul wrote the second letter, instructing the church that the persecutions they were experiencing were not to be confused with the judgments of the day of the Lord against unbelievers. That was yet to be (2 Thess. 1:7-9). "Now, concerning your confusion about how the rapture relates to all of this: don't be misled or disturbed by any kind of false teaching. The day of the Lord has *not* come yet. That day will not come until after two things have happened: first, the rise of the great rebellion against God, and then the appearance of the man of sin, the instigator of the rebellion."¹³

5. The aim of the apostle in this chapter,

therefore, was “to clear away the confusion existing in the minds of the converts by further defining the circumstances attending the Day of the Lord; these are different from the circumstances of the Parousia.”¹⁴

6. Read 2:1-12 again and record all that is written about the man of sin (Antichrist). Then refer to the section Further Study for more descriptions of this archenemy of Christ.

#### **XIV. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES FOR 2 THESSALONIANS**

Compose a theme for 2 Thessalonians. This should center on the main subject of the epistle.

Make a list of key words and verses of the letter, as you observed these in your survey studies. Compare your list with what is recorded on Chart 95.

## **XV. APPLICATIONS FROM 2 THESSALONIANS**

This second letter is filled with truths applicable to the Christian life. For example, what is taught about victorious Christian living in 3:1-5, and about the disciplined life in 3:6-15? Go through the three chapters and list the applications you see.

## **XVI. REVIEW QUESTIONS ON 2 THESSALONIANS**

1. Does Paul identify himself by name in 2 Thessalonians?
2. When did he write the second letter?
3. What were Paul's reasons for writing?
4. Compare the two letters in five ways.
5. Compare the rapture and the revelation.

Complete the two phrases:

**BEFORE THE RAPTURE:** _____

BEFORE THE REVELATION: _____

6. Compare the lengths of the two letters.

7. Identify a title for each.

8. What is the key point of 2 Thessalonians, regarding Christ's second coming?

9. Identify the contents of each chapter.

10. Where does Paul write most about the Antichrist (man of sin)?

## **XVII. FURTHER STUDY OF 2 THESSALONIANS**

Because the Antichrist is a main character of 2 Thessalonians 2, it will be very helpful for you to read other passages of Scripture about him. (The Thessalonians knew about him from the Old Testament and from Paul's earlier instruction [2:5-6].) Read the following: Ezekiel 38-39; Daniel 7:8, 20; 8:24; 11:28—12:3; Zechariah 12-14;

Matthew 24:15; 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7; Revelation 13:1-10; 17:8.

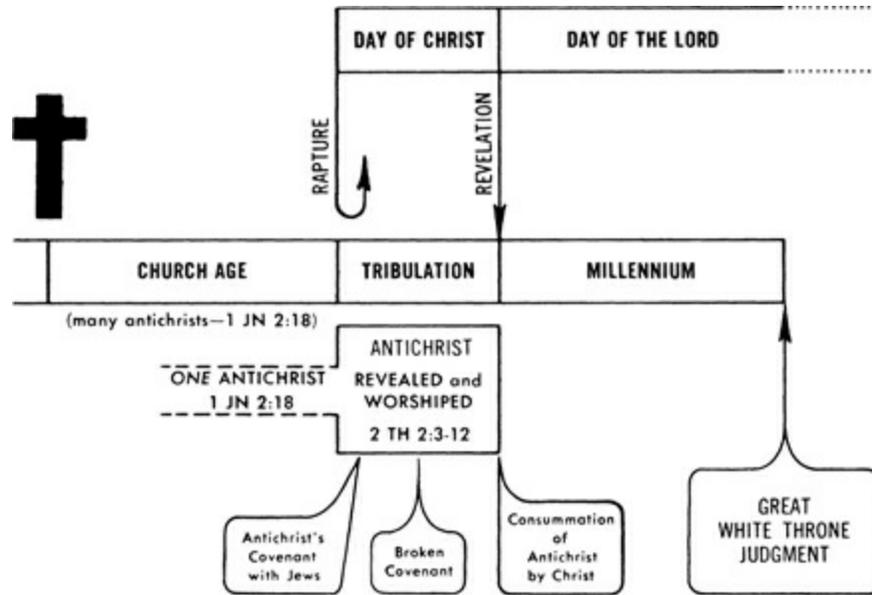
Various names by which this Antichrist is identified in Scripture are the little horn (Dan. 7:8; 8:9), the prince that shall come (Dan. 9:26), the willful king (Dan. 11:36), the man of lawlessness (sin) (2 Thess. 2:3), the son of destruction (perdition) (2 Thess. 2:3), that lawless (wicked) one (2 Thess. 2:8), antichrist (1 John 2:18), the beast out of the sea (Rev. 13:1-10).

John wrote about many antichrists in the world, but singled out the Antichrist (1 John 2:18). This Antichrist is a real person, an emissary of Satan, the personification of evil, and the culmination of all that is opposed to God.

Chart 96 shows the temporary reign of Antichrist during the Tribulation period, as it is related to the two phases of Christ's

coming — the rapture and revelation. You will want to keep this chronology in mind when you study chapter 2.

# CHART 96: THE TEMPORARY REIGN OF ANTICHRIST



## XVIII. OUTLINE

2 THESSALONIANS: Waiting For the Lord's Return	
Salutation	1:1-2
BEFORE THE RAPTURE: PERSECUTION	1:3-12
BEFORE THE REVELATION: ANTICHRIST	2:1-17
HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD LIVE NOW	3:1-15
Benediction	3:16-18

## XIX. SELECTED READING FOR THE THESSALONIAN LETTERS

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Bruce, F. F. "1 and 2 Thessalonians." In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 61-62;

1154-55.

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, pp. 31-68.

## **COMMENTARIES**

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *The Thessalonian Epistles*.

Hogg, C. F., and Vine, W. E. *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*.

Morris, Leon. *The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians*.

Ryrie, Charles C. *First and Second Thessalonians*.

## **OTHER RELATED SOURCES**

Hoyt, Herman A. *The End Times*.

Pentecost, J. Dwight. *Things to Come*.

Tan, Paul Lee. *The Interpretation of Prophecy*.

Walvoord, John F. *The Blessed Hope and The Tribulation*.

_____. *The Rapture Question*.

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1. The terms *letter* and *epistle* are used interchangeably in this volume, even though a distinction may be made regarding content and style. (E.g., see Dwight M. Pratt, “Epistle,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2:967.)

2. Sections of this fifteen-foot-wide paved highway remain to this day.

3. Charles F. Pfeiffer and Howard F. Vos, *The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands*, p. 457.

4. Some have placed the date as early as

A.D. 50.

5. If Galatians was not the first to be written, as many hold, then the Thessalonian letters were Paul's first inspired writings.

6. The mid-tribulation view sees the rapture in the middle of the Tribulation period; the posttribulation view sees it at the end of the Tribulation.

7. Before Calvary, the spirits of deceased believers went to the blessed of the two regions of Sheol, that part reserved only for God's people. After Calvary, only Sheol's other region, the place of torment (new name "Hades"), remained, since thereafter the spirits of believers at death would go to paradise. (Cf. Luke 23:43.)

8. Outside sources include Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, handbooks, and books with the subject titles.

9. F. F. Bruce, "1 Thessalonians," in *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 1159.

10. R. H. Walker, “The Second Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 5:2968.

11. Adapted from J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, pp. 206-7.

12. “by ... report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come” (2:2, NIV).

13. Summary paraphrase of 2:1-12.

14. C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, p. 245.

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# ***18 The Pastoral Epistles and Philemon***

***1 Timothy: Godliness and Pastoral Care***

***Titus: Adorning the Doctrine of God***

***2 Timothy: Endurance and Separation in the Ministry***

***Philemon: Appeal for Forgiveness***

Paul wrote about half the New Testament's twenty-seven books. The last three that he wrote were 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy, in that order. The letters have since been called pastorals, for reasons to be given below. The very fact that these letters were written toward the end of such an outstanding career is a promise of much spiritual insight and inspiration to all who would study the letters.

About a year before writing 1 Timothy, Paul wrote a short letter to Philemon. This letter appears last in the canonical list of Paul's writings, hence it is the last to be studied in this survey series.

The pastoral epistles and Philemon are messages from one heart to another. Here we can learn much about *individual* Christians: Paul and Timothy and Titus; Philemon and Onesimus; and the members of churches in Ephesus and Crete and Colossae. And because human nature does not change from generation to generation, we can easily see why these letters are so contemporary in their message to us.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

It will help you to prepare for your study of each of the pastoral epistles by first viewing them as a group.

Paul's three letters to Timothy and Titus are called pastorals, because for the most part they are Paul's counsel to his assistants who served in the pastoral (shepherd-like) functions of the churches in the regions of Ephesus and Crete.¹ (The word *pastor* appears only once in the New Testament, Ephesians 4:11, and literally means "shepherd." Read Acts 20:28-29 and 1 Peter 5:2-3, where the word *flock* is used, and note the various functions of a spiritual shepherd, such as feeding, guiding, and superintending. Also read Jeremiah 23:1-4.)

The Pauline authorship of these epistles has been challenged by liberal critics, but external and internal evidence strongly supports it.

The place and function of the pastoral letters in the New Testament are seen when they are compared with the other writings

of Paul. Study Chart 61, page 241, carefully, and note the following:

1. The epistles are listed in the chronological order of writing. (Some would place Galatians at a later date.)

2. There are three groups of epistles:

*travel epistles*: written during the years of the missionary journeys

*prison epistles*: written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment

*pastoral epistles*: 1 Timothy and Titus written after Paul's release from prison; 2 Timothy written during his second Roman imprisonment.

3. The main subjects and general purposes of these three groups were different, broadly speaking. Do you see a progression in each

list?

4. The first two groups were addressed to churches;² the pastoral epistles were addressed to individuals.

5. The pastoral epistles, especially 1 Timothy and Titus, are about the church and its workers. Sometimes the epistles are referred to as Paul's ecclesiastical letters.

6. Second Timothy has a place all its own, since it is Paul's personal farewell to his most intimate friend and colaborer.

Note: We will study the pastoral epistles in the order of their writing — 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy. This will be followed by a survey of Paul's letter to Philemon.

## **II. BACKGROUND OF 1 TIMOTHY**

### **A. THE MAN TIMOTHY**

Timothy is one of the most likable and devoted Christians of the entire New Testament. From a human standpoint, his greatest honor was to be chosen as an assistant to the church's foremost missionary leader Paul. He was Paul's closest friend to the very end, but the apostle recognized his higher worth and relationship when he called him a "man of God" (1 Tim. 6:11).

The name Timothy appears twenty-four times in the New Testament. You may want to read these verses to learn more about the man: Acts 16:1; 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Romans 16:21; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10; 2 Corinthians 1:1, 19; Philippians 1:1; 2:19; Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 3:2, 6; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:2, 18; 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:2; Philemon 1; Hebrews 13:23.

1. *Home.* Timothy was a native of Derbe (cf. Acts 16:1 and 20:4), son of a Gentile

father and Jewish mother (Acts 16:1, 3). His mother and grandmother are mentioned by name in 2 Timothy: Eunice and Lois (2 Tim. 1:5). Paul was thirty to thirty-five years old when Timothy was born, which means that the apostle was twice Timothy's age when 1 and 2 Timothy were written (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12).

From the time Timothy was a child, he was instructed by his mother in the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15). His mother had been taught by her mother Lois. Timothy's Gentile father apparently did not hinder this Jewish religious training.

2 . *Name*. The name Timothy (Greek, *Timotheus*) means "honoring God" or "honored by God." Timothy's mother very likely chose the name because of her faith in God.

3 . *Conversion*. Timothy and his mother

were probably converted when Paul visited Derbe on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-7, 20-21). From 1 Corinthians 4:14-17 and 1 Timothy 1:2, we may conclude that it was Paul who led Timothy to the Lord. Timothy was a young man, probably in his late teens, when he was saved.

4. *Ministry.* When Paul and Silas revisited Derbe on the second missionary journey, Christians from that area highly recommended Timothy to Paul as an assistant (Acts 16:1-2). Paul responded, and Timothy was circumcised and ordained to the ministry of the Word (Acts 16:3-5; 1 Tim. 4:14).³ From that time onward, Timothy was Paul's closest co-worker, serving in these various capacities:

a. Paul's aide on the journeys, doing many of the necessary menial tasks as well as helping in the ministry of the Word

b. Paul's representative to young groups of Christians, in follow-up work, while Paul was ministering in new areas (for examples, read Acts 19:22 and 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2)

c. Paul's companion in prison (cf. Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Philem. 1; Heb. 13:23).

The relationship of the apostle Paul to the younger Timothy has been described by one writer thus:

That an older man should selflessly love, instruct and repose confidence in a youth and then continue to exhibit such close companionship for approximately twenty years is surely admirable. For a young man to respond with similar respect, confidence, and heartfelt admiration, without jealousy, impatience, or resentment is equally commendable. The relationship of

these two men is a remarkable display of Christian virtues at their best.⁴

Paul spent about three years of his third missionary journey in Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:8, 10; 20:31). Timothy was with Paul at this time (cf. Acts 19:1 and 19:22), so that he became well acquainted with the Christians there. This was the area where Timothy was ministering when Paul wrote 1 Timothy approximately seven years later.

5 . *Character.* Someone has written, “Timothy was one of the magnificent compensations Paul enjoyed for the cruel treatment he received at Lystra.” Various things written in Acts and the epistles furnish the background for a personality profile of this man of God. Try to visualize the man Timothy from these descriptions:⁵

tender, affectionate (1 Cor. 4:17; Phil.

2:20-21)

timid, tactful (1 Cor. 16:10-11: 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 1:6-7)

faithful, loyal (1 Cor. 4:17)

conscientious (Phil. 2:19-23)

devoted to God (1 Tim. 6:11)

with a physical infirmity (1 Tim. 5:23).

You will become more acquainted with Timothy the man as you survey the two letters bearing his name.

6 . *Death.* The Bible does not reveal any details of the deaths of Paul or Timothy. According to tradition, Paul was executed by Nero, and Timothy suffered martyrdom later under Emperor Domitian or Nerva.

## **B. THE AUTHOR PAUL**

Many things related to the apostle's

ministry (e.g., message, methods, people, places), up to the time of his writing 1 Timothy, form part of the background of the pastorals. So it will be very helpful at this time to view Paul's career in sketch form, observing how 1 Timothy fits into the pattern. For this, study Appendix B, pages 518-19, entitled, "An Approximate Chronology of the Life of Paul." Note especially all references to the man Timothy.

### **C. THE CHURCHES OF EPHEBUS**

Timothy's ministry extended to all the local congregations in and around Ephesus, so any reference in this book to the "mother" church at Ephesus includes the satellite churches as well. See Map W, which shows the geographical setting of 1 Timothy. There were, of course, other towns

and villages in the vicinity of Ephesus.

Read Acts 20:17-21 for Paul's resume of his ministry at Ephesus when he brought the gospel to that city for the first time (third missionary journey).

When Paul visited Ephesus after his release at Rome, he discovered that during his absence the church was being plagued with all kinds of spiritual problems. The city itself, with all its corruption and idolatry, was proving to be a spiritual battleground for the congregation of believers. One can well appreciate why this was a problem in many of the first-century churches.

“If it be remembered how vast was the change which most of the members had made in passing from the worship of the heathen temples to the pure and simple worship of Christianity, it will not excite surprise that their old life still clung to them

or that they did not clearly distinguish which things needed to be changed and which might continue as they had been.”⁶

Paul stayed a while and tried to help the people as much as he could. When he had to leave for Macedonia, he left Timothy at Ephesus to continue what he had started (1 Tim. 1:3).

The congregations of Ephesus were five to eight years old when Paul wrote 1 Timothy. Growing pains were still there, issuing from such important tasks as organizing, teaching, correcting, and unifying. Timothy had a full-time job, helping the leaders of the various congregations fulfill their ministry.

#### **D. DATE AND PLACE WRITTEN**

Paul probably wrote this letter from Macedonia, around A.D. 62⁷ (1 Tim. 1:3). He

expected to return to Ephesus shortly, but he knew of the possibility of a long delay (3:14-15).

# MAP W



## E. OCCASION

It is not difficult to learn from the epistle itself what situation at Ephesus constrained Paul to write at this time. Read the letter through, not tarrying over details, and observe direct or indirect references to the following problems or needs: spread of false doctrine,⁸ spiritual coldness, personnel problems, problems of the worship services, problems related to the offices of the church

and the care of widows.

## **F. PURPOSES**

Paul's immediate purpose in writing was to urge Timothy to stay on at Ephesus (1:3-4). Timothy must have yearned to be ministering at the side of Paul again. In general, Paul wrote this letter with two purposes in mind, to meet the needs caused by the occasion discussed above: (1) personal — to help Timothy; (2) ecclesiastical — to help the churches of Ephesus.

Underlying both of those aims was Paul's ever-present burden of propagating and preserving the truth of the gospel. The apostle clearly shared this burden with his colaborer when he spoke of the gospel as "the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with

which I have been entrusted” (1:11).

### **III. SURVEY OF 1 TIMOTHY**

#### **A. FIRST SCANNING**

Read 1 Timothy in one sitting. The purpose of this initial scanning is to get the atmosphere of the book and catch its major purposes. Write down your first impressions of the epistle and any key words and phrases that stand out as of this reading.

#### **B. SEGMENTS AND PARAGRAPHS**

Refer to Chart 97 and observe that new segments of this letter begin at the opening verse of each chapter, with these exceptions: at 6:26 in place of 6:1; and an additional unit beginning at 3:14. Mark these segments

in your Bible.

Next, mark new paragraph divisions in your Bible, at the following opening verses: 1:1, 3, 12, 18; 2:1, 9; 3:1, 8, 14; 4:1, 6, 11; 5:1, 3, 9, 11, 17; 6:1, 26, 6, 11, 17, 20. Read the paragraphs and assign a title for each.

Do you observe any groups of paragraphs with similar general content?

What have you noticed so far about these subjects in the epistle: Timothy's life and ministry, the church, notes of praise, various kinds of sin?

## **C. STRUCTURE**

Paul's letter is a unit from beginning to end. It is not an unorganized list of miscellaneous thoughts. Let us look at it more closely to see its structural relationships.

1. What is the opening salutation?
2. What would you consider to be the concluding note?
3. Does the word *Amen* appear at any place other than at the end of the letter? What is the function of such a word?⁹
4. Does there seem to be a turning point in the epistle? For example, how does chapter 3 end?
5. How do the opening words of chapter 2 indicate a beginning of something new here? Compare what goes before (chap. 1) with what follows (chaps. 2-3).
6. What reference to the local church is made in 3:15? Are chapters 2 and 3 about the subject of the church? Support your answer.
7. What seems to be the general subject of chapters 4-6?

## D. SURVEY CHART

Survey Chart 97 shows some of the structure of this letter. Study it carefully, in the light of your own observations made so far. Among other things, note the following:

1. A major division is made at 2:1. What is the two-part outline?

2. The key of the epistle is shown as 3:14-16. Read the passage. How is it related to what goes before and to what follows? How is this shown on the chart?

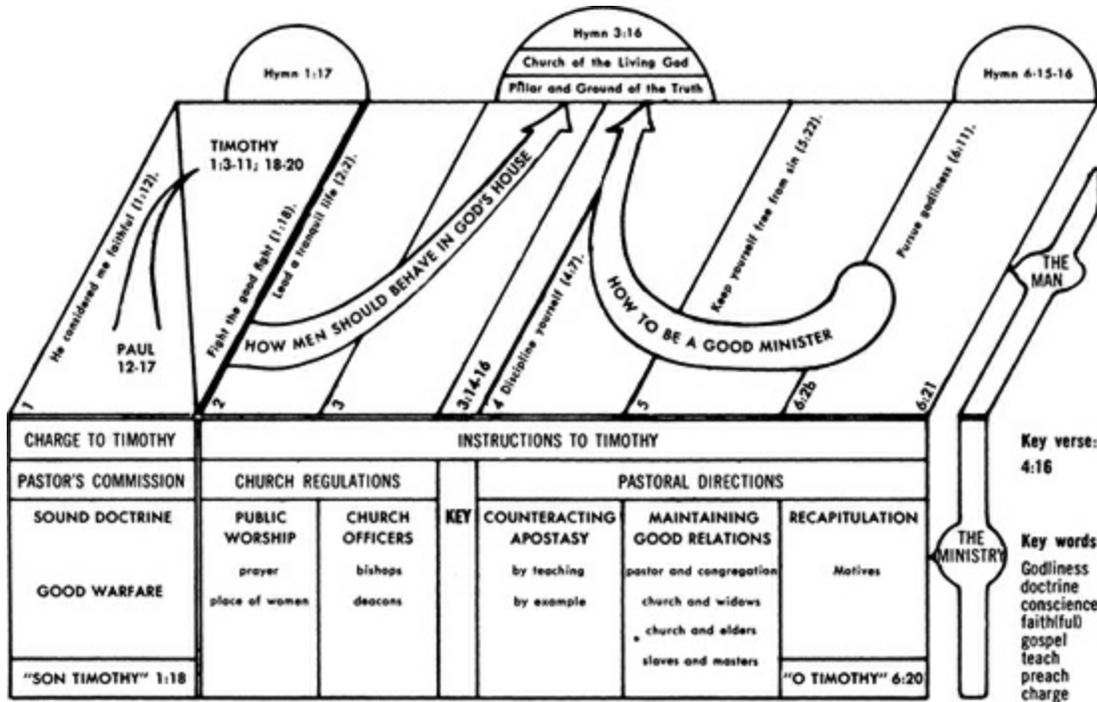
3. Study the contents of each chapter as shown on the chart. What is the difference between *church regulations* and *pastoral directions*?

4. Note the outline indicators at the right of the chart, *the man* and *the ministry*. These are two subjects that Paul writes much about in the letter. For example, how is

chapter 1, *charge to Timothy*, an appropriate introduction to all that follows?

5. Note the three indicators of hymns on the charts. Read the passages. What is the context of each?

# CHART 97: 1 TIMOTHY: GODLINESS AND PASTORAL CARE



6. Note the title for 1 Timothy, shown at the top of the chart. How do the two subjects of the title appear in the letter?

## IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 1 TIMOTHY

### A. INTERCESSORY PRAYER (2:1-7)

Read the passage and observe who are the objects of intercessory prayer. What other things are taught about prayer in verses 1-4?

What other subjects does Paul write about in the full paragraph, and how are these related to intercessory prayer?

## **B. WOMEN (2:9-15)**

Read the paragraph, noting the different subjects Paul writes about regarding women. Compare your observations with this outline:

2:9-10 — A woman's appearance in public

2:11-12 — A woman's place in the church

2:13-15 — The first woman, Eve

What is the timeless, universal principle taught in each of the first two parts (2:9-10; 2:11-12)? In the paragraph Paul writes about the noble state of Christian

womanhood. Where do these descriptions appear: godly life, diligent learning, salvation?

### **C. CHURCH OFFICERS (3:1-13)**

Paul writes here about two kinds of church officers: overseer and deacon (NASB). Before examining the passage closely, read the following descriptions of the two offices, as taught by various New Testament passages.

The organization of local churches in the first century was simple and basic. There were only two offices: *episkopos* and *diakonos*, Greek titles translated by the King James Version as *bishops* and *deacons*, respectively (Phil. 1:1).

#### *1. Titles.*

a . *Episkopos*. The Greek word means

literally “overseer,” as it is consistently translated in the *New American Standard Bible*. The word appears in these New Testament verses: Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:7.

The titles *elder* and *overseer* referred to the same person and were used interchangeably (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7). The title *overseer* denoted the *function* of the office. The title *elder* (Greek, *presbyteros*) was a carry-over from the Jewish synagogue organization and denoted the *dignity* and *authority* of the office.

b . *Diakonos*. The Greek word translated “deacon” means literally “servant” or “minister.” It is distinguished from the common New Testament word for servant (*doulos*) thus: *diakonos* views a servant in relationship to his work, and *doulos* views a servant in relationship to his master. Consult

a concordance for the appearances of these three words: *deacon*, *minister*, *servant*.

## 2. *Functions*.

a . *Overseers* were superintendents of a local church. They were also the teachers and preachers of the congregation, having the responsibility of feeding the flock (Acts 20:28; cf. 1 Pet. 5:2). Other duties included guarding the congregation from spiritual harm (Acts 20:29-31); being examples to the members (1 Pet. 5:3); and visiting those in need (James 1:27). In other words, the title *overseer* of the first centuries was equivalent to the present-day title of *pastor*.¹⁰

b . *Deacons* were the assistants of the overseers, serving in spiritual matters but especially in the physical, mundane areas of the church's life. Read Acts 6:1-6, which is the description of what may be the first deacon appointments in the New Testament

church (even though the word *deacon* does not appear in the Bible text).

On the basis of the previous discussion, would you say that the two offices of the early New Testament church called for very strict qualifications of those who would serve in them? In the light of this, study the qualifications given by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1-13: qualifications of the overseer (3:1-7); qualifications of the deacon (3:8-13).

#### **D. HYMN OF DOCTRINE (3.16)**

Paul may be quoting here from an early creedal hymn used by the Christians. What prime doctrines appear in the stanza? What do you think Paul has in mind by introducing the lines by the phrase, “great is the mystery of godliness”?

## **E. ANTIDOTE FOR FALSE TEACHING (4:1-16)**

False teaching was one threat to the churches that Paul vigorously forewarned against. The apostle's consistent formula was, in effect, destroy false doctrine by sound doctrine. This is the subject of 4:1-16, as Paul turns his attention particularly to Timothy's missions, showing him how he can minister to the needs and problems of the Ephesian churches.

What false doctrines and teachers does Paul expose in 4:1-5? What sound doctrines does he teach throughout the chapter?

## **F. WIDOWS, ELDERS, AND SLAVES (5:3—6:2a)**

Questions and problems that had arisen in

the churches about widows, elders, and slaves are now discussed by Paul.

1 . *Widows*. Four groups of widows are cited.¹¹ Only the first group is eligible for church support. Observe in the text the description and disposition given for each group.

- real widows (5:3, 5, 9-10)
- widows with relatives able to support (5:4, 8, 16)
- widows living in wanton pleasure (5:6-7)
- young widows (5:11-15)

2 . *Elders* (5:17-25). The word *elder* does not appear after verse 19, but it seems that Paul is still thinking about this group of church leaders until he moves to the next group at 6:1. Following this pattern, observe

in the text what these verses teach about elders: 5:17-18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24-25.

3 . *Slaves* (6:1-2a). Christian employees have obligations to Christian employers, even as employers have obligations to their employees. Paul here applies the gospel to the slave-master situation that existed in the households of many new converts to Christ in the first century. Are these verses Paul's counsel to servants or to masters? Might there have been a problem in the Christian households about this when he wrote? If so, what was it?

## **G. WEALTH (6:6-10, 17-19)**

Paul gives sound advice to those who are blessed with wealth. How does he relate the following subjects to wealth: godliness, contentment, evil, good works, eternal

wealth?¹²

## V. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES FOR 1 TIMOTHY

What key words and verses did you observe in your survey of 1 Timothy? Note the ones cited on Chart 97. Observe that *godliness* appears eight times in the letter. This is one of the reasons for including it in the two-part title, “Godliness and Pastoral Care.”

## VI. APPLICATIONS FROM 1 TIMOTHY

1. Go back over the epistle and read the various things Paul wrote about the Christian pastor. Use the following outline in organizing your reading.¹³ What is the value of this instruction to laymen of a local church?

a. His office: 1:1, 11, 12, 18; 2:7; 3:1; 4:11; 6:12.

b. His qualifications: 1:16, 18; 3:2, 4-6; 4:6, 12, 15, 16; 5:21-22; 6:13-14.

c. His duties as preacher: 1:4; 2:7, 8; 3:8-15; 4:6, 7, 11; 5:14-16, 20, 21; 6:1, 2, 4, 17-19, 20-21.

d. His duties as pastor: 1:3, 4, 18-19; 2:1, 2; 3:2, 3, 4-7, 8-13, 15; 5:1-2, 4-16, 20, 21; 6:10, 11, 12, 20.

e. His personal life: 1:5, 16, 18; 3:2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 15; 5:22, 23; 6:6-8, 9, 20.

2. What does this letter teach about the following:

a. the church's obligation to any physical needs of members of the congregation

b. procedures, policies, and principles to be followed when calling a man to serve as pastor

c. the kind of Christian employee that all of us should strive to be

d. the daily conduct of women — whether they are widows, single, or married — which is pleasing to the Lord

e. why church organization and administration need not suppress spiritual vitality.

3. What does 1 Timothy teach about prayer?

## **VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS ON 1 TIMOTHY**

1. In what order were the pastoral epistles written?

2. When did Paul first bring the gospel to Ephesus? How long did he minister there at that time?

3. What does the name Timothy mean? When was Timothy converted? When did he

join Paul's missionary party?

4. In what three ways did Timothy serve with Paul?

5. What kind of a man was Timothy?

6. Did Timothy minister to only the "mother" church at Ephesus? What was Timothy's main responsibility?

7. What were some of the problems in the Ephesian congregation when Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy?

8. What were Paul's two main purposes in writing the epistle?

9. What practical lessons can be learned for today from this New Testament book?

10. What are the two main structural divisions of 1 Timothy?

11. In what chapter does Paul give his personal testimony in connection with the charge to Timothy?

12. What subjects does Paul write about in the section called *church regulations* (p. 379)?

13. In what chapter does Paul write about widows?

14. Name five key words of this letter.

## VIII. FURTHER STUDY OF 1 TIMOTHY

1. With the help of an exhaustive concordance, study the usage of the key word *godliness* in the New Testament. The Greek word is a compound of two roots: *eu* (good), and *sebomai* (revere, adore).¹⁴

2. The phrase “this is a faithful saying” appears five times in the pastoral epistles. Use the following comparative outline to suggest other studies of the phrase.¹⁵

Christ’s coming — the way of sins’ forgiveness (1 Tim. 1:15)

Christ's ministry — the way of noble service (1 Tim. 3:1)

Christ's life — the way of spiritual progress (1 Tim. 4:10)

Christ's world — the way of honorable work (Titus 3:8)

Christ's strength — the way of successful suffering (2 Tim. 2:11)

## IX. OUTLINE

1 TIMOTHY: Godliness and Pastoral Care

CHARGE TO TIMOTHY	1:1-20
Sound Doctrine	1:1-11
Grace and Warfare	1:12-20
INSTRUCTIONS TO TIMOTHY	2:1—6:21
Public Worship in the Church	2:1-15
Church Officers	3:1-16
Antidote for False Teaching	4:1-16
Widows, Elders, and Slaves	5:1—6:2a
Final Instructions and Exhortations	6:26-21

## X. BACKGROUND OF TITUS

Soon after Paul wrote 1 Timothy to his closest friend, he wrote a letter to another co-worker and fellow-servant, Titus. This letter has been called “a priceless and unrivalled manual of pastoral advice.” Though written to a church leader, its message is intended for all Christians, just as the other pastoral epistles are. Luther wrote of it: “This is a short Epistle, but yet such a quintessence of Christian doctrine, and composed in such a masterly manner, that it contains all that is needful for Christian knowledge and life.”¹⁶

Review what you learned about Titus earlier in this chapter.

## **A THE MAN TITUS**

1. *Name and family.* The name Titus was a common Latin name in Paul’s day. Both of

Titus's parents were Greek. Their residence may have been in a city such as Antioch of Syria (cf. Gal. 1:21; 2:1).

2 . *Conversion.* Titus may have been converted through the ministry of Paul, as suggested by Titus 1:4. (Cf. 1 Cor. 4:15.)

# CHART 98: THE MEN TIMOTHY AND TITUS COMPARED

LIKENESSES	
Both were young and gifted.	
Both were co-workers of Paul.	
Both served in difficult church situations.	
DIFFERENCES	
TIMOTHY	TITUS
half-Jew	wholly Gentile
circumcised by Paul	uncircumcised
served at Corinth and Ephesus	served at Corinth and Crete
nervous and retiring personality	strong and stern personality
prominent in Acts	not mentioned in Acts

3. *Ministry as Paul's assistant.* Titus does not appear by name in the book of Acts, but his first contacts with Paul were during those years. The following is a summary of his ministries with the apostle.

a. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. (Read Galatians 2:1-4.)

b. He was Paul's representative at the Corinthian church during Paul's third

missionary journey (1) to alleviate tension there (2 Cor. 7:6, 13-14); and (2) to collect money for the poor (2 Cor. 8:6, 16, 23).

c. He was Paul's representative at the Cretan churches after Paul's release from the first Roman imprisonment (Titus 1:4-5).

d. He had a ministry at Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10).

4. *Timothy and Titus compared.* Likenesses and differences of the two men are summarized in Chart 98.

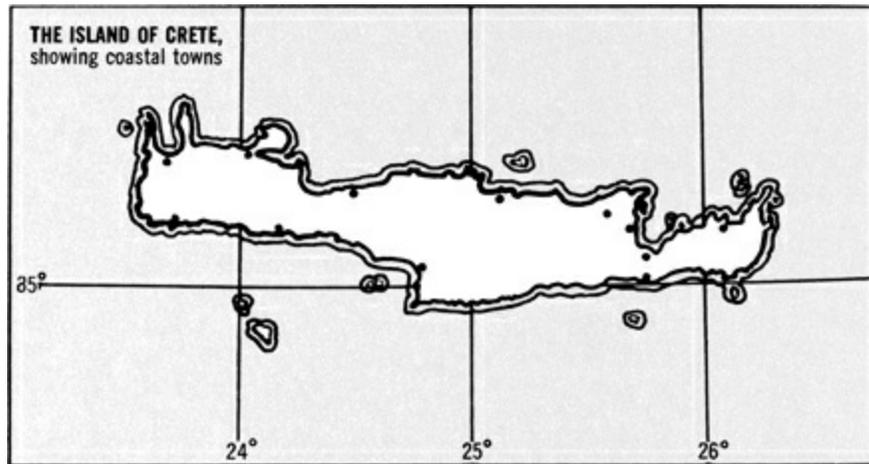
5 . *Character.* Titus was a consecrated Christian of strong affection, courage, and zeal. He was wise and practical in his dealings with others, commanding their respect. "He knew how to handle the quarrelsome Corinthians, the mendacious Cretans, and the pugnacious Dalmatians."¹⁷

## **B. THE EPISTLE TO TITUS**

1 . *Date and place written.* Paul wrote to Titus soon after writing 1 Timothy, probably while the apostle was in Macedonia, enroute to Nicopolis (3:12), in A.D. 62.

2. *Island of Crete.* Paul had left Titus in the Roman province of Crete, just as he had left Timothy at Ephesus (1:5). This mountainous island is located southeast of Greece (see Map W, p. 376); its dimensions are 160 miles by 35 miles. The accompanying Map X shows where its numerous coastal towns were located in Titus's day.

## MAP X



These towns were heavily populated, described by one writer as “neither peaceable among themselves, nor very patient of foreign dominion.” Morally and socially the Cretans had a bad reputation in the Mediterranean world, illustrated by these two sayings from classical writing: “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons” (Epimenides, quoted by Paul in 1:12). “The Cretans are always brigands and piratical, and unjust” (Leonides).

3. *Churches of Crete.* It is not known when or by whom the Cretans were first evangelized. The original nucleus of

Christians may have begun on the day of Pentecost, at Jerusalem (Acts 2:11). Paul did not visit the island on any of his missionary journeys. He may have preached in the cities of the island on his brief visit after the Roman imprisonment. (Read Titus 1:5.) By the time he wrote to Titus, however, he had many Christian friends living there (Titus 3:15). The very fact that God included in the canon of the New Testament a letter written indirectly to the Cretan churches that were not widely known to the first-century Christian world tells us that no local church, however small or insignificant in man's eyes, is overlooked by God.

4. *Occasion of writing.* Paul wrote the book of Titus for many of the same reasons he wrote the book of 1 Timothy. These include:

a. disorder and false teaching threatening the local churches (1:10-11)

b. inconsistent living by church members  
c. need for instruction concerning church organization.

5 . *Purposes of the epistle.* The main purposes of the epistle, in the immediate setting, include (a) to advise Titus in his task of superintending the circuit of Cretan churches as Paul's representative (1:5); (b) to instruct and exhort both Titus and the churches regarding Christian behavior consistent with Christian doctrine (chaps. 1-3); (c) to instruct Titus concerning personal matters (3:12-13).

6. *Main contents.* Your survey of Titus will show the main subjects discussed by Paul in the epistle. The predominant theme is that of maintaining good works as a demonstration of a saving faith. Read the passages 2:11-14 and 3:4-7, which have been called two of the most comprehensive

statements of Christian truth to be found in the New Testament.

7. *Place among the pastoral epistles.* Of the pastoral epistles, 1 Timothy and Titus are most alike regarding background and content, and in one sense could be called twin epistles. The three pastoral epistles are compared in the accompanying diagram.

## PASTORAL EPISTLES COMPARED

1 TIMOTHY	TITUS	2 TIMOTHY
predominantly pastoral	less pastoral	mainly personal
Guard the gospel (6:20)	Practice the gospel (3:8)	Preach the gospel (4:2)

## **XL SURVEY OF TITUS**

### **A. READINGS**

Follow the stages and exercises of survey

that you have established in your own personal study. Use the suggestions given below to send you on various paths of inquiry.

1. Identify the introduction and conclusion of the letter. What does Paul write about in each part, in addition to the customary greetings?

2. Regard each chapter (not including the introduction and conclusion) as a unit of study. Read the chapters a few times and observe the things Paul writes about and *how* he writes them.

3. Note the two comprehensive doctrinal passages cited earlier (2:11-14 and 3:4-7). What is the *context* of each? What is the *content* of each?

4. You will observe the word *doctrine* as one of the key words of Titus. Note the phrase of 2:10, “that they may adorn the

doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.” The meaning of “adorn” is “to make attractive” (cf. NIV translation). As you read the text of Titus, observe the many ways Paul exhorts to good deeds, which are the adornment of the gospel. Note the repetition of the phrase “good deeds.”

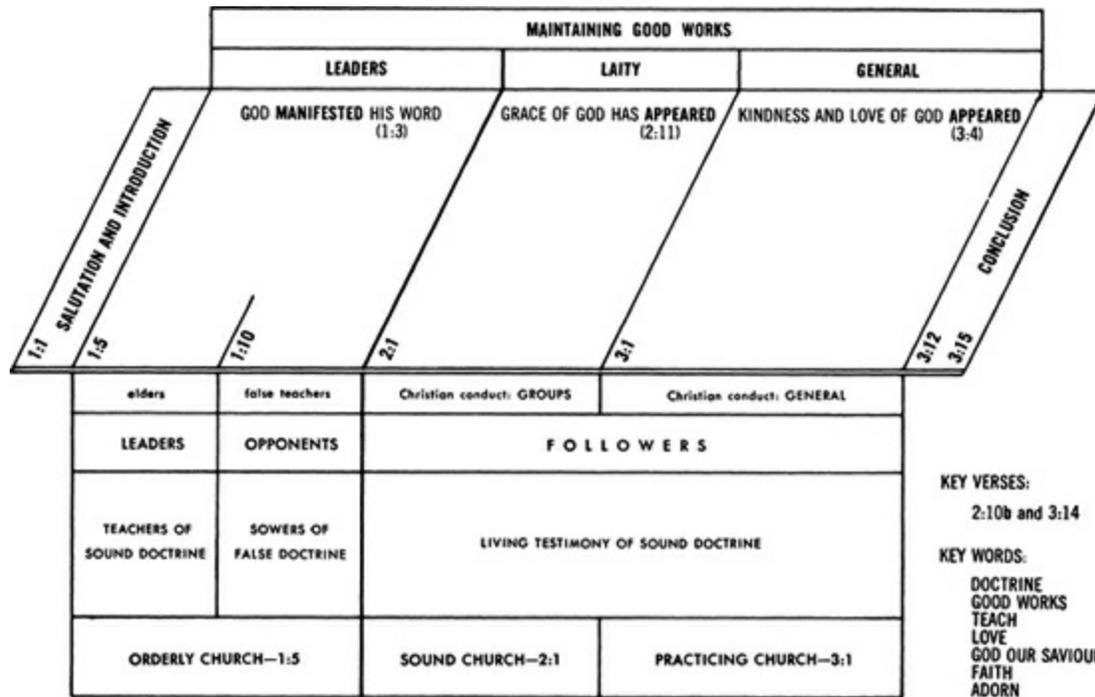
5. What groups of people does Paul write about in each chapter?

## **B. SURVEY CHART**

Study carefully the different structural outlines shown on the survey, Chart 99, and note the following:

1. In this letter Paul writes mainly about three groups: leaders, opponents, and followers. Survey the Bible text to identify who they are.

# CHART 99: TITUS: ADORNING THE DOCTRINE OF GOD



2. Note the outline centered on *doctrine*. How is this outline derived from the Bible text?

3. Note the other outlines appearing on the chart. Relate these to your own observations in the survey process.

4. What title is assigned to the letter? What verse is it derived from?

## XII. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF TITUS

## A. FALSE TEACHING IN A CHURCH (1:1-16)

After an inspiring greeting (1:1-4), Paul launches into the main subject of his letter without delay. The churches of Crete had some glaring defects, and the apostle wanted Titus to “set things in order” there (1:5).

This first chapter illustrates a consistent principle of the Bible: no diagnosis without prescription for cure. As far as Paul was concerned, the problems of the churches on the island of Crete could be solved, hence the letter to his friend and co-worker.

Read the chapter again and observe these three parts:

- . *Doctrine* (1:1-4). False teaching is best dealt with by true doctrine. What different doctrines does Paul refer to

here?

. *Leaders* (1:5-9). Spiritual, experienced leaders of the church have the responsibility to deal with the problem of false teaching. What qualifications of the leaders are cited here?

. *False teachers* (1:10-16). Observe the different false teachers and teachings plaguing the Cretan churches.

## **B. ADORNING THE GOSPEL (2.1-15)**

In this chapter Paul turns his attention to the churches' lay members, exhorting them, through Titus, to genuine Christian conduct. Already in the letter he has written much about creedal truth, using such terms as *the faith, the truth, word, preaching, commandment, sound doctrine*. Now he

appeals for the kind of Christian conduct that will make that doctrine attractive to people: “Adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect” (2:106; cf. Matt. 5:16). Recall that this verse represents the key thought of the entire epistle.

What exhortations does Paul give to each group cited in chapter 2?

### **C. THE GOOD WORKS OF A BELIEVER (3:1-15)**

In this last chapter of his letter to Titus, Paul masterfully blends the two truths of faith and works, leaving no question unanswered concerning the place of good works in the life of a believer.

Read each of the three paragraphs and observe (1) the reference to “good deeds” in each paragraph; (2) what Paul writes about

each subject listed below:

Preparation for good works 3:1-7

Carefulness in good works 3:8-11

Regularity of good works 3:12-15

## **D. THE GRACE OF GOD (2:11-14; 3:4-7)**

As noted earlier, these are two of the most comprehensive statements of the Christian gospel to be found in the New Testament. Compare the two lists of doctrines in the two passages.

### **XIII. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES FOR TITUS**

What key words and verses did you observe in your survey? Compare these with what is shown on Chart 99. Refer to an exhaustive concordance and note how often some of the words are repeated in the letter.

In your own words, how would you

identify the theme of Titus?

#### **XIV. APPLICATIONS FROM TITUS**

You have seen in your survey of Titus that the main emphasis of the epistle is the adorning of the gospel by good deeds. Think through the epistle once again and see how many practical applications you can recall.

#### **XV. REVIEW QUESTIONS ON TITUS**

1. In what different ways did Titus assist Paul in the gospel ministry?
2. Compare Titus and Timothy.
3. Describe the local congregations of Christians on the island of Crete.
4. What were some of Paul's main purposes in writing Titus?
5. What are some prominent emphases of the epistle?

6. Compare this epistle with 1 Timothy.

7. List some key words of Titus, and quote one key verse.

8. Complete the outline: ORDERLY CHURCH; SOUND CHURCH;

---

9. In what part of the letter does Paul write about false teachers and false teachings?

10. What is the meaning of the phrase, “adorning the doctrine of God”?

## **XVI. FURTHER STUDY OF TITUS**

1. *Word study.* Make a comparative study of all the verses of Titus where the word *work(s)* appears.

2. *Doctrine study.* Atonement, redemption, and sanctification are three doctrines referred to in Titus 2:14. How are the three

doctrines related to each other? (Use outside sources, such as a book of doctrine.)

3. After you have studied the book of James, compare James and Titus regarding their emphasis of good works in the life of the believer.

## **XVII. OUTLINE**

### **TITUS: Adorning the Doctrine of God**

Salutation and Introduction	1:1-4
CHURCH LEADERS DEALING WITH FALSE TEACHERS	1:5-16
MAKING CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE ATTRACTIVE BY EXAMPLE	2:1-15
THE GOOD WORKS OF A BELIEVER	3:1-11
Conclusion and Benediction	3:12-15

## **XVIII. BACKGROUND OF 2 TIMOTHY**

The tenderest and most moving of Paul's letters was his last one, known by title as 2 Timothy. Paul was an aged man when he wrote this epistle from a cold, dark dungeon

of a Roman prison. He knew he had but a short time left to live, and so the letter is his spiritual last will and testament — his “dying wish” — to friend and co-worker Timothy.

## **A. BACKGROUND**

Some of the background of 1 Timothy already studied is common to that of 2 Timothy and hence need not be repeated. It will help you to review that background now. Below is a look at the particular setting of 2 Timothy.

1. *Date and place written.* Paul wrote this letter from prison at Rome around A.D. 67, about five years after his first letter to Timothy. Refer to the chronology of Paul’s life (Appendix B, p. 518-19), and note the setting of the two Roman imprisonments.

Part of the sequence is this:

A.D. 58-62 First imprisonment — “prison epistles” written

A.D. 62-66 Release and travels — 1 Timothy written

A.D. 67 Second imprisonment — 2 Timothy written

There was one event in Rome that happened during Paul’s time of release and led indirectly to his second imprisonment. That was the burning of Rome, which occurred on July 19, A.D. 64. When Emperor Nero failed to squelch the well-founded suspicion that he had ordered the fires, he blamed the Christians and ordered them to be arrested and punished. For the remainder of his reign Christianity was a *religio illicita* (illegal religion) and waves of anti-Christian persecution rolled across the lands of the Empire. When Paul returned east in the

spring of A.D. 66, his enemies had no problem arresting him and transporting him to a prison in Rome.

Read the following verses of 2 Timothy, which point to the fact of this last imprisonment: 1:16-17; 2:3, 9-13; 4:6-8, 16. Study the comparisons of the two imprisonments, as shown on Chart 100.

# CHART 100: PAUL'S TWO IMPRISONMENTS COMPARED

FIRST IMPRISONMENT	SECOND IMPRISONMENT
accused by Jews of heresy and sedition	persecuted by Rome and arrested as a malefactor
good living conditions in a rented house (Ac 28:30-31)	poor conditions, in a cold, dark dungeon
many friends visited him	virtually alone
had many opportunities for Christian witness	opportunities restricted
expected freedom (Phil 1:24-26)	anticipated execution (2 Ti 4:6)

2. *Occasion and purpose.* The immediate occasion of the letter was Paul's desire to see Timothy and Mark again (4:9, 11, 21) and to have Timothy bring Paul's cloak, books, and parchments, which the apostle had left at Troas (4:13).¹⁸ The cloak was for the damp of the cell and the cold of the winter. Of the two kinds of writing (books and parchments) that Paul requested, the latter no doubt included the Scriptures (Old Testament), hence the accent, "*especially the parchments*" (italics added).

Paul's main purpose in writing was to

inspire and challenge Timothy to take up the torch of the gospel ministry left by the apostle. It is possible that Timothy had left Ephesus by this time, suggested by 4:12. If so, he probably was engaged in evangelistic work in Macedonia or Asia. If Paul was executed before Timothy could visit him, the letter was that much more significant for Timothy.¹⁹

Try to imagine how Timothy felt when he received this letter from his friend who just recently had been torn from him by Nero's soldiers. As far as Timothy knew, Paul already might have been executed by the tyrant Nero. Here is how one writer has described the soul of Timothy at that time:

Timothy stood awfully lonely, yet awfully exposed, in face of a world of thronging sorrows. Well might he have been shaken to the root of

his faith. He might almost have tasted a drop of that last despair which gives up to God and wishes that being could cease to be. To such a heart, when some sad weeks had passed away, came this Letter ... to pour its mighty sympathies into his sorrow and to bid him be strong again in the living Lord Jesus Christ.²⁰

3 . *Tone.* Paul's last inspired writing has been called "an epistle of mingled gloom and glory." True, there is a pathos about such lines as "I am already being poured out" (4:6) and "Demas has deserted me" (4:10). Paul was ever truthful, and exposing his wounded heart like this could only have spurred Timothy on to the fellowship of suffering. But the prominent tone of the letter, even in references to trials as mentioned above, is triumph, and glory, and

deep gratitude. Paul is not despondent; he does not despair. Only a sure hope could give birth to such an exclamation as, “In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness” (4:8).

## **XIX. SURVEY OF 2 TIMOTHY**

### **A. FIRST READING**

1. First mark your Bible to show segment divisions beginning at the following verses: 1:1, 3; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1, 6, 9, 22. Then read the letter through, aloud if possible, in one sitting for first impressions. Be aware of the segment units as you read.

2. What atmosphere do you sense in the letter?

3. What key words and phrases stand out prominently?

## **B. SEGMENTS**

1. Read the letter again, segment by segment. Assign segment titles. Try to identify a main subject of each segment. Are you beginning to see differences of content of the segments?

2. Do the same for the paragraphs of the epistle, using this set of paragraph divisions: 1:1, 3, 6, 11, 15; 2:1, 8, 14, 20; 3:1, 10, 13, 14; 4:1, 6, 9, 19, 22.

3. Record on paper any new observations and impressions.

## **C. STRUCTURE**

Because this letter is very personal, we are not surprised that it does not have an elaborate organization such as does a doctrinal book like Romans. At the same

time, we observe that the master author Paul did not put together the letter in a haphazard way. You probably sensed a togetherness of the composition in the readings you have already made.

1. What would you identify to be the introduction and conclusion of the letter?

2. Review the main subjects that you assigned to the segments. Do any combinations of segments cover any general area of subject? For example, is there a concentrated section of exhortations and warnings?

3. Look more at the paragraphs, and note the flow of Paul's thinking as he writes to Timothy.

4. Identify each segment for its emphasis of any one of the three time elements of past, present, future.

5. Try to arrive at a basic outline for this

epistle.

## D. SURVEY CHART

Study carefully Chart 101. Note the following:

1. The parting words of 4:6-8 are the climax of the epistle.

2. Study the outline beginning with *thanksgiving for Timothy*. Scan the chapters and account for each part of this outline.

3. Note the three-part major outline, *past — present — future*. Check this out by scanning the epistle again. Do these three time references represent the *general* emphasis of each particular section?

4. The topical outline on the bottom of the chart lists the references to God's Word as these appear throughout the epistle.

Observe the variety of references. Do you sense a climax in the brief phrase, “Preach the word”?

5. The three-part outline of *challenge* reveals the major flow of Paul’s writing. Read the section 1:3—2:13 and observe the different ways Paul urges Timothy to suffer hardship *with* him. Then note in 2:14—4:5 the repeated theme of warning to *avoid* evil men. Observe the two subjects of endurance and separation in the title assigned to the epistle.

6. Compare the outlines shown on the chart with your own observations of the epistle’s organization.

## **XX. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 2 TIMOTHY**

### **A. FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE (1:3-18)**

The burden of Paul's heart was to inspire and challenge his young successor Timothy to keep witnessing for Christ. It was no easy task to tell Timothy that afflictions were part of the price to pay for being faithful to his calling in Christ, especially since the young evangelist was already experiencing deep trials and shedding tears in travail (1:4). But Paul had the answers, learned by experience at the feet of his Master, whom he first had met thirty-four years earlier. The apostle knew that the foundations of the gospel were impregnable, and that if Timothy could be reassured about this, he would not falter.

Read the passage. How does Paul show the following to be foundations for Christian service: home training, 1:3-5; God's work, 1:6-10; divine call to serve, 1:11-14; bond of fellowship, 1:15-18?

## **B. CHAPTER OF METAPHORS (2:1-26)**

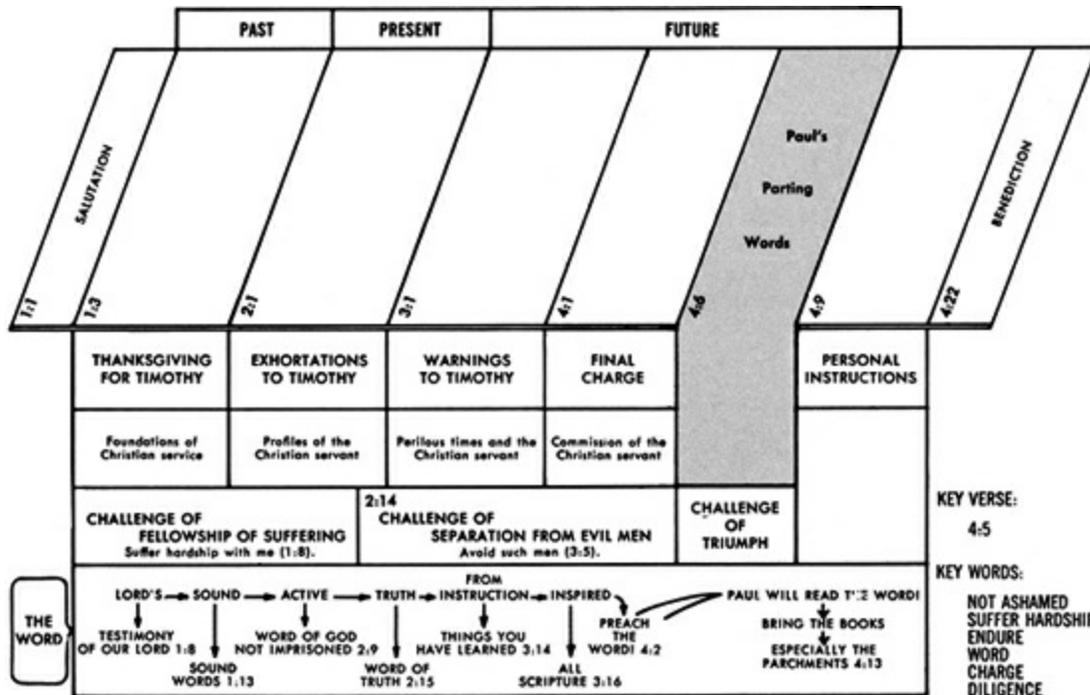
After reassuring Timothy about foundations of Christian service, Paul writes about the ministry itself. He is a master in using metaphors to describe persons, things, and actions.²¹ In this chapter he uses a number of them, such as *athlete* and *farmer*, to describe the Christian servant and to challenge Timothy to be a good one. Because Paul writes from prison and sees soldiers every day, it should not surprise us that one of the first metaphors he uses is that of *soldier*: “Timothy, be a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (see 2:3).

Read the chapter, observing each metaphor and what Paul teaches in each instance.

## **C. THE LAST DAYS (3:1-9, 13)**

Paul the realist forewarns Timothy about the difficult times — times of stress — which were yet to come upon the world. The apostle identifies the times as “the last days” (3:1). Sometimes the New Testament phrase *last days* refers to the entire Messianic age, including the first century (cf. Acts 2:16-17; 1 John 2:18). Homer Kent writes, “Within this period of the last days, which has already extended more than nineteen centuries, there will set in shorter seasons. ... These will occur from time to time (even during Timothy’s lifetime), but conditions will become progressively worse.”²² When you study this passage observe not only the description of the times but also the strategy for triumph that Paul shares with his readers, to inspire to greater heights of endurance.

# CHART 101: 2 TIMOTHY: ENDURANCE AND SEPARATION IN THE MINISTRY



## D. GOD-INSPIRED SCRIPTURES (3:16-17)

This is the classic passage of the Bible on the divine inspiration of the sacred *writings*. (Review the discussion of this in Chapter 1 of this study manual.) The phrase “inspired by God” translates one Greek word, *theopneustia*, meaning literally “God-breathed.”

Compare 2 Peter 1:21, which teaches the

divine inspiration of the human *writers*. The Bible has been called “the heart of God in the words of God.” The infallibility and inerrancy of the original autographs rest firmly on such testimonies as 2 Timothy 3:16, as well as the very character of God.

Observe what Paul writes about in the verses of chapter 3 preceding the *theopneustia* passage. How are the two related?

## **E. PAUL’S FAREWELL (4:1-22)**

These are Paul’s last recorded words, written in a tone of urgency, triumph, and tender care. The chapter is the climax not only of this epistle but of the entire recorded earthly life of the man from Tarsus.

The chapter is of four main parts. What does Paul write, in each?

4:1-5 TIMOTHY

4:6-8 PAUL

4:9-18 MAINLY PAUL

4:19-22 MAINLY PAUL

## **XXI. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES FOR 2 TIMOTHY**

In your survey of 2 Timothy what did you choose as key words and verses? Compare these with what is shown on Chart 101.

In your own words write what you consider to be the theme of 2 Timothy.

## **XXII. APPLICATIONS FROM 2 TIMOTHY**

1. This last letter of Paul understandably includes many warm exhortations and strong commands. Make a list of the ones that stand out prominently in your memory.

2. Write a list of the practical truths taught by 1:7. Do the same for the uassages listed below.

2:1-7 Rewards for Christians

2:8-20 Discipline in the Christian life

2:21-25 What to flee and what to follow (cf. chapter 3)

4:1-5 Ministry of the Word

4:6-8 Crown of righteousness

## **XXIII. REVIEW QUESTIONS ON 2 TIMOTHY**

1. Trace briefly the careers of Paul and Timothy between the years of the writing of the two epistles.

2. Compare the two imprisonments of Paul.

3. What were Paul's purposes in writing 2 Timothy?

4. Name a few outstanding passages for which 2 Timothy is remembered.

5. How much of the structure of this

epistle can you remember? Where is a climax?

6. Where in the letter does Paul make the challenge of *fellowship of suffering*? Where does he write much about avoiding the fellowship of evil men?

7. Name five different things that Paul writes about the Word, in this epistle.

8. How would you compare 2 Timothy with 1 Timothy and Titus? Reflect on the observation that 2 Timothy is mainly personal, only incidentally pastoral, and less doctrinal than the other two pastoral epistles.

9. Name some key words of 2 Timothy.

10. What are the key teachings of 3:16-17?

## **XXIV. FURTHER STUDY OF 2 TIMOTHY**

Here are four vital subjects suggested for further study:

1. description of the world in last times
2. inerrancy of the original Scriptures
3. crowns as rewards for Christians
4. the ministry of preaching the Word.

## **XXV. OUTLINE**

### **2 TIMOTHY: Endurance and Separation in the Ministry**

Salutation	1:1-2
FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE	1:3-18
A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST	2:1-26
PERILOUS TIMES AND THE CHRISTIAN SERVANT	3:1-17
PAUL'S FAREWELL	4:1-18
Greetings and Benediction	4:19-22

## **XXVI. BACKGROUND OF PHILEMON**

Philemon is the shortest of Paul's writings, written about six years earlier than his last

epistle, 2 Timothy. Recall that Paul wrote to Philemon from his first imprisonment, when the apostle also wrote Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. One of the reasons Philemon is placed last in the canonical list of Paul's writings is its brevity.

The letter is a masterpiece of graceful, tactful, and delicate pleading for a forgiving spirit. This very personal correspondence of Paul has been described as "a model letter written by a master of letter writing."

## **A. NAMES IN THE LETTER**

1. Philemon was a well-to-do Christian friend of Paul, living in or near Colossae. He was probably the husband of Apphia and father of Archippus, two persons named in Philemon 2. The name Philemon means "loving."

2. Onesimus was a household servant of Philemon, who, after his conversion at Rome, probably came to know Paul intimately. His name means “useful,” or “profitable,” a common nickname for slaves.

3. The names cited in Philemon 23-24 were studied in connection with the Colossian epistle.

## **B. OCCASION AND PURPOSE OF THE LETTER**

Onesimus had apparently stolen money or goods from his master Philemon (Philem. 18) and fled to Rome like so many other runaway slaves. Through circumstances unknown to us, he became acquainted with Paul, who led him to the Lord (Philem. 10). Paul’s immediate concern was for Onesimus’s restoration and reconciliation

with Philemon. Hence the apostle's tender and moving intercessory letter to his close friend Philemon on behalf of Onesimus.

The bearers of the letter were Onesimus and Tychicus, who also delivered Paul's letters to the Ephesian and Colossian churches. (Cf. Col. 4:7-9.)

## **C. PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING**

Paul wrote to Philemon from prison in Rome, around A.D. 61. That was about the same time he wrote the other three prison epistles, namely Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians. (See Chart 1, p. 20.)

## **XXVII. SURVEY OF PHILEMON**

### **A. READINGS**

1. First mark paragraph divisions in your Bible, beginning at the following verses: 1, 4, 8, 12, 17, 22.

2. Read the letter a few times, paragraph by paragraph. Identify the introduction and conclusion.

3. Where in the letter does Paul first make his request? What does he write about in verses 4-7?

4. Identify the main point of each paragraph, and construct an outline of the letter from this.

## **B. SURVEY CHART**

1. Study the survey, Chart 102. Note among other things the orderly progression of thought, as shown by the two outlines: *object of the appeal — the appeal — source of the appeal; praise of Philemon — plea for*

*Onesimus — promise of Paul.*

2. Study the entries made in the bottom areas of the chart. Locate the phrases in the Bible text that are the bases for the entries.

3. What title is assigned to the letter?

## **XXVIII. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF PHILEMON**

### **A. PLEA FOR FORGIVENESS**

The whole epistle is one Christian's plea to another to forgive and restore a third person. In what different ways does Paul make His appeal to Philemon?

### **B. SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT (ILLUSTRATION)**

Read verses 17-21 and apply the following phrases, by way of illustration, to the

# substitutionary work of Christ for the sinner:

“accept him as you would me” verse 17

“charge that to my account” verse 18

“I will repay it” verse 19

“you owe to me” verse 19

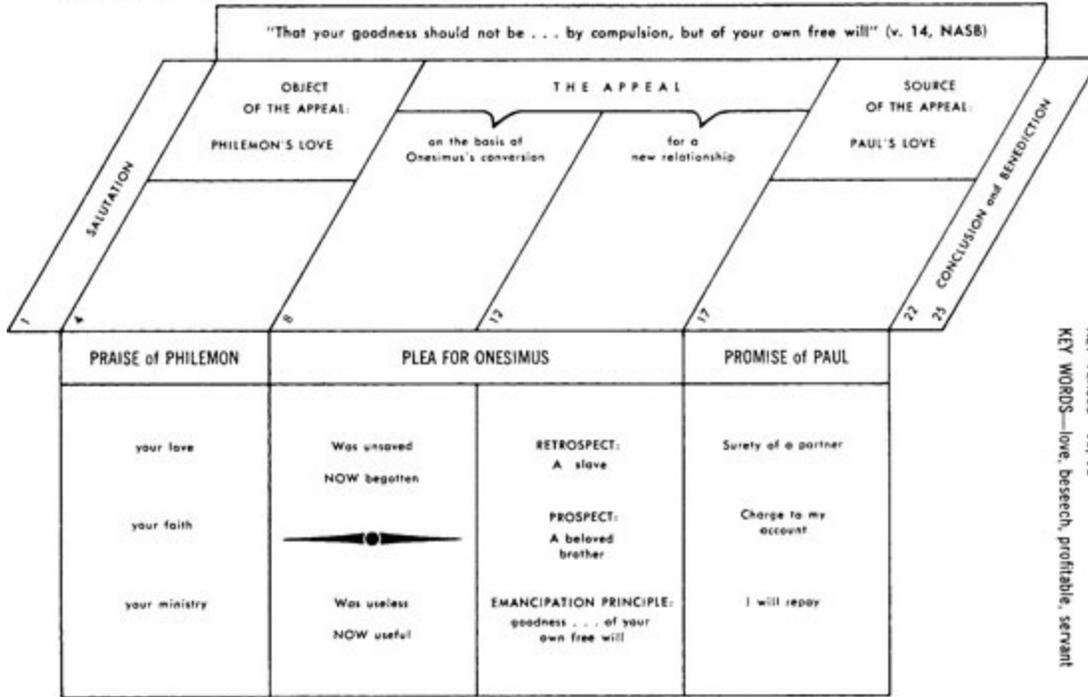
Read the entire epistle and look for other words and phrases similar to those cited above.

## **XXIX. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES FOR PHILEMON**

What key words and verses did you observe in your survey study? Compare those with the ones shown on Chart 102.

What is the theme of Philemon, in your own words?

# PHILEMON APPEAL FOR FORGIVENESS



KEY VERSES—10, 18  
KEY WORDS—love, beseech, profitable, servant

KEY VERSES—10, 18 ^{CHART 102}

KEY WORDS—love, beseech, profitable, servant

### XXX. APPLICATIONS FROM PHILEMON

1. What examples of tact and wisdom do you see in the letter? For example, observe that Paul does not use such words as *stole* or *fled* when referring to Onesimus.

2. What does this epistle teach about the master-servant relationship, when both are Christians? Compare Colossians 3:22—4:1. Extend this application to related situations today, such as that of employer-employee.

3. “For love’s sake I ... appeal to you” for Onesimus (Philem. 9-10). What do you learn about Christian love from this letter?

### XXXI. REVIEW QUESTIONS ON PHILEMON

1. What brought about the writing of Philemon?
2. When and where was the letter written?
3. How did Paul make his appeal?
4. Outline the epistle.
5. Name some key words and phrases.

## **XXXII. FURTHER STUDY OF PHILEMON**

Much has been written about the subject of slavery, including what the New Testament says about it. It has been observed, for example, that in his letter to Philemon Paul does not make a frontal attack upon the institution of slavery, which was very widespread throughout the Roman Empire. Rather, he sets forth principles and patterns of Christian conduct and relationships that inevitably must bring about the destruction of the institution,

when consistently applied. Study this subject further, using the New Testament and outside helps for your sources.

## **XXXIII. OUTLINE**

### **PHILEMON: Appeal for Forgiveness**

Salutation and Benediction	1-3
PRAISE OF PHILEMON	4-7
PLEA FOR ONESIMUS	8-16
PROMISE OF PAUL	17-21
Conclusion and Benediction	22-25

## **XXXIV. DEATH OF PAUL**

Soon after writing his last letter, 2 Timothy, Paul no doubt stood before Nero to hear the sentence of death. The Scriptures are silent concerning the end of the apostle's life. Here is a penetrating reconstruction of what might have transpired, as imagined by one author:

In all history there is not a more startling illustration of the irony of human life than this scene of Paul at the bar of Nero. ON THE JUDGMENT-SEAT, clad in the imperial purple, sat a man who in a bad world had attained the eminence of being the very worst and meanest being in it — a man stained with every crime, the murderer of his own mother, of his wives and of his best benefactors; a man whose whole being was so steeped in every namable and unnamable vice that body and soul of him were, as some one said at the time, nothing but a compound of mud and blood; and IN THE PRISONER'S DOCK stood the best man the world contained, his hair whitened with labors for the good of men and the glory of God.

The trial ended, Paul was

condemned and delivered over to the executioner. He was led out of the city with a crowd of the lowest rabble at his heels. The fatal spot was reached; he knelt beside the block; the headsman's axe gleamed in the sun and fell; and the head of the apostle of the world rolled down in the dust. ... The city falsely called eternal dismissed him with execration from her gates; but ten thousand times ten thousand welcomed him in the same hour at the gates of the city which is really eternal.²³

## **XXXV. SELECTED READING FOR THE PASTORAL LETTERS AND PHILEMON**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *An Introduction to*

*the Pauline Epistles*, pp. 305-65.

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*, pp. 331-42.

## COMMENTARIES

Erdman, Charles R. *The Pastoral Epistles of Paul*.

Gaebelein, Frank. *Philemon: The Gospel of Emancipation*.

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *First Timothy*.  
Everyman's Bible Commentary.

Kent, Homer A. *The Pastoral Epistles*.

Stibbs, A. M. "Titus". *The New Bible Commentary*.

Wallis, Wilbur ?. "I Timothy," "II Timothy," and "Titus." *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*.

## OTHER RELATED SOURCES

Bruce, F. F. *The Letters of Paul: Expanded Paraphrase.*

Ernst, Karl J. *The Art of Pastoral Counselling. A Study of the Epistle to Philemon.*

Strong, James. *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.* Thomas, Robert L., ed. *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*

Vincent, Marvin R. *Word Studies in the New Testament.*

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1. Technically, it might be said that Timothy and Titus were not *pastors*, as we use the term today, since in those early years a church's pastor was chosen from its elders (cf. Acts 20:17, 28-29). Timothy and Titus were not elders of churches at Ephesus

and Crete. Timothy's task was "to direct, organize, and supervise the work of the churches and to help repel and reject certain errorists whose efforts were threatening to corrupt that work. He had been temporarily left behind to carry on the work which Paul would do if he were there himself" (D. Edmond Hiebert, *First Timothy*, p. 10). Fortunately, the doctrines and applications of the epistles are unaffected by questions about the men's official title.

2. Philemon was addressed to others besides the man Philemon (see Philem. 1).

3. The rite of circumcision in this case was to keep open the door of witness to unbelieving Jews who would learn that Timothy was half Gentile (Acts 16:3).

4. Homer A. Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 19.

5. Sometimes a trait can only be implied from a Scripture passage.

6. James Stalker sees in this description of

the church at Corinth a picture of the average church of Paul's missionary journeys. *The Life of St. Paul*, p. 108.

7. Some hold that Paul wrote from Corinth in Greece.

8. Read Paul's earlier prediction of this in Acts 20:28-30.

9. One writer has pointed out this symmetrical structure of 1 Timothy, centered on the three hymns of the epistle:

Charge (1:3-16); Hymn (1:17);  
Charge (1:18-20)

Charge (2:1—3:15); Hymn  
(3:16); Charge (4:1—6:2c)

Charge (6:2d-15a); Hymn  
(6:15b-16); Charge (6:17-21).

(See Wilbur B. Wallis, "1 Timothy," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, pp. 1368-70.)

10. The two-office organization of the New Testament church gradually merged into

this three-office arrangement in the centuries that followed: (1) pastor (as preacher-teacher-shepherd); (2) elders (assisting the pastor especially in spiritual matters); (3) deacons (assisting the pastor especially in physical matters, such as the finances of the church). The thing to note here is that the tasks that needed to be done were always present; the titles given to those who performed the tasks varied from church to church and from century to century.

**11.** Some classify the widows of 5:9-10 as a distinct group, in which case the number of groups is five.

**12.** The last phrase of 6:5 introduces the paragraphs 6:6-10: “who think that godliness is a means to financial gain” (NIV).

**13.** Outline from W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 1:245.

**14.** In one verse (1 Tim. 2:10) another

Greek word translated “godliness” appears: *theo* (God) *sebeia* (reverence).

15. W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, 2:243. Scroggie suggests that these sayings may point to “certain Logia current in the early Churches, or the use of liturgical forms.”

16. Quoted by W. Graham Scroggie *Know Your Bible*, 2:251.

17. Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 857.

18. Troas may have been the place of Paul’s arrest.

19. On the view that Timothy may have got to visit Paul, see Frank J. Goodwin, *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul*, p. 191.

20. H.C.G. Moule, *The Second Epistle to Timothy*, p. 14.

21. A metaphor is an implied comparison between two different things.

22. Homer A. Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p.

281.

**23.** James Stalker, *The Life of St. Paul*, pp. 142-43.

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## *The Non-Pauline Epistles*

The New Testament may be divided into four main groups: historical accounts, Pauline epistles, non-Pauline epistles, and apocalypse. The five historical books (gospels and Acts) make up almost sixty percent of the Bible text; the Pauline epistles, about twenty-four percent; the non-Pauline epistles, about ten percent; and the apocalypse (Revelation), six percent.¹ So far we have surveyed the books of the first two groups; the remaining two groups follow.

Listed below are the eight non-Pauline epistles. These books are classified as non-Pauline because none bears the name of Paul as author. The anonymous epistle to the Hebrews may have originated with Paul. All the books except Hebrews are sometimes referred to as general epistles. This vague designation was attached to the seven books

during the centuries of the early church for a combination of reasons: general or joint apostolic authorship of the group; general scope of the recipients (no local churches addressed); general in content.² Actually there is no group title that clearly and fully identifies all the books from Hebrews to Jude in the New Testament canon. We will use the designation “non-Pauline,” keeping in mind the unsettled question of authorship of Hebrews.

Hebrews 1 John

James 2 John

1 Peter 3 John

2 Peter Jude

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1. The size of each proportion is, of course, no measure of the relative importance of the books involved.

2. D. Edmond Heibert, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 3:16. Read this work, pages

15-25, for a discussion of the non-Pauline epistles.

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## ***19 Hebrews: Consider Jesus, Our Great High Priest***

Hebrews is a unique commentary on the Old Testament. It interprets its history, explaining the fulfillment of its prophecy and revealing the ultimate purpose of all its institutions of worship. The epistle is the Holy Spirit's grand portrait of Christ with the Old Testament as a background. "Consider Jesus" is its urgent appeal to believers who were turning their backs to Jesus. Christians today who are in danger of backsliding and apostasy, who are leaning toward the things of the world from which they have been delivered, have God's clear warning and exhortation in Hebrews. No Christian is immune to the threat of lukewarmness and apathy, and Hebrews speaks about those. The book is that contemporary.

## I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY

Before you begin your study of Hebrews, think of various things that cause Christians today to drift away from their close relationship to Jesus. Among other things, this will help you appreciate more the exaltation of Jesus in the epistle.

## II. BACKGROUND

### A. TITLE

The earliest manuscripts have the simple title *pros Hebraious* (“to Hebrews”). The title was probably not a part of the original epistle, but no doubt was added later by the church.

### B. DATE WRITTEN

The interval between A.D. 65 and A.D. 70 may be accepted as the time when Hebrews was written. A date before A.D. 70 is based on the fact that in A.D. 70 Jerusalem, with its Temple, was destroyed by the Roman general Titus. Hebrews gives the clear impression that the Temple was still standing when the epistle was written (see 8:4-5; 10:11), and there is the hint that the removal of the Temple services was not too far distant (12:27). If the Temple had already been destroyed, some mention of it surely would have been made by the writer, because one of his main points was that the Jewish institutions were intended to be superseded by a more perfect system.

That the epistle was written as late as A.D. 65 is supported by the observation that the readers were a second generation of Christians (2:1-4; cf. 5:12), whose leaders probably had passed away (13:7, ASV).

## C. AUTHOR

The conclusion of Origen on this subject is the classic statement, “Who wrote the epistle in truth God alone knows.”

Various authors have been suggested. The following list shows some of the possibilities:

1. *Paul*. This view is based on (1) affinities in language and concepts between Hebrews and other Pauline epistles; (2) centrality of the Person and work of Christ in Hebrews, as in other Pauline epistles; (3) Paul’s association with Timothy (cf. 13:23); (4) the “Pauline” salutation: “Grace be with you all” (13:25).

2. *A co-worker of Paul*. This view accounts for both Pauline and non-Pauline traits of the epistle. Apollos, Luke, and Barnabas are names suggested, most of the evidence

pointing to Apollos. Apollos was an Alexandrian Jew (Acts 18:24), worked closely with Paul toward the end of Paul's ministry (Titus 3:13), was well grounded in the Old Testament Scriptures, and was an enthusiastic teacher-preacher. (Read Acts 18:24-26.)

3 . *Others.* Least likely authors, but suggested for various reasons, include Aquila, Silas, Philip the Deacon, and Clement of Rome.

## **D. GROUP ADDRESSED**

Whatever is known today of the original readers is derived from the epistle itself. They were from a single congregation of Hebrew Christians, living somewhere in the Roman world (e.g., 2:3; 5:11-12; 6:9-10; cf. 13:23-24). Some think Jerusalem was where

the church was located because of the emphasis on the Temple and its institutions. This view is not without problems, however. Alexandria, Caesarea, Antioch in Syria, and Ephesus are also suggested as the home of those Hebrew Christians. There is strong support for the view that Rome was the location. That there was an influential group of Jewish Christians in Rome is confirmed by the Roman epistle (e.g., Rom. 9-11), and by Acts' record of Paul's contacts when in prison at Rome (see Acts 28:17-31). The salutation of Hebrews 13:24 could have been made by Christians who were originally from Italy and were sending back greetings to their friends.

More important than knowing where the readers lived *geographically* is knowing how they fared *spiritually*. The many strong warnings of the epistle indicate that those Hebrew Christians were in a backslidden

condition, in danger of apostatizing from Christ and returning to Judaism. Faith, conviction, and enthusiasm were waning (3:6, 9, 12, 14); and prayer, public worship, and the Scriptures were being neglected (2:1; 10:25; 12:12-13). The Christians by now should have been teachers of others, but were still in need of being taught the ABC's of the gospel (5:12).

One circumstance had much to do with the Hebrew Christians' turning back in their Christian walk. That was the threat of persecution from without, with its intimidation to surrender. Earlier those Christians had withstood persecution (10:32-34). But now they were beginning to weaken. Of this, R. C. H. Lenski writes:

The Jewish Christians stood unshaken during the terror of 64 (year of Nero's burning of Rome).

... But now, since Peter was dead, since even Paul, their spiritual father, had been removed, since Christianity was permanently branded as criminal, since there was no other apostle to stiffen their courage, some of these Jewish Christians began to weaken. Voices were raised which advocated a return to Jewry. If their synagogues became Jewish as they had been a few years ago they would be safe like the other Jewish synagogues, for Judaism continued to remain a religion that was legally approved in Rome and in the empire.³

## **E. PURPOSES**

Someone has said that Hebrews was written to “rekindle a dampened fire.” A

fainting spirit, dying enthusiasm, and dullness of hearing were the emergency of the hour. The letter of Hebrews was the response, sounding forth in this double chord: (1) teaching and (2) warning and exhortation.

1 . *Teaching*. The best antidote for the poison of falsehood and unbelief is the positive declaration of revealed truth. The opening verses of Hebrews disclose that the epistle's main teaching is about three vital subjects:

a. Revelation ("God ... has ... spoken" 1:1-4). The written revelation of God over the centuries has come in two groups: Old Testament and New Testament. Hebrews shows the relationships between those two Testaments or covenants. And beyond the written Word is the living Word.

b. A person ("by his Son"). Hebrews is the

most comprehensive New Testament book portraying Christ as Son of God and Son of Man. “Consider ... Jesus” (3:1) is a key phrase in the epistle. How would a better knowledge of who Jesus was help the Hebrew Christians in their spiritual plight? Andrew Murray answers: “He (the author) unceasingly places their weakness and Christ’s person side by side: he is sure that, if they but know Christ, all will be well.”⁴

c. A work (“He sat down”). The subjects of Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice and His continuing ministries as Priest and King pervade the book. Concerning sacrifice, one has written of Hebrews, “Tear a page and it will bleed.”

2. *Warning and exhortation.* Warning and exhortation appear throughout the epistle, aimed at the spiritual condition of the readers. The warnings concern just

recompense for sinning against God; the exhortations are positive appeals and encouragements to appropriate the power and privileges of God's children, and incentives to press on to fuller stature as Christians.

There are five main warning sections in Hebrews:

- a. Take heed (2:1-4).
- b. Do not miss the rest (3:7—4:13).
- c. Beware sloth and apostasy (5:11—6:20).
- d. Beware willful sinning (10:26-31).
- e. Beware disobeying Christ (12:25-29).

Exhortations appear throughout the epistle (e.g., 4:1, 11, 14, 16), but the main hortatory section begins at 10:19.

## F. PLACE IN THE BIBLE

The book of Hebrews occupies a very important place in the Scriptures. It is the Spirit's commentary on the Pentateuch, especially the book of Leviticus. The writer uses the Old Testament Scriptures throughout, making at least eighty-six direct references, traceable to at least one hundred Old Testament passages. Hebrews explains the meaning and significance of the whole Jewish ritual. It makes clear that all the ceremonial laws given in the Old Testament, such as the offerings of sacrifices and the ministrations of the priests, were but types pointing forward to Christ, the *great* sacrifice for sin, the *true* Priest, the *one* Mediator between God and man. In Hebrews the Christian is taught that he has passed from the realm of shadows into that of reality, that in Christ he has the fulfillment of all the

earlier types.

Hebrews has been referred to as the fifth gospel because it tells of Jesus' finished work on earth and His continuing work in heaven. There is no other book in the New Testament that helps us to understand the *present* ministry of Christ as does the book of Hebrews. Many Christians know little about Christ's present work for His people. Hebrews shows us that just as God led the Israelites from Egypt through the barren wilderness, protecting them from danger, supplying all their needs, teaching them, training them, and eventually bringing them into the rich land of Canaan, so Christ is at this present time helping His children, by intercession, inspiration, instruction, and indwelling, to enter into the spiritual rest land of abundant living, a taste of the heavenly glories to come.

## **G. HEBREWS AND ROMANS COMPARED**

Hebrews is often compared with Romans. Hebrews presents the Person of salvation; Romans presents the way of salvation. Hebrews focuses on the ceremonial law of the Old Testament; Romans, on the moral law of all time. “Romans moves from law to grace, and Hebrews, from shadow to substance.”⁵

### **III. SURVEY**

#### **A. FIRST READING**

1. First note how many chapters there are in Hebrews.
2. Make a cursory reading of Hebrews, in one sitting if possible, to get main impressions and the “feel” of the book.

Record your impressions.

3. What words and phrases stand out after this reading?

4. What appears to be the main theme of the book? What are some of the subjects discussed to support the theme?

5. Compare the beginning and end of the book.

6. Where in the book does doctrine give place to the practical? (Practical sections are recognized by the prominence of commands and exhortations.)

## **B. WORKING WITH THE INDIVIDUAL SEGMENTS**

Keep reading the epistle as you work with the individual segments.

1. Refer to the survey Chart 103 and note

the breakdown of the epistle into segments. Mark your Bible to show the beginning of each segment, at these verses: 1:1, 4; 2:5; 3:1; 4:14; 5:11; 7:1; 8:1; 9:1; 9:13; 10:19; 11:1; 12:3; 13:1, 22.

2. Assign a segment title from the Bible text for each segment.

3. Who is the main person of the epistle? What different things are written about Him?

4. Make a list of different subjects of the epistle. After you have done this, compare your list with the following one.

Person of Christ — His humanity and deity

Work of Christ — for example, atonement and intercession

Old and New Covenants — the relation between the two

Sin — especially the sins of unbelief and

disobedience

Word of God — written (Bible) and living (Christ)

Faith — for salvation, and for Christian living

Testing and discipline — their purposes and rewards

Christian growth — the marks of spiritual maturity

Old Testament institutions and New Testament counterparts

Purposes of the Levitical ritual law

5. What new key words and phrases are you observing?

6. Look for groupings of segments according to similar subject, and try making a simple, general outline of the epistle.

7. What is the main theme of Hebrews?

## **C. STRUCTURE OF THE EPISTLE**

When various topical studies are outlined on a survey chart, the structure of a book's composition becomes evident. The survey of Hebrews, Chart 103, shows something of the organization of the epistle. Study the chart carefully, then note how the following are shown on the chart.

1. There are thirteen chapters in Hebrews. The chart shows thirteen segments (not all beginning at the first verse of a chapter) plus an introduction (theme, 1:1-3) and epilogue (13:22-25). Five warning sections are parts of those segments. Which warning section is a full segment? Which warning sections conclude a segment? Which is in the middle of a segment?

2. Basically, the epistle has two main divisions: Instruction (1:1 — 10:18) and Exhortation (10:19—13:25).

### 3. Study the key outline.

## KEY OUTLINE OF HEBREWS



a. What Have We? (1:1—7:28). The suggestion for this question really comes from 8:1a, “Now the main point in what has been said is this: We have...” In other words, in chapters 1-7 the author is adding up that which the believer has, in answer to a question “What have we?” One can visualize the Hebrew Christians saying, “Why shouldn’t we go back to Judaism — what do we have for being Christians?” The author of Hebrews responds, “You ask, ‘What have we?’ Let me show you what we have!”

b. We Have Such a High Priest (8:1—10:18). The phrase “We have such a high

priest” comes from 8:1. Read the verse again. The author is saying that we have in Jesus a *High Priest*. But the emphasis is on the word *such*. (In the original Greek the word appears first, for emphasis.) The author has shown this superiority in the previous section, chapters 1-7. Observe the outline on Chart 103 that shows Jesus as divine Priest, redeemer Priest, apostle Priest, perfect Priest, eternal Priest. All this adds up to the sum “We have *such* a high priest.”

Although 8:1 refers back to the cumulative inventories of chapters 1-7, it also introduces this middle section, 8:1—10:18. In this section the author continues to show the superior priestly ministry of Jesus (e.g., 8:6; 9:11), and he also shows in detail the workings of that ministry.

c. Having, Therefore ... Let Us (10:19—13:25). Read 10:19-21 for the source of this

phrase. Observe the phrase “let us” in 10:22-24. The practical, hortatory division of Hebrews thus begins at 10:19. The exhortations to Christians are all based on the blessed truth that “we have *such* a high priest.”

4. Observe on the chart another outline that divides Hebrews into three main parts. Also keep this in mind as you proceed with analysis later on.

5. Note where the five warning sections appear on Chart 103.

6. The outline shown at the bottom of the chart could be worded as follows:

Christ, the Son of God — His deity (1:1—2:4)

Christ, the Son of Man — His humanity (2:5—4:13)

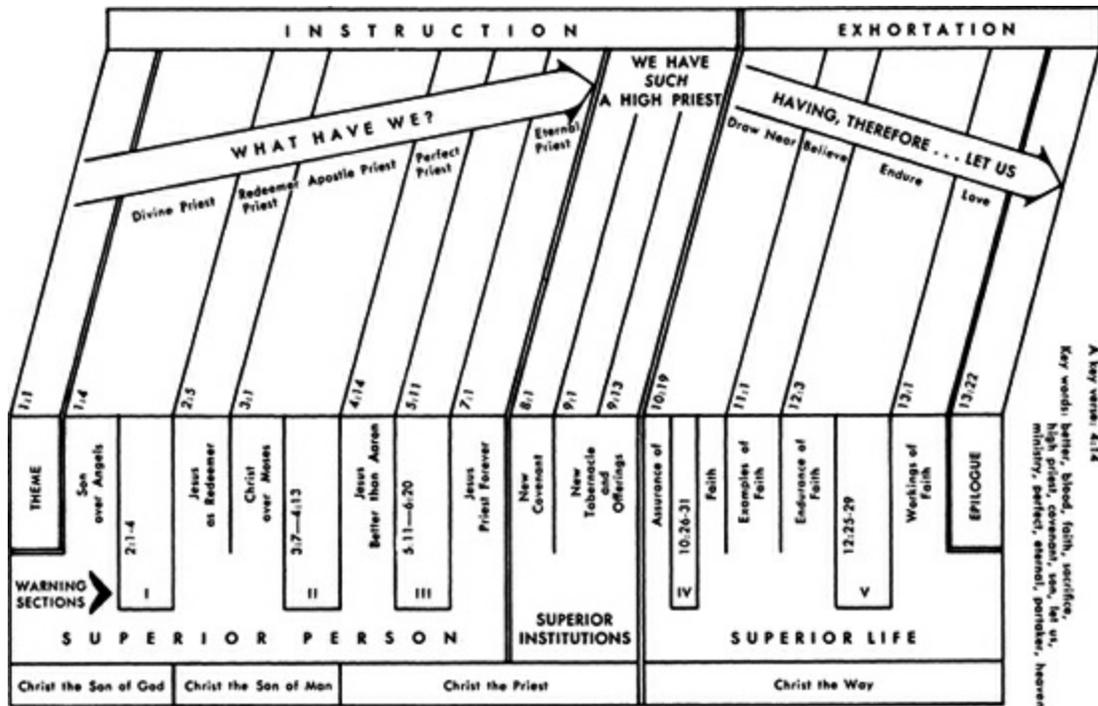
Christ, the Priest — His work (4:14—

10:18)

Christ, the Way — His leadership  
(10:19—13:25).

7. Observe on Chart 103 the title “Consider Jesus, Our Great High Priest.” In the course of your study in Hebrews, try to arrive at a title of your own.

# CHART 103: HEBREWS CONSIDER JESUS, OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST



## IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

### A. PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

The main person of Hebrews is Jesus. The author of the epistle is convinced that all that is necessary to restrain from apostasy is to hold up Christ in all the dignity and beauty of His Person and the importance of His work. It might be said that Hebrews

consists of a series of pictures of Jesus the Lord. We behold Him in His deity, His humanity, His sacrificial work, His priestly office, and His kingly glory. After a careful study of the book of Hebrews one must feel better acquainted with Christ than ever before.

## **B. SUPERIORITY OF JESUS**

The writer of Hebrews repeats the key word *better* to emphasize the superiority of Jesus regarding man's salvation. The epistle presents a series of contrasts between the *good* things of Judaism and the *better* things of Christ. In seeking to restrain the Jewish Christians from apostasy, the author demonstrates, step by step, that Christ is superior to the prophets through whom God had spoken in times past (1:1-3); superior to

angels, through whom the law had been administered (1:4—2:4); superior to Moses, their great leader, (3:1-6); superior to Joshua, who led them into Canaan (4:8); and superior to Aaron, their high priest, (4:14—5:10). Throughout the book the writer's plan is to introduce, one after the other, Old Testament characters and institutions, and then to present Christ and show how far superior He is to any of those.

### **C. CONTRASTS**

The epistle abounds in contrasts. Here are some of them:

Son and angels (1:4—2:4)

Son and Moses (3:1-6)

Canaan rest and God's rest (3:12—4:13)

Christ and Aaron (4:14—5:10)

Spiritual infancy and maturity (5:11-14)

Apostasy and faithfulness (5:11—6:20)

Old and New Covenants (8:1-13)

Offerings of the law and offering of Christ (9:1 —10:18)

Faith and sight (11:1-40)

Mount Sinai and Mount Zion (12:18-29)

## **D. CHRIST THE SON OF GOD (1:1—2:4)**

In the opening segment of the epistle the author reveals the dignity and exalted nature of the author of Christianity as the Son of God. Note some of the different ways he points to the deity of Christ in this first

segment (locate the Bible texts that support the points).

1. *Divine names*, (e.g. God, 1:8; Lord, 1:10)
2. *Divine works*, (e.g., creation, 1:2; upholding all things, 1:3; purging sins, 1:3)
3. *Divine character*. (1:3)
4. *Divine position and honor*, (e.g., heir, 1:2; seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, 1:3; rank higher than angels, 1:4-14).
5. *Eternal existence*, (e.g., 1:8)

## **E. CHRIST THE SON OF MAN (2:5—4:13)**

Christ is shown as Son of Man to be man's Redeemer, tasting "death for every one" (2:9). He became the Son of Man that we might become the sons of God. He came to earth that we might go to heaven. He bore

our sins that we might partake of His righteousness. He took our nature in order that we might have His nature. Christ became a man in order to restore to man all that he lost through Adam's fall.

As a man Christ lived before men; as a man He died; and as the Son of Man He appears now in the presence of God for the believer. Not only was it necessary for Christ to become a man that He might die, but it was necessary for Him to become a man in order that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest; One who was tempted as we are; One who knows all about us; One who is able to succor them that are tempted (2:17-18). Those are some of the truths of Christ's humanity that the author writes about in this section of the epistle.

**F. CHRIST THE HIGH PRIEST (4:14—**

10:18)

An extensive development of the central subject of Christ as the great High Priest begins at 4:14 and continues until 10:18. Christ's priesthood had already been mentioned at 2:17 and 3:1, but this was with an introductory purpose.

In Judaism the office of high priest was the highest religious office. The writer of Hebrews seeks to show that Christianity also has a High Priest, but One who is superior in every way to the high priests of Judaism. He makes clear that the high priest of Judaism was just a *type* of the great High Priest of Christianity.

In this long section of the epistle the author shows the superiority of the Person and ministry of Christ the High Priest. The range of his discussions is shown on Chart 104.

Recall from your survey the summary statement of 8:1, “We have *such* a high priest.” Locate on Chart 103 the five descriptions of Christ as priest, noted earlier. Locate in the Bible text of 1:4—7:28 where each of the five identifications appears.

In 8:1—10:18 Christ is shown as:

mediator of a better covenant (8:6-13)

priest of a better tabernacle (9:1-12)

offerer of a better sacrifice (9:13—  
10:18)

# CHART 104: HEBREWS 4:14-10:18

## SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S PERSON AND MINISTRY

4:14 SUPERIORITY OF THE PERSON (HIGH PRIEST) 7:28	8:1 SUPERIORITY OF THE MINISTRY (HIGH PRIESTHOOD) 10:18
"We have a great high priest" (4:14)	"We have such an high priest" (8:1)
qualifications, order	"A more excellent ministry" (8:6)
	covenant, tabernacle, sacrifice

### G. REST FOR THE BELIEVER (3:7—4:13)

The keynote of 3:7—4:13 is *rest*. Life's incomparable blessings come only from Christ. The first of blessings in Christ is salvation itself, or *redemption*. Only the redeemed one can enjoy life in its fullness, which is abundant life, or *rest*. The logical order is: *redemption*, then *rest*. The author of Hebrews follows this order in his epistle, as seen in the following outline:

*Comparison:* Christ better than angels (1:4—2:4)

*Blessing:* REDEMPTION (2:5-18)

*Comparison:* Christ better than Moses (3:1-6)

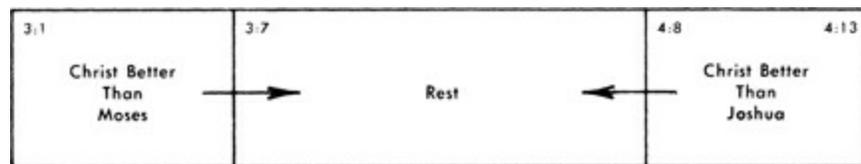
*Blessing:* REST

(3:7—4:7)

*Comparison:* Christ better than Joshua (4:8-13)

The above outline shows how the *Comparison* sections are woven around the *Blessing* sections, to support the theme “We have *such* a high priest.” The accompanying diagram illustrates that.

## SURROUNDING CONTEXT OF ONE “REST” PASSAGE



Refer to the Bible text and observe these things taught about *rest*:

1. It is called “His rest” — God’s rest (3:18; 4:1, 3, 5, 10). It is called His rest because it is that which He Himself enjoys and which He alone can confer.

2. It is the kind of rest or satisfaction that God enjoyed in His finished work of creation

(see Gen. 2:2; Heb. 4:4). And it is the rest He now has in His Son's finished work of redemption.

3. This rest of God is intended for the people of God (4:9). He wants His people to enjoy the same rest and satisfaction in the finished work of Christ that He Himself enjoys.

4. He who has entered into God's rest is the one who has ceased from his own works and is satisfied with the work that God did for him in the Person of Jesus Christ (4:10).

5. Faith enables the believer to enter into this rest of God; unbelief and disobedience prevent him from entering into it (4:2, 11).

6. The rest that God is speaking of in this chapter is a rest far beyond Israel's Canaan rest, although the Canaan rest was a type of the reality. This is evident from 4:8-9. Such rest is the heart rest that comes only by

genuine confidence in God and entire satisfaction in all that He does. This rest is for now, although the believer shall not come into the full enjoyment of it until a future time when his body is redeemed and he is forever with the Lord.

## **H. WARNING SECTIONS**

There are five major warning sections in the book of Hebrews. Locate them on Chart 103, page 413. (The list was also cited earlier in this chapter, page 409.) For many Bible students they are the most difficult passages to understand, especially because the warnings of judgment are so severe. Some important things for the student to remember when he analyzes the passages are these:

1. Recognize the context. What leads into

the warning section? What does the author write about *after* the section?

2. Observe all parts of the passage very carefully.

3. Do not force your personal explanation upon any difficult passage. The Scriptures themselves — both near and far context — are the most reliable interpreters of the text.

4. Accept by faith even truths you cannot understand.

5. After your own independent study, seek help on difficult portions from outside reliable sources.

## **I. EXAMPLES OF FAITH (11:1—12:2)**

Recall from your survey of the epistle that at 10:19 the author blends instruction into exhortation, and doctrine becomes practice.

Observe on Chart 103 that Christ is identified as the way to the superior life. Christ is not only the way to eternal life (John 14:6); He is also the way for Christian living, which 10:19—13:25 describes. The superior Person, Christ, makes possible the superior life in Christ. Christ is both our Priest and our pattern. In this last division of Hebrews, we who know Him as the way *to* God are exhorted regarding the way He would have us live *for* God. We are exhorted to avail ourselves of all the advantages and privileges that are now ours as Christians, and we are exhorted to perform all the duties that belong to us as saved sinners.

The key to successful Christian *living* is faith. Observe on Chart 103 the four sections of 10:19—13:25 on *faith*. The second chapter is the familiar chapter 11 (11:1—12:2), called “The Westminster Abbey of Faith.”⁶ It is a condensed register

of some of the Old Testament's heroes of faith. Here is a brief suggested outline to follow when you study the chapter:

Faith described (11:1-3)

Faith as the way to please God  
(11:4-16)

Faith and the race of life (11:17  
—12:2).

The conclusion of 12:1-2 is powerful. A greater example of faith is to be found in Jesus. Noble and great as are the cloud of witnesses of chapter 11, it is Jesus, originator and perfecter of our faith, upon whom we must fix our eyes.

## **V. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

The main theme of Hebrews may be stated thus: The knowledge and assurance of how great this High Priest Jesus is should

lift the drifting believer from spiritual lethargy to vital Christian maturity. Stated another way: The antidote for backsliding is a growing personal knowledge of Jesus.

Various verses in Hebrews could be cited as key verses representing the epistle's main theme. One such verse is 4:14, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

What key words did you observe in your readings of Hebrews? Compare your list with the following: better, perfect, eternal, partaker, heaven(ly), blood, faith, sacrifice, covenant, Son, high priest, let us, ministry, love. Refer to an exhaustive concordance to see the appearances of these words in the epistle.

## **VI. APPLICATIONS**

There is a wide range of applications that may be made of Hebrews. Below are listed various suggestions.

1. Warnings about backsliding
2. Exhortations
3. Encouragement
4. Appeal for spiritual inventory
5. Intercessory ministry of Christ
6. Exalting Christ

The faith life The most important teachings of the epistle are referred to in the benediction of 13:20-21: the power of God; the death of Christ; His resurrection life; His present work; the everlasting covenant; the object of Christ's work, namely, to restore again in man the image of God, which has been marred through sin. What different applications are suggested by these truths?

## VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What Old Testament book is Hebrews especially related to, concerning Jewish ritual?
2. When was Hebrews written?
3. What names have been suggested as author of Hebrews?
4. What is the source of the title “Hebrews”?
5. Identify the original readers geographically, socially, and spiritually.
6. What are the purposes of this epistle?
7. What is the main theme of Hebrews?
8. How many main sections are there in Hebrews? Identify them by outline.
9. What is 8:1—10:18 about? Relate it to what goes before and what follows.
10. Where in the epistle is the deity of

Christ especially discussed?

11. Where is the high priesthood of Christ especially discussed?

12. Identify by content the five warning sections of Hebrews.

13. Name key words of the epistle. What key verse represents the theme?

## **VIII. FURTHER STUDY**

1. The high priesthood of Jesus is related to the person and office of Melchizedek in 4:14—5:10. Study this Old Testament character, and arrive at your conclusions why he is a type of Jesus the High Priest.

2. Chapter 1 deals at length with angels. Study further why angels are the first objects of comparison with Jesus in the sequence of 1:1—7:28.

## IX. OUTLINE

# HEBREWS: Consider Jesus, Our Great High Priest

SUPERIOR PERSON	1:1—7:28
Son Superior to Angels	1:1—2:4
Jesus as Redeemer	2:5-18
Christ Superior to Moses and Joshua	3:1—4:13
Jesus Superior to Aaron	4:14—5:10
Warning Against Sloth and Apostasy	5:11—6:20
Jesus, Priest Forever	7:1-28
SUPERIOR INSTITUTIONS	8:1—10:18
Better Covenant and Tabernacle	8:1—9:12
Better Sacrifice	9:13—10:18
SUPERIOR LIFE	10:19—13:25
Confidence of Faith	10:19-39
Examples of Faith	11:1—12:2
Endurance of Faith	12:3-29
Workings of Faith	13:1-25

## X. SELECTED READING

# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Ross, Robert W. "Hebrews." In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, pp. 1401-8.  
Scroggie, W. Graham, *Know Your Bible*, 2:265-82.

## COMMENTARIES

Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*.

Lenski, R.C.H. *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James*.

Newell, William R. *Hebrews Verse by Verse*. Westcott, B. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*.

## OTHER RELATED SOURCES

Murray, Andrew. *The Holiest of All*.

Strong, James. *The Exhaustive*

## *Concordance of the Bible.*

Thomas, Robert L., ed. *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*

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3. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James*, p. 21.

4. Andrew Murray, *The Holiest of All*, p. 23.

5. John Phillips, *Exploring the Scriptures*, p. 262.

6. The abbey in London displays the tombs of Christian statesmen of past centuries, as Hebrews 11 eulogizes the faith lives of Old Testament saints.

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## ***20James: Faith for Living***

One of the earliest, perhaps the first, New Testament book to be written was the epistle of James. Its practical, nondoctrinal emphasis reveals the kind of message that God wanted to share with the Christian community in published form very soon after Jesus ascended to heaven.

### **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

Think about the primary message of Scripture. It is accurate to say that the Bible dwells mainly on two themes: “The Way to God,” and “A Walk with God.” No one can walk *with* God who has not first been restored *to* God. Much of the New Testament tells us the way a sinner can come to God and be eternally saved. That way is by God’s grace, through one’s faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8). The epistle of James, on the

other hand, was written to instruct Christians — those who have been reconciled to God through Christ — how to walk with God in this life.

Thoughts, words, and deeds are the ingredients of a person's daily living. The important question here is, What *kind* of thoughts, words, and deeds should be part of the life of a Christian who walks with God? James was written to give us God's answers to that question. Those are some of the things you will be observing as you survey this important book.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### **A. THE AUTHOR**

To know the author of a book is to understand and appreciate better his

writing. We do not have an abundance of information concerning the man James, but what we do know makes us feel that James is no stranger to us after all.¹ And what is more, we as Christians know the divine Author of this epistle in an experiential relationship, which is the master key to our understanding of its message.

So before we survey his epistle, let us think about the man James.

1 . *Personal name.* The English name “James” in the New Testament translates the Greek *lakobos*. This is from the Hebrew *lakob*, translated “Jacob” in the Old Testament.

2. *Family background.* To learn something of the author’s family background, we first need to identify which James this is. Actually, there are four different New Testament persons with the name James:

James the son of Zebedee (Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19; Luke 5:10)

James the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; 15:40; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13)

James the father of Judas the apostle (Luke 6:16, Berkeley)

James “the Lord’s brother” (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Gal. 1:19).

There is strong support that the epistle’s author was the last-named James. This is the view followed by this study guide. James really was a half brother of Jesus, both having the same mother, Mary, but not the same father. (Joseph was only the *legal* father of Jesus; Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, Matt. 1:20.)

James had sisters and at least three brothers besides Jesus: Joses (Joseph), Simon, and Jude (Matt. 13:55). The home environment in which James was reared

must have been an exceptional one, with such devout parents as Mary and Joseph. Yet, the parents could not make their children's decisions concerning belief in Jesus as Savior and Lord (Messiah). When it was that James made his decision is the subject of the next section.

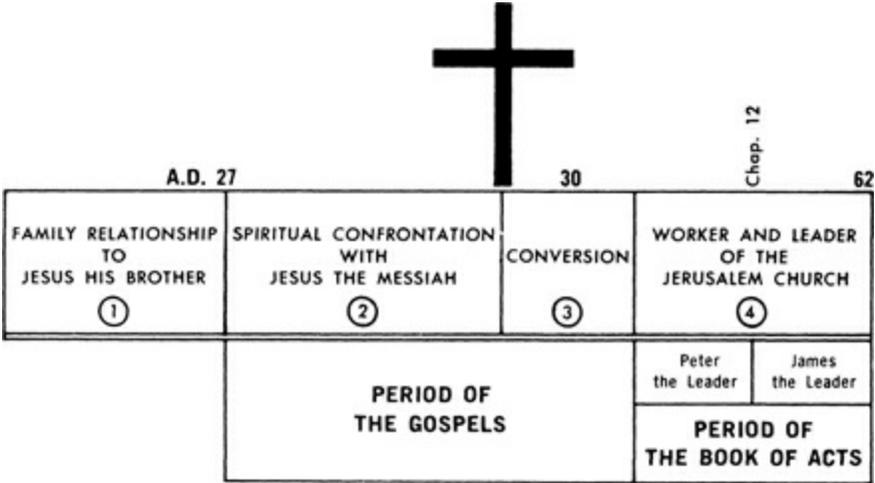
Whether James ever married and raised his own family is an open question. The only passage in Scripture that may suggest his marriage is 1 Corinthians 9:5.

3 . *Conversion.* James and the other brothers of Jesus did not believe in Him as Savior and Lord during the years of Jesus' public ministry. Read John 7:2-8. Does this passage suggest what hindered the brothers from believing? How do you account for this unbelief in light of such devout upbringing by Mary and Joseph? What light does Proverbs 22:6 shed on this question?

From Acts 1:14 we learn that James had become a believer sometime before Pentecost day. His conversion may be dated at the time when Jesus appeared to him after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). Or James may have believed just after Jesus' crucifixion. Whenever the experience, it was genuine, for James's entire life was transformed into one of service for Christ, as the book of Acts so clearly reveals.

4. *Christian service.* A biography of James's life shows four main periods, as indicated by Chart 105. For help in background orientation, fix this chart clearly in your mind.

# CHART 105: PERIODS OF JAMES' LIFE



The third period (conversion) is the shortest and most crucial of the four, representing about fifty days between Jesus' death and Pentecost day (Acts 2).² James' ministry as a "servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1) could not begin earlier than his conversion. From his earliest days as a believer, James identified himself with the local Christian group at Jerusalem, praying, working, and serving in various capacities (cf. Acts 1:14). Gradually he was recognized as a leader, so that at least by the time Peter, the church's key leader during Acts 1-7, left Jerusalem (Acts

12:17), James was the natural successor. Of this D. A. Hayes writes,

When he was exalted to this leadership we do not know, but all indications seem to point to the fact that at a very early period J a m e s was the recognized executive authority in the church at Jerus, which was the church of Pentecost and the church of the apostles. ... All Christian Jews would look to Jerus as the primitive source of their organization and faith, and the head of the church at Jerus would be recognized by them as their chief authority.³

It was just about this time also that James wrote his epistle, whose content reveals that he was an active Christian worker and leader at the time of writing.

The Bible references shown below reconstruct for us something of the biography of James up to the time of his death. Read all the passages (plus the contexts surrounding them) and record on paper the information furnished by each reference.

*During Jesus' public ministry*

John 2:12

Matthew 12:46-50

John 7:1-9

*Early days as a believer*

1 Corinthians 15:7

*Early years as a servant of Jesus Christ*

Acts 1:14

Galatians 1:18-19 (cf. Acts 9:26)

*Successor to Peter as leader of the Jerusalem church*

Acts 12:17 Acts 15:13

Galatians 2:1, 9-10 (What is the significance of James being mentioned first in Paul's list of three pillars, Galatians 2:9?)

Acts 21:18-26 (Last appearance of James in the New Testament)

5. *Character.* The biography of a man is incomplete without a description of his character. Review the verses you have just studied in connection with James's life. Recall, for example, that James was a praying man (Acts 1:14). One church historian, Hegesippus (c. A.D. 175), commended James's prayer life especially, noting how he spent long hours interceding for the people, so that his knees became calloused.

The best insight into James's character is gained by reading his own writing. Take a few minutes at this point in your study to

read the epistle with one object in mind: learning what kind of man James was. Record your impressions and compare those with the following list: a praying man, pure, powerful, practical, plain, persistent, humble, honest, single-minded, upright, and just.

Concerning the last-named trait, James came to be known by the early church as “James the Just,” (meaning James the Righteous). It is interesting to note that James’s father, Joseph, was “a righteous man” (Matt. 1:19); and that James refers to Jesus as “the righteous” man (James 5:6). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* pursues this thought at length, showing how the younger brother James and his elder brother Jesus were so much alike in personality.⁴ The content and style of their messages were very similar.

6. *Death.* A strong tradition is that James was martyred at Jerusalem in A.D. 62. This date is about one year after the closing of the book of Acts and about five years before Paul and Peter were martyred. The manner of death, if Josephus (A.D. 37-95) and others are correct, was by stoning at the order of Ananias the high priest.

## **B. THE PEOPLE ADDRESSED**

The salutation identifies the original readers of this letter as “the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad.” Like many passages in the Bible, this phrase could be interpreted literally or symbolically.

1 . *Literal interpretation.* The question is, Were the readers (1) *Jews in general*, representing the twelve families of Israel, living in different parts of the New

Testament world, of what is usually called the Dispersion (*Diaspora*); or (2) *Jewish Christians* scattered abroad for various reasons?⁵ Read at least part of chapter 1 and see why the first view (Jews in general) is unacceptable.

2. *Symbolic interpretation.* These scattered “twelve tribes” represent the Christian church, God’s elect (cf. Gal. 3:7-9; 6:16; Phil. 3:3), living in strange country (this world), far from their land of citizenship (heaven). (Cf. Gal. 4:26; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 12:22; 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:1, 17; 2:11.)

The contents of the epistle itself strongly support the view that James’s readers were *Jewish Christians*, wherever they were located. This would be expected, if the epistle was written at a very early date (see Date below), for most Christians in the earliest days were Jews (cf. Acts 1-7).

Indications in the epistle itself that James's readers were Jews include these (read the verses):

1. the reference to “synagogue” (“assembly,” KJV), not “church” (2:2)⁶
2. illustrations from the Old Testament (e.g., 2:25; 5:11, 17)
3. the reference to Abraham as “our father” (2:21)
4. the Old Testament name “Lord of Sabaoth” (5:4)
5. no mention of what might be called “pagan” vices, such as idolatry and drunkenness.

### **C. DATE AND PLACE WRITTEN**

The position of this survey guide is that James was the earliest (or one of the

earliest) New Testament book to be written. (See Chart 1, p. 20). The date of writing was around A.D. 45-50.

Associate the writing of James with the times of the book of Acts, with the help of Chart 106.

## CHART 106: THE WRITING OF JAMES IN RELATION TO ACTS

CHAP.	1	8	13	28
	CHURCH ESTABLISHED		CHURCH EXTENDED	
A.D.	30	33	47	56
O.T. HERITAGE	JEWISH PERIOD		UNIVERSAL GOSPEL	

no N.T. books written here      JAMES written here      other N.T. books written here

The view of a later date places the writing of James around A.D. 60, a year or so before James's death.⁷ Reasons for the early date include:

1. Church order and discipline in the epistle are very simple.
2. The Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 (A.D. 48 or 49) was still future: "The question of the admission of the Gentiles (into the church which in the earliest years was Jewish) seems not yet to have come to the fore."⁸
3. The Judaic emphases on law, moral

principles, and works were the immediate concerns of the first decades of the church.

As to the question of the place of writing James, it is very probable that James was living in Palestine when he wrote the epistle.

## **D. OCCASION AND PURPOSES**

Persecution of the Christians, unchristian conduct (e.g., in speech) by many believers, and erroneous views on such doctrines as faith and sin were some of the circumstances that called for this epistle.

Most of the epistle was written to correct evils and to teach right Christian behavior. There is also encouragement and exhortation in things such as the coming of the Lord (e.g., 5:7). The epistle has been called "A Practical Guide to Christian Life

and Conduct.” More of James’s purposes will be observed as you survey the epistle.

## E. CONTENT

James emphasizes *conduct* more than *creed*. For this reason James has been called the apostle of good works, an identification linking him with the trio of John, apostle of love; Paul, apostle of faith; and Peter, apostle of hope. There is very little of systematically-presented theology in the book. Specific references to Jesus and the gospel are few, though this does not take away from the Christian spirit that pervades the book.⁹ Of this, D. A. Hayes writes, “James says less about the Master than any other writer in the New Testament, but his speech is more like that of the Master than the speech of any of them.”¹⁰

## F. COMPARISON WITH OTHER BOOKS

Some interesting comparisons between James and other parts of Scripture are suggested below. You may want to inquire more into this subject a later time.

1. *Proverbs of the Old Testament.* James and Proverbs are both concerned primarily with *conduct*.

2. *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.* There are many extraordinary likenesses between the book of James and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

3. *Paul's writings* (especially Galatians and Romans). The most obvious observation to be made here is a difference of emphasis: Paul emphasizes the place of faith, and James, the place of works. There is no contradiction here, however, though some theologians have concluded so.¹¹ The

difference between the two books is accounted for by the two different vantage points. Paul deals with “Justification Before God;” James, “Demonstration Before Men.” “Paul saw Christ in the heavens, establishing our righteousness. James saw Him on the earth, telling us to be perfect....”¹²

Refer to Chart 62, page 244, for comparisons of the various New Testament books. Note especially how James and Galatians are compared:

GALATIANS: Liberation by the gospel

JAMES: Compulsion of the gospel

A study of this chart is one good way to survey the main content of the New Testament.

#### *4. Other general Epistles.*

James and 1 Peter — predominantly

ethical (Christian behavior)

Jude and 2 Peter — eschatological  
(doctrine of last events)

Epistles of John — Christological and  
ethical

It is interesting to observe that James, the first author of the New Testament, and John, the last author, both write with a note of authority, emphasizing conduct acceptable to God.

## **G. STYLE**

The book of James is a letter, as its salutation indicates, but its style is more like that of a preacher's sermon, or an Old Testament prophet's appeal. James writes in simple, straightforward sentences. Like Old Testament writings and Jesus' discourses, there are no abstractions, and picture

language abounds. Most of the sixty-three Greek words unique to James's letter are picture words, such as *poison*, *fade*. The epistle bristles with strong, pointed truths, from the first word to the last. Hayes says of James, "He has the dramatic instinct. He has the secret of sustained interest. ... He is an artist."¹³

## H. TONE

A tone of authority pervades the epistle. (There are fifty-four imperatives in the one hundred eight verses.) For this, James has been called "The Amos of the New Testament." But James's forth-rightness and severity are blended with warmth and love, evidenced by the repeated words "brethren" and "beloved brethren." Read 1:5, 17; 2:5; 4:6 and 5:11, 19, 20 for some of the more

tender sentences of the epistle.

## **I. PLACE IN THE CANON**

Questions over authorship and doctrine delayed general recognition of this book's divine inspiration, but by the end of the fourth century the epistle of James was firmly fixed in the canon of Holy Scripture.

## **III. SURVEY**

As you make your own survey of James, keep from getting involved in details, which is the task of analysis. Look especially for *main emphases* and *broad movements*.

### **A. FIRST READING**

Scan the book in one sitting, reading

aloud if possible. You may choose to do this first in a modern paraphrase and then in the version of your study. What are your first impressions of the book? What things stand out? Do you sense a tone or atmosphere in the writing? Do any key words and phrases draw attention to themselves?

## **B. SUBSEQUENT READINGS**

1. Scan the book again, underlining every appearance of the address “my brethren” (or related phrases). How often is this repeated? Is there any pattern concerning where the phrase appears? What does this brief study tell you about the epistle?

2. Compare the opening verses (e.g., 1:1-4) with the closing verses (e.g., 5:19-20).

3. With a pencil, mark paragraph divisions in your Bible at these places: 1:1, 2, 5, 9, 13,

16, 19, 22, 26; 2:1, 5, 8, 14,18,19, 21, 25;  
3:1, 3, 56, 7, 9, 13; 4:1, 4, 11, 13; 5:1, 7, 13,  
19.

4. Now read each paragraph and derive a paragraph title from each.

5. Observe in the epistle every reference to each of the subjects listed below.

- . a. references to God, Jesus, Lord
- . b. use of questions
- . c. specific references to the Old Testament
- . d. figurative language (e.g., “vapor,” 4:14)

6. What are your new observations and impressions?

## **C. OBSERVING THE STRUCTURE OF THE**

# EPISTLE

Review the paragraph titles you made earlier. Read the epistle again and identify *groups* of paragraphs according to *common* subject. (These groups are called *segments*.) For example, what paragraphs speak about the common subject of the tongue (speech)? This might be the most difficult part of your study in James because this epistle is not a formal treatise as such, but a series of exhortations written in a pattern whose order is not apparent, for the most part. Take on the challenge of finding an outline, as obscure as one may appear. That is how discoveries are often born. An example of this is the testimony of J. Albrecht Bengel concerning his study of the maxims of Proverbs: "I have often been in such an attitude of soul, that those chapters in the Book of Proverbs in which I had before

looked for no connection whatever, presented themselves to me as if the proverbs belonged in the most beautiful order one with another.”¹⁴ It may be added here that any time spent in search of structure of a book of the Bible is not lost time, for its fruits keep reappearing in the later stages of analytical study.

The next logical step in determining the structure of a book is to identify sections, which are groups of segments, followed by the identification of divisions, which are groups of sections.

# CHART 107: VARIOUS OUTLINES OF JAMES

	1:1	2:1	3:1	4:1	5:1
①	NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION	NATURE OF TRUE FAITH	3:13 NATURE OF TRUE WISDOM		5:19 PURPOSE OF WISDOM
②	LIVING FAITH TESTED BY TRIAL	LIVING FAITH PROVED BY WORKS	LIVING FAITH EVIDENCED BY CONDUCT		LIVING FAITH EXERCISED BY PERSECUTION
③	Test of Faith	Nature of Faith	Works of Faith	4:13 Application of Faith	

Three outlines by different authors are shown on Chart 107 as examples of various ways in which the structure of James has been outlined.¹⁵ Compare these also with the outlines of Chart 108.

What would you identify as the introduction and conclusion of James, if they are present? Do you observe any turning point or climax in the epistle?

## D. SURVEY CHART

Study carefully the survey, Chart 108, and

observe the following:

1. There is a formal salutation in James, but no formal closing.

2. The bottom of the chart shows four main divisions in the epistle. There is an ascending progression in the first three: *principles involved; practices for the present; prizes in the future*. The fourth section is like an epilogue, where the writer returns to the subject of *practices for the present* by giving two final exhortations of a very practical nature to his Christian readers.

3. Observe how the epistle is first divided into small sections (first outline under the main horizontal line). Then study the outline of large divisions, on the subject of *faith*. Check out the outlines with your own observations, which you have made of the epistle.

4. What outline of *works* appears on the

chart?

5. The division of 1:19—4:12 (*faith at work*) is difficult to break down into an outline. James appears to be writing about various aspects of the outer and inner life of faith. Note the listing of subjects on the chart (*fulfillment, favoritism, and so forth*). Compare this outline with your own work.

6. The title for James given on the chart is “Faith for Living.” The intention of this title is to show the necessary ingredient of *faith in action*.¹⁶ This very clearly is James’s main theme. The key verse chosen for the epistle (2:26) reflects that theme.

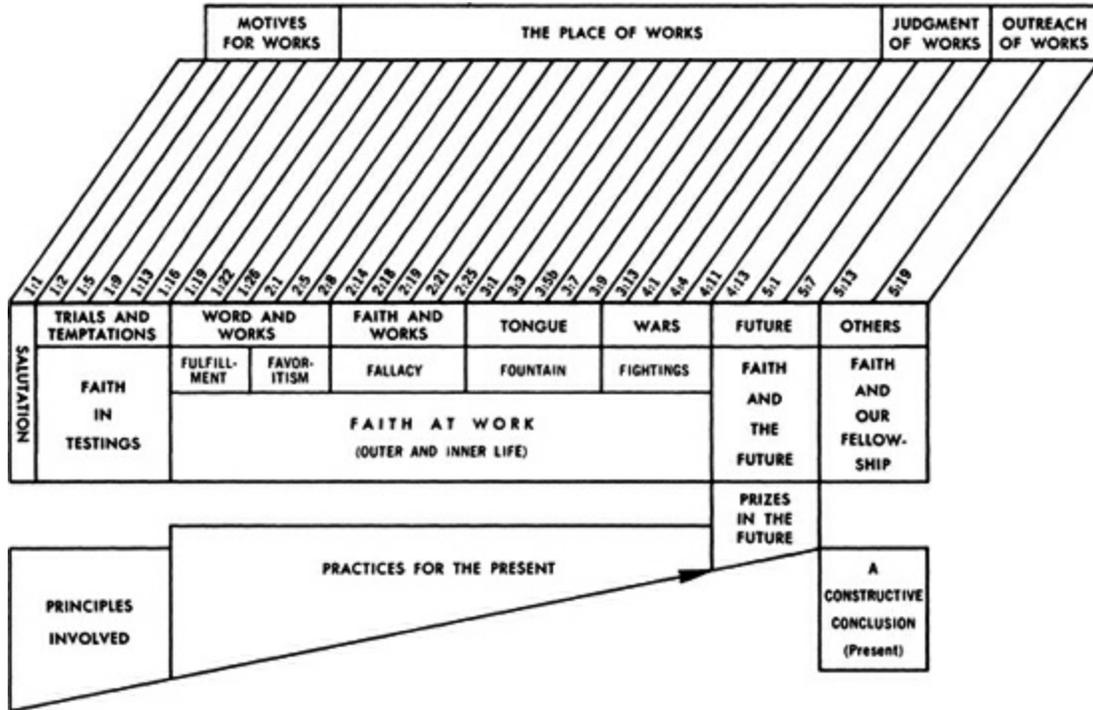
## IV. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

### A. FAITH AND TRIALS (1:1-18)

Recall that the hardships of persecution

were part of the setting bringing forth this epistle. The fact that the first subject that James writes about is the hardship of trials tells us that this was a most pressing problem.

# CHART 108: JAMES FAITH FOR LIVING



Observe how much instruction James compresses into three verses, in 1:2-4.

trials v. 2 — The Situation

testing v. 3a — The Test

endurance vv. 36, 4a — The Immediate Fruit

maturity v. 46 — The Ultimate Fruit

Read the entire segment and observe other truths and applications concerning

perseverance under trial.

## **B. THE FAITH THAT SAVES (2:14-26)**

James describes saving faith in different ways. The following outline shows some of those.

### *The Faith that Saves*

A Faith That Produces Works  
(2:14-18)

Works are faith's partner (2:14-17)

Works are faith's demonstrators  
(2:18)

A Faith That Comes from the Heart  
(2:19-26)

It is not mere intellectual assent  
(2:19-20)

It is heart obedience (2:21-26)

Read Romans 3:21—5:2 for Paul's teaching about justification by faith. Paul says a person is not justified by works (e.g., Rom. 4:2, 6); whereas in the present passage of James we read that Abraham was justified by works (2:21). Contradictory as the two passages may appear, there is no problem when one considers the context and the perspective of each writer. Paul only denies works as the root of salvation.¹⁷ He is not writing about Christian conduct as such, but about the way to becoming a Christian. James is not denying faith as the way of salvation, but he is maintaining that works will issue from a faith that is genuine. D. A. Hayes writes: "Paul is looking at the root; James is looking at the fruit. Paul is talking about the beginning of the Christian life; James is talking about its continuance and consummation. With Paul, the works he renounces precede faith and are dead works."

With James, the faith he denounces is apart from works and is a dead faith.”¹⁸

## **C. THE TONGUE (3.1-12)**

James 3:1-12 is a classic Scripture passage on the tongue. Use the following outline as you study the various truths taught.

3:1-2 The subject of the tongue introduced

3-5a The influential tongue

5b-6 The destructive tongue

7-8 The untameable tongue

9-12 The inconsistent tongue

As you study this passage, reflect on what is involved in these three activities: Thought; Word; Action. Think about motives; ones affected; possibility of

misunderstanding; repentance and recovery. If deeds (be “doers of the word,” 1:22) are crucial in effective Christian living, are spoken words any less crucial?

## **D. FACTION AMONG CHRISTIANS (3:13—4:12)**

The subject of the previous segment was the Christian and his speech; now it is the Christian and strife. When James wrote about the tongue, there was nothing mediocre in his tone. For he well knew the awesome power of the tongue. When he writes in this passage about strife among believers, his pen is at its sharpest and boldest: “You lust ... you commit murder ... you fight and quarrel” (4:2). What a tragic state of affairs, James must have thought, when joint heirs of the Prince of Peace are

mauling each other to grab a selfish prize.

James writes much about this problem that defiles a Christian community. As you read the passage, refer to Chart 109¹⁹, observing the different approaches James takes to the problem. What four arguments against selfish faction does he raise?

## **V. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

State the theme of James in your own words, based on your survey study.

Compare the key words and verses, which you observed in James, with those shown on Chart 108.

## **VI. APPLICATIONS**

From beginning to end the thrust of James's epistle is application. Write a list of the various areas of application in the book.

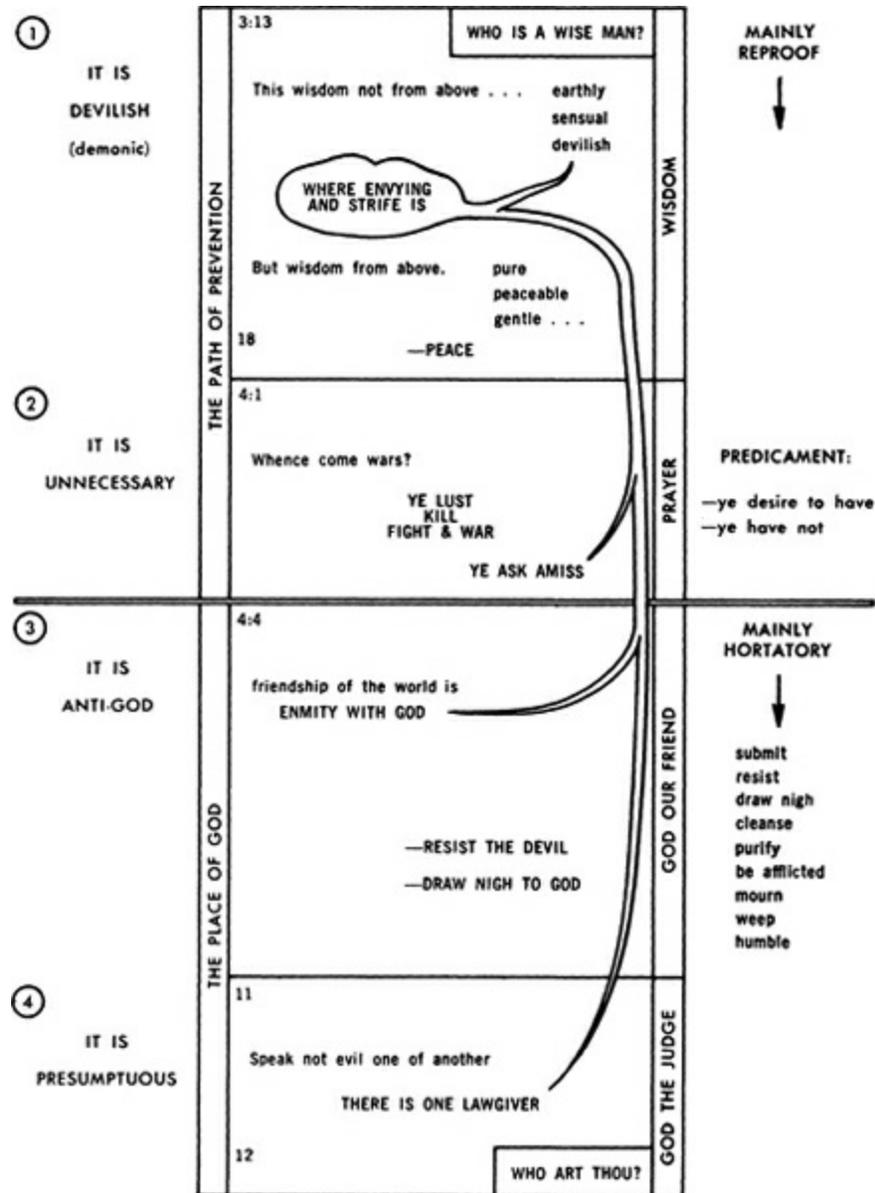
Compare your list with the following: prayer, trials, lust, service to God, values, good works, faith, love, judging others, the tongue, brotherly love, impartiality, wealth, the Lord's second coming. Derive applications for each area.

## **VII. REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Who are the four different New Testament persons with the name James? Which one is most likely the author of the epistle?

2. Recall what is known about James's family background.

# CHART 109: FOUR ARGUMENTS AGAINST SELFISH FACTION JAMES 3:13—4:12



3. What did James not believe about Jesus during His public ministry? What may have been the main hindrance?

4. Draw from memory the chart of the periods of James's life.

5. What do you think brought James to believe in Christ?

6. List what is known from the New Testament about James's part in the local Jerusalem church's experience during the thirty years of Acts' history.

7. Describe the personality and character of James.

8. What is traditionally held about James's death?

9. What is known about the original readers of James's epistle?

10. When and where did James write this epistle?

11. Why did James write?

12. Compare the epistle with other New Testament books.

13. Describe the style and tone of the letter.

14. Can you recall two of the four-point outlines of the book shown on Chart 108?

15. Name five key words and quote one key verse.

16. What title is assigned to the epistle on the survey, Chart 108?

## **VIII. FURTHER STUDY**

Three subjects recommended for further study are:

1. The various dispersions of the Jews, since the time of Christ to the present

2. The place of the law of God in the life of the Christian

3. Comparisons of James and Galatians.

## **IX. OUTLINE**

JAMES: Faith for Living	1:1-18
FAITH IN TESTINGS	1:19—4:12
FAITH AT WORK	1:19-27
Doers of the Word	2:1-13
The Case Against Discrimination	2:14-26
The Faith that Saves	3:1-12
The Christian and His Tongue	3:13—4:12
Evils of Faction Among Christians	4:13—5:12
FAITH AND THE FUTURE	5:13-20
FAITH AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP	

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *The Non-Pauline Epistles*, pp. 32-67. Knowling, R. J. *The Epistle of St. James*.

McNab, Andrew. "The General Epistle of James." In *The New Bible Commentary*.

## COMMENTARIES

Luck, G. Coleman. *James: Faith in Action*. Everyman's Bible Commentary. Mayor, Joseph B. *The Epistle of James*.

Plumptre, ?. H. *The General Epistle of St. James*.

## OTHER RELATED SOURCES

Robertson, A. T. *Studies in the Epistle of James*.

Vine, W. E. *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

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1. Practically all our knowledge of James comes from New Testament history. Tradition supplies a few items of interest concerning his life.

2. The word *pentecost* means “fiftieth.” Pentecost was the Old Testament Festival of Weeks (cf. Lev. 23:15; Deut. 16:9). The day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1) fell on the fiftieth day after the passion Passover.

3. D. A. Hayes, “Epistle of James,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 3:1563. It should be observed here that the book of Acts does not give much information concerning James’s leadership

during those decades.

4. Ibid., 3:1567.

5. *Diaspora* is the Greek word translated “scattered abroad” in 1:1. Persecutions, dating back as far as the Assyrian captivity (721 B.C.), and pursuit of commerce accounted for most of this “dispersion.”

6. The word *church* does appear, however, in 5:14.

7. Some hold to a late date on such grounds as: James 2:14-26 was written to correct a misinterpretation of Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith, contained in such writings as Romans (c. A.D. 56); and references to persecutions fit a late date better than an early date.

8. Henry C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 277.

9. The two verses containing the name “Jesus” are 1:1 and 2:1. The name “Lord” occurs fifteen times in the epistle.

10. D. A. Hayes, “Epistle of James,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 3:1564.

11. The notable example of refuting James is that of Martin Luther, who wrote that James “contradicts Paul and all Scriptures, seeking to accomplish by enforcing the law what the apostles successfully effect by love.” (Quoted by Hayes, 3:1566.)

Henrietta C. Mears, *What the Bible Is All About*, p. 595.

13. Hayes, 3:1564.

14. Quoted in John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Proverbs*, p.

15. These are outlines, respectively, of (1) Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, pp. 263-64; (2) Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Handbook*, p. 784; (3) Walter M. Dunnnett, *An Outline of New Testament Survey*, pp. 143-44. The three outlines show mainly the compositional unit of *section*.

16. Compare the title of G. Coleman Luck's commentary in the Everyman's Bible Commentary series, *James, Faith in Action*.

Read such passages as 1 Timothy 6:18; Titus 1:16; 3:8, which show the important place Paul assigns to works as the outcome of salvation.

D. A. Hayes, "The Epistle of James," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 3:1566.

19. Chart 109 is an abridged analytical chart. The method of constructing analytical charts is taught in my book, *Independent Bible Study*.

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## ***211 Peter: Trials, Holy Living, and the Lord's Coming***

Shortly before Peter denied his Master, Christ told him, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, *strengthen your brothers*” (Luke 22:31-32, italics added). Little did Peter know at that time how he would eventually be used of God to strengthen not only believers of his own generation, but believers of all generations to come, through the two inspired epistles that he was to write.

### **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

One of the best preparations for studying Peter's letters is to study his biography. That is the reason for the extended treatment of

biography in the pages that follow.

## II. THE MAN PETER

Peter wrote only two New Testament books. It is interesting to observe that of the notable “triumvirate” of New Testament writers mentioned earlier — Paul, apostle of faith; John, apostle of love; and Peter, apostle of hope — the man who does not appear in the gospels (Paul) authored most of the New Testament books, and the man who is most prominent in the gospels (Peter) wrote the least number of New Testament books.¹

For some Bible books, we cannot be sure of the identity of authorship (e.g., Hebrews). For some books whose authorship is known, we have sparse biographical information concerning the author (e.g., Jude). However, in the case of 1 and 2 Peter, the gospels and

Acts furnish much information concerning the life and character of those epistles' author.

Peter is one of the most interesting characters of the New Testament. The New Testament gives more personal information of Peter than it does of any other apostle of Christ.

## **A. NAME**

Originally, Peter's name was Simon (a common Greek name), the Hebrew equivalent of which is Symeon (Acts 15:14). Jesus gave Simon a new name, prophetically pointing to his future status and position among the Christian circle. That new name was Cephas (Aramaic), or Peter (Greek) (John 1:42). Consult an exhaustive concordance to observe how frequently the

name Peter appears in the New Testament, as opposed to only six references to the Aramaic name Cephas. It may be noted here that there is no other Peter in the New Testament.

## **B. BIRTH**

We do not know the date of Peter's birth. His father was a Jew named John or Jonas (also Jona). (Read Matthew 16:17; John 1:42; 21:15-17.) Peter had at least one brother, whose name was Andrew. The family's hometown was Bethsaida of Galilee (John 1:44), located near the north shore of the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee). (See Map F, p. 65.)

## **C. FOUR PERIODS OF LIFE**

The biography of Peter can be divided into four parts: (1) pregospel period, (2) gospel period, (3) early church period, (4) later life period. The highlights of each of those are shown below.

### 1. *Pregospel period.*

a. Education. Peter probably had the normal elementary education of a Jewish boy in a small town. The description “unlearned and ignorant” of Acts 4:13 (KJV) is better translated “unschooled, ordinary” (NIV) and has reference to Peter’s not having had rabbinical training. What amazed the rulers and people was that such unschooled laymen as Peter and John preached and performed with such mighty power.

b. Occupation. Many boys raised in the environs of the Sea of Galilee eventually entered the fishing trade. Peter and his

brother Andrew were among those. When Jesus first met them, they were busy about their trade (Matt. 4:18). James and John, sons of Zebedee, were partners with Peter and Andrew (Luke 5:10), who were living at that time in the coastal town of Capernaum (cf. Mark 1:29).

c. Marital status. From Mark 1:30 and 1 Corinthians 9:5 we learn that Peter was a married man during the period of the gospels. We do not know if he had children. (The gospels and Acts provide comparatively little information concerning the families of the disciples and apostles.)

## 2. *Gospel period.*

The highlights of Peter's life during Jesus' public ministry are listed below. Be sure to read all the Bible passages cited.

a. Connection with John the Baptist. Peter very likely attended the preaching services

of John the Baptist, as did his brother Andrew (cf. John 1:35-37, 41-42).

b. There were three calls by Jesus to Peter:

(1) the new name call: “You shall be called” (John 1:42)

(2) the new vocation call: “You will be catching men” (Luke 5:1-11)

(3) the new association call: “He appointed twelve” (Mark 3:13-19).

What three aspects of this ordination are mentioned in Mark 3:14-15? It is interesting to observe that in the four passages where the names of the twelve apostles are listed, Peter’s name heads each list (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13-14). At least two reasons may be given for this priority: (a) Peter was among the first disciples called by Jesus for the evangelistic

ministry, and (b) Peter's natural aggressiveness made him the spokesman and leader of the group, at least in an unofficial way. Two examples of Peter acting as spokesman are given in John 6:66-69 and Matthew 16:16-20.

c. Peter was one of Jesus' "inner circle." It was natural for Jesus to have in His company from time to time only a small segment of the twelve disciples. Peter, James, and John made up this "inner circle." The gospels record three occasions when the three men were the only apostles accompanying Him. Read the passages and determine the reasons for the limited company.

(1) At the house of Jairus — Mark 5:37  
(also Luke 8:51)

(2) Mount of Transfiguration — Matthew 17:1 (also Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28)

### (3) Garden of Gethsemane — Matthew 26:37 (also Mark 14:33)

d. Peter was a prominent character during Jesus' passion week. Read carefully each of the following passages, and observe (1) the occasion involved, and (2) what is revealed about Peter's character.

Matthew 26:33-46, 58, 69-75

Mark 11:21; 13:3

Luke 22:8, 61-62

John 13:1-11; 18:10-11

e. Key role among apostles. Peter also played a key role among the apostles during the forty days between Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Before Peter could begin to minister as a "rock" in the gospel's witness, he needed to be restored to fellowship with Christ, which had been broken during the week of Jesus' trial. Read the following

passages and note what is said about Peter in each case:

John 20:1-10 (Mark 16:7; Luke 24:12)

1 Corinthians 15:5

John 21:1-23.

In your own words describe the “new” Peter as of the end of the gospel account.

### 3. *Early church period.*

The most active and eventful period of Peter’s life was during the years of the first twelve chapters of Acts, or A.D. 30 to A.D. 47. Chart 110 shows the major events and movements of those chapters, and it also indicates that Peter was *the* main character in chapters 1-7, and that in chapters 8-12 he shared the spotlight with such men as Philip, Barnabas, and Paul.²

# CHART 110: ACTIVE PERIOD OF PETER'S LIFE (ACTS 1-12)

1	3	8:16	9:32	12
Church Is Born	Church Grows Through Testing	Church Is Scattered	Church Embraces Gentiles	
Jerusalem		Judea and Samaria		
Peter		Philip—Barnabas—Peter—Paul		

The following passages of Acts reveal the place of leadership and responsibility that Peter filled in the small group of twelve chosen apostles and in the larger group of the local congregation of believers in Jerusalem.³

- a. Leader of the twelve apostles (1:15-26).
- b. Powerful preacher (2:14-40; 5:42; 8:25; 10:34-43).
- c. Miracle-worker (3:1—4:22; 5:12-16; 9:32-43).
- d. Other experiences (identify them): 5:1-11; 5:17-41; 8:14-24; 12:1-19 (Except for

the reappearance of Peter in chapter 15 in connection with the Jerusalem Council, we might say that Peter fades out of the picture of Acts at 12:17: “And he [Peter] departed and went to another place.”) It is not known where that place was.

e. Apostle to the Gentiles (10:1—11:18).

f. Speaker at the Jerusalem Council (15:6-11; cf. vv. 12-29). This is the last reference to Peter in Acts. What he was doing while Paul was engaged in missionary journeys and other experiences of Acts 13-28 is the subject of the next era of his life, which we shall call the later-life period.

#### 4. *Later-life period.*

From a few New Testament references to Peter after the Jerusalem Council, the following reconstruction of his later life may be made:

a. Evangelistic ministry to Jews (Gal. 2:7-

9).

b. A visit to the church at Antioch (in Syria). Here Paul rebuked Peter for his inconsistency in the manner of having fellowship with Gentiles and with Jews.⁴ Read Galatians 2:11-21. What harm was Peter doing?

c. Evangelistic tour of northern Asia Minor. There is a strong possibility that the northern provinces of Asia Minor not evangelized by Paul were the areas where Peter ministered the gospel as an itinerant evangelist after the Jerusalem Council. This would partly explain Peter's references to believers living in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, in the salutation of 1 Peter (1 Pet. 1:1).⁵ Peter probably ministered to both Jews and Gentiles at this time.

d. Arrival at Rome. It is generally believed

that Peter came to Rome shortly after Paul's release from his first imprisonment.

e. Writing of the epistles. With perhaps a short interval between them, the two epistles of Peter were written during the period A.D. 64-67. At the time of his second letter, Peter knew his death was imminent (2 Pet. 1:14).

## **D. DEATH**

According to tradition, Peter was martyred by Nero in A.D. 67, about the same time his "beloved brother Paul" (2 Pet. 3:15) also was martyred. Origen says that Peter's death was by crucifixion and that the apostle requested he be crucified head downward, because he felt unworthy to die as Christ died.

## **E. THE CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY OF PETER**

The character of Peter has been scrutinized perhaps more than that of any other man or woman of the Bible. It is a happy circumstance that the New Testament reveals much about this interesting man.

A man's character may change radically in his lifetime, such as happens in the conversion of his soul. His basic temperament, however, is part of his permanent image.⁶ For example, Peter was always an aggressive man, full of energy. In his early days as a disciple of Jesus, this brought on unfortunate consequences, such as Peter's rash act of cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant, Malchus (John 18:10-11). After Pentecost, Peter was still the man of action, but that basic temperament had undergone some radical

experiences, including the Holy Spirit's baptism (Acts 2). This gave birth to a new passion and a mature vision, so that now the yet-aggressive man named Peter was the powerful preacher and courageous leader of the earliest New Testament church community. Peter in Acts is a different *character* from the Peter found in the gospels, but his basic temperament is essentially the same.

Various character traits have been attributed to Peter at some time in his life. Among the descriptions are: unstable, daring, weak, humble, energetic, courageous, devoted as a servant, hasty, strong in faith, impulsive, strong in leadership, self-confident. As to what kind of man he was in the last decade or so of his life, our only source is his inspired writing during those years — the two epistles that bear his name. After you have surveyed the

epistles, try arriving at a character identification of the apostle at that time.

### **III. BACKGROUND**

#### **A. AUTHORSHIP**

First Peter is one of those Bible books whose authorship is identified by name. “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to ...” (1:1). As to genuineness of this authorship, the epistle is one of the best attested books of the New Testament. When Peter wrote this letter he was an elderly man, as seen from 5:1: “I ... your fellow-elder” (cf. 5:5, “younger”). How else did Peter identify himself in 5:1?

#### **B. DESTINATION**

The natural, literal meaning of 1:1 is that this epistle was sent to people who were living in various Roman provinces of northern Asia Minor, namely, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (see Map T, p. 296). They were believers (5:2), and apparently had moved to those regions because of persecution (“aliens, scattered,” 1:1). Peter’s interest in these areas may have originated in evangelistic work to which he had devoted himself some time between the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15, A.D. 49) and the Neronian persecutions at Rome (A.D. 64). From the Acts account we learn that Paul did not evangelize northern Asia Minor on his missionary tours — in fact, on the one occasion when he began to move northward into this vicinity, he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit, who directed him to Troas, from there to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-12).

It is difficult to determine the exact

background of the exiles to whom Peter wrote his epistles. There were probably Gentiles represented in the group as well, suggested by such verses as 2:10 and 4:3-4 (read these).

### **C. DATE AND PLACE WRITTEN**

First Peter was written probably around the time of the outbreak of the Neronian persecution, or A.D. 64.

From 5:13 we may conclude that Peter wrote this epistle from Babylon. If the reference is a literal one,⁷ there are two possible places of writing: (1) Babylon on the Euphrates (Mesopotamia), where a colony of Jewish Christians lived as early as A.D. 36; or (2) Babylon on the Nile (a city of Egypt now known as Old Cairo).⁸

Many Bible scholars favor a symbolic

interpretation of the name Babylon, seeing it as a reference to Rome. Merrill Tenney sees Babylon here as “a mystic name for Rome, by which Christians applied to it all the evil connotations that had been historically associated with the Babylon on the Euphrates, and by which they could vent their feelings without being detected.”⁹ If the purpose of using “Babylon” was to disguise the actual origin, we can understand why the name as Peter used it does not have the *appearance* of mysterious symbolism in the context of the verse.

#### **D. IMMEDIATE SETTING**

The Christians addressed by Peter in this epistle were experiencing fiery trials of their faith (1:6-7). Slander by fellow citizens was one of those trials (2:12). Darker still were

the shadows of state persecution, which Christians throughout the Roman Empire feared. Everyone knew about those martyred by Nero in Rome. Would the fires spread to the Christians in northern Asia Minor? Peter wrote this letter not to assure the Christians that persecution would not come, but to encourage them to stand true and endure suffering for Christ's sake and with His strength, even when the persecution grew more intense.¹⁰

## **E. PLACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Refer to Chart 62, page 244, and note that the Petrine epistles are classified under the subject of eschatology. The emphasis of the two books is how to live the Christian life *in view of* the second coming of Christ. After you have surveyed the letters think of how

they are related to other New Testament books.

## **IV. SURVEY**

### **A. FIRST READING**

Scan 1 Peter in one sitting. The purpose of this initial quick reading is to get the feel and atmosphere of the book and to catch its major purposes. Write down your first impressions of 1 Peter and any key words and phrases that stand out as of this reading.

### **B. PARAGRAPHS**

1. First, mark in your Bible paragraph divisions at these verses: 1:1, 3, 10, 13, 22; 2:1, 4, 9, 11, 13, 18; 3:1, 7, 8, 13, 18; 4:1, 7, 12; 5:1, 5, 10, 12.

2. Read the epistle paragraph by paragraph, assigning a title to each paragraph as you read.

3. Scan the paragraphs again and note the opening word or phrase of each. Does this suggest anything about Peter's writing?

4. Compare the paragraphs in regard to general kind of content: for example, the amount of doctrine (teaching, such as 1:18-19), as compared with the amount of practical injunctions (such as the command of 2:2).

5. Compare the opening paragraph (1:1-2) and closing paragraph (5:12-14).

6. What new key words and phrases do you observe?

## **C. STRUCTURE OF THE WHOLE**

The organization of a book of the Bible is not always clearly discerned. This is so for 1 Peter. Whatever outline is arrived at for a Bible book, the student should not force any artificial structure onto any part of the book, just for the sake of a homogeneous or symmetrical outline. The suggestions for survey study given below have this counsel in mind.

1. Read your paragraph titles and try to recall the general movement of 1 Peter.

2. The opening and closing paragraphs are typical salutations found in epistles.

3. In constructing an outline, we should always look for *groups* of paragraphs of similar content. One group shows up very clearly in 1 Peter — paragraphs involving servants, wives, husbands, and so forth. Locate these paragraphs in the epistle. Chart 111 shows this group beginning at 2:11 and

ending at 3:12. Observe that the opening and closing paragraphs are directed to believers in general. The other paragraphs are addressed to more specific groups. List these in the following outline:

2:11-12 _____

2:13-17 _____

2:18-25 _____

3:1-6 _____

3:7 _____

3:8-12 _____

In this connection also note the appeal of subjection, or submission, directed to each group (e.g., 2:13, 18; 3:1, 7).

4. You no doubt have already observed that the subject of trial and suffering appears often in 1 Peter. Read each verse listed below, and record what is said about suffering in each case. (The first group gives

the appearances of the word *suffering* in its various forms as related to Christ; the second group, as related to believers. The last group shows references to the *subject* of suffering.)

*Group 1: Christ's suffering*

1:11; 2:21, 23; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1

*Group 2: Believers suffering*

2:19, 20; 3:14, 17; 4:1, 13, 15, 16, 19; 5:9, 10

*Group 3: Other references*

1:6, 7; 2:12; 3:13, 16; 4:4, 12, 14

What combination of two chapters has the most references to suffering?

How is trial related to salvation in 1:5-9?

5. There are important references to Christ's second coming in this epistle. What is taught in 1:8, 13; 2:12; 4:7, 13; 5:4? (There are other references that *imply* this

second coming. Look for these.)

## D. SURVEY CHART

When the total structural organization of a Bible book is not too clear, it is sometimes helpful to choose a prominent section of the book and, using it as the base or starting point, relate the other sections of the book to this base. The result will be *an* outline of a prominent theme of the book, which will not necessarily represent a standard outline of content.¹¹ Let us apply this approach to 1 Peter. Keep referring to Chart 111 as you read the following.

### 1. *A base section.*

Let us choose 2:1-10 as our base section. In these three paragraphs are some wonderful truths basic to Christian living, namely, truths about who Christ is and

about what the believer's position is in Christ. (Read the passage.) Let us identify the section by the phrase *unique position*. Note where this appears on Chart 111. Try to think of other representative phrases.

## 2. *Related sections.*

*2:11—3:12.* We have already scanned this section, observing that it is about specific Christian groups, appealing especially to a life of submission. Let us call this section *life of submission*.

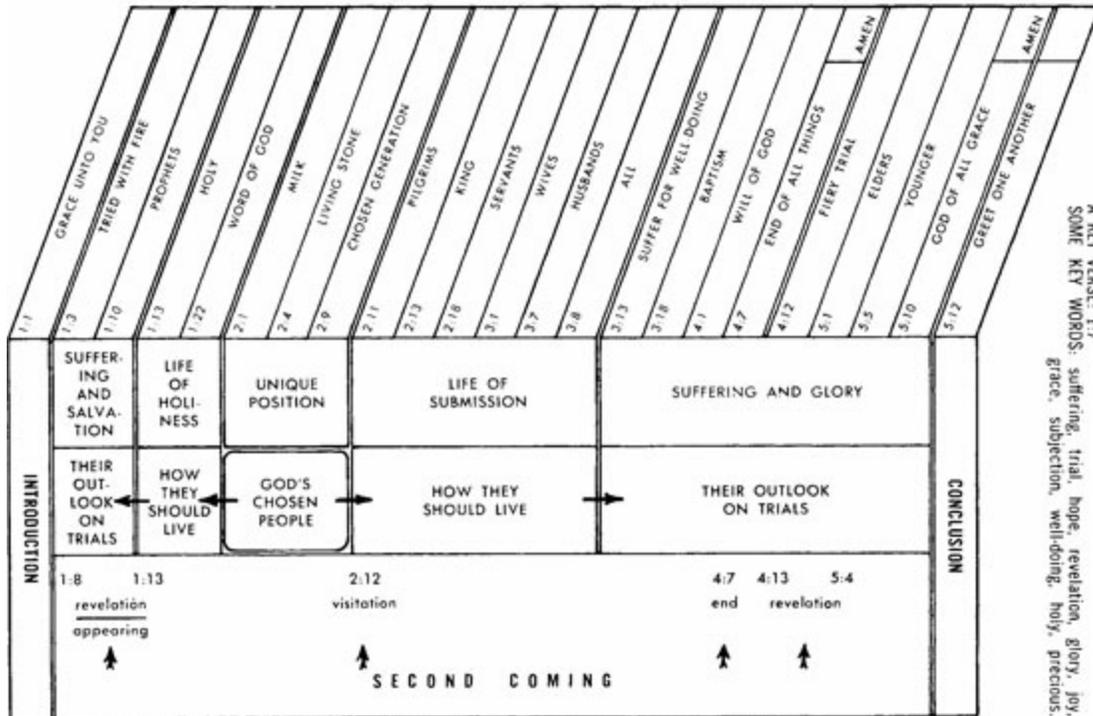
*1:13-25.* A strong key command here is “be holy yourselves” (1:15). While other attributes appear in this section as well (e.g., “fear,” v. 17; “love,” v. 22), we will choose to call this section *life of holiness*.

*3:13—5:11.* Earlier in our study we observed the concentration of

# CHART 111

## 1 PETER

### TRIALS, HOLY LIVING, AND THE LORD'S COMING



references to suffering in this section. Read the passage again to discover what truths are associated with that of suffering. One such truth is *glory*. Underline in your Bible each reference to glory. We will call this section *suffering and glory*.

Observe the word “Amen” at the end of 4:11. Some see here a climactic point in the passage 3:13—4:11. Compare 3:13—4:11 and 4:12—5:11, observing differences and

likenesses.

*1:3-12.* Two subjects seem to be prominent in this section: suffering and salvation. Read the section and observe how Peter relates the two subjects. We will call this section *suffering and salvation*.

### *3. Main outlines.*

Note on Chart 111 the wording of the outline that is centered on “God’s Chosen People,” which is another way of wording the outline arrived at above. Compare the different points of each outline.

References to Christ’s second coming are also shown on the chart.

What title is assigned to 1 Peter?

## **V. PROMINENT SUBJECTS**

### **A. THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE (1:13-25)**

One of the key verses of 1 Peter is 1:17, which concludes with the command “conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth.” The Christian’s pilgrimage on earth should be marked by various life-styles and attitudes. Three of these that Peter emphasizes in this passage are:

Be Holy (1:15-16)

Fear God (1:17)

Love One Another (1:22).

These are basic commands for active consecrated Christian living. Later in the epistle (2:11—3:12) Peter treats specific rules of behavior (e.g., of servants, husbands, wives).

## **B. REDEMPTION BY CHRIST'S BLOOD (1:18-19)**

The lamb as a type and picture of Christ appears from time to time throughout the Bible. Make a list of the various truths taught about the blood of Christ in this passage. Chart 112 shows key references to Christ as a lamb, as these references appear throughout the Bible. Read the context of each passage cited.

## **C. LIFE OF SUBJECTION (2:11—3:12)**

The key word of this passage is *submit*. Read the segment and note how many paragraphs open with that thought. What does the passage teach about submission in the everyday living of citizens, employees, wives, husbands, and members of a local church?

## **D. SUFFERING AND TRIAL (3:13—5:11)**

Peter the realist writes much about the suffering and trials of Christians. Read 3:13—4:11 and observe how Peter writes about these attitudes of Christians in suffering:

# CHART 112: THE LAMB IN SCRIPTURE

PASSAGE	MAIN TEACHING	SETTING
1. Genesis 4:4-8 (Abel)	necessity of the lamb	for the offerer
2. Genesis 22:7-8 (Abraham and Isaac)	provision of the lamb	for another individual
3. Exodus 12:12-14 (Passover)	slaying and eating of the lamb	a family
4. Leviticus 1:10	character of the lamb	a nation
5. Isaiah 53	the lamb is a person	all elect
6. John 1:29-36	the lamb is <b>that</b> person	world
7. Acts 8:32-35	that person is <b>promised</b>	whosoever
8. 1 Peter 1:18-21	resurrection of the lamb	all time
9. Revelation 5:12-13	enthronement of the lamb	all the universe
10. Revelation 21:22	glory of the lamb	all eternity

1. attitude of goodness in action (3:13-17)
2. attitude of newness of life (3:18-22)
3. attitude of separation in living (4:1-6)
4. attitude of service in suffering (4:7-11).

In 4:12—5:11 Peter writes more about the trials (e.g., “fiery ordear 4:12) of a Christian. Chart 113 shows a breakdown of this passage.

The glory and help of God are two of the triumphant notes with which Peter concludes this section. As an optimist the apostle was confident that the suffering and trials of Christians can reflect the glory of

God, and that the Lord is an ever-present help and inspiration in every trial.

## **VI. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

The theme of 1 Peter is that of hope in the midst of severe trial. Such hope comes from a firm faith in the “God of all grace” (5:10).

What key words and verses did you observe in your survey study? Compare these with what is shown on Chart 111.

# CHART 113: TRIALS OF 1 PETER 4:12-5:11

4:12	5:1	5:5	5:11
<b>Trials of Judgment</b> —judged by the world (falsely)  —judged by God (rightly)	<b>Trials of Service</b> —the load of responsibility  —the demand of integrity	<b>Trials of Submission</b> —subjection (to one another) (to God)  —but resistance (vs. Satan)	

## VII. Applications

Reflect on things you observed in the text of 1 Peter. Apply these in the following areas:

1. gratitude for one's salvation
2. holy Christian living
3. pure fervent love among Christians
4. life of submission to others
5. suffering and trials.

## VIII. Review Questions

1. What is significant about Peter's name?
2. What were the four periods of Peter's life? Recall some of the highlights of each

period.

3. What were Peter's three calls by Jesus? What was the significance of each call?

4. What role does Peter play in the book of Acts?

5. Reconstruct a probable biography of Peter after the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.

6. Describe in your words the character of Peter as of the time of the writing of his epistles.

7. Describe the people to whom Peter wrote this epistle.

8. Where were they living?

9. What was their relationship to Peter?

10. What were their particular spiritual needs at that time?

11. What is the theme of 1 Peter?

12. What are some important subjects

reiterated in the epistle?

13. Name the points of one major outline of Chart 111, page 448.

14. How many key words of Chart 111 do you recall?

15. Write down the key verse of Chart 111 from memory.

## IX. FURTHER STUDY

1. Investigate the extent of persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire during the last half of the first century.

2. Study the subject of *fear* as it appears in the Bible. Include the attitude that a Christian should have (e.g., 1 Pet. 1:17); and the fear he need not have (e.g., “Perfect love casts out fear” 1 John 4:18).

3. Make a study of the Christian’s relation to governmental authority in the first

century. The book of Acts furnishes much information on this subject. Study also what Jesus said about this.

4. Study what the letters of Peter reveal about his character.

## X. OUTLINE

### 1 PETER: God's Chosen People

Salutation and Benediction	1:1-2
THEIR SUFFERING AND SALVATION	1:3-12
THEIR PILGRIMAGE	1:13-25
THEIR UNIQUE POSITION	2:1-10
HOW THEY SHOULD LIVE	2:11—3:12
THEIR SUFFERING AND GLORY	3:13—5:11
Greetings and Benediction	5:12-14

## XI. SELECTED READING

(Refer to the list at the end of [Chapter 22.](#))

1. Paul wrote thirteen epistles (fourteen, if he wrote Hebrews); Peter, two; John, five books (gospel, three epistles, Revelation).
2. See Chart 51, page 208, for the reigns of emperors, procurators, and high priests during those years.
3. The original group of twelve was reduced to eleven with the alienation and death of Judas (Acts 1:16-20), but it was restored to the number of twelve when Matthias was selected to replace Judas (Acts 1:23-26).
4. Peter's behavior on this occasion has been identified in various versions as "insincerity" (RSV), "deception" (Phillips), "playing false" (NEB), and "hypocrisy" (NASB and NIV).
5. Of Peter's relationship to the churches in these areas, Tenney writes, "While there is no statement on record that Peter founded or even visited these churches, there is nothing to preclude his doing so." Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, rev. ed., p.

345.

6. For an interesting and practical discussion of varieties of temperament, see O. Hallesby, *Temperament and the Christian Faith*.

7. The main argument for a literal interpretation is that the whole verse (5:13) is a simple, matter-of-fact salutation.

8. See G. T. Manley, ed., *The New Bible Handbook*, p. 399.

9. Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, rev. ed., p. 348.

10. To what extent the persecutions at Rome extended to other lands at this time is not exactly known, but “Roman provincial governors tended to reflect the Emperor’s will, and especially in any place where powerful elements were ill-disposed to Christianity there might well be a severe outbreak” (Alan M. Stibbs, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, p. 54). At least by the end of the century, in the time when John wrote

Revelation, the churches of Asia Minor were undergoing severe persecution.

11. I consulted seven authors to compare their outlines of 1 Peter, and I found no two outlines alike, even concerning chapter-verse dividing points. Of the seven outlines, three centered on the subject of suffering, one on salvation, two on Christian living, and one on varieties of questions

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## ***222 Peter: True and False Prophecy***

About three years after Peter penned his first letter to saints in exile, the Spirit moved him to write again. The second epistle is shorter, but no less important.

### **I. BACKGROUND**

There are not as many personal references in 2 Peter as there are in 1 Peter. Nevertheless, a fairly accurate picture can be composed concerning the epistle's background.

#### **A. AUTHOR**

The opening verse of the epistle identifies the author as Simon Peter, an apostle of Christ. This Petrine authorship has been challenged by critics, who have maintained,

among other things, that internal evidence points to a date later than Peter's lifetime, and that the style of the second epistle differs from that of the first.

External evidences of the church's *early* acceptance of 2 Peter as one of the inspired books of the New Testament canon are relatively scanty. For example, the epistle is not quoted directly by any of the church fathers before Origen (c. A.D. 250).¹ By the end of the fourth century, however, the book's rightful place in the canon was recognized by the Christian church. The arguments favoring Petrine authorship are strong. Consider these internal evidences:

1. The name of Simon Peter appears in the text (1:1).²
2. The writer is identified as an apostle of Jesus Christ in 1:1.
3. The writer refers to an earlier epistle

having been written by him to the same readers (3:1).

4. The writer was a close friend of Paul and had read many if not all of Paul's epistles (3:15-16).³

5. Autobiographical references in the epistle are about Peter. Read these:

a. Mount of Transfiguration experience (1:16-18; cf. Mark 9:2-9).

b. Christ's foretelling Peter's death (1:13-15; cf. John 21:18-19).

## **B. DATE AND PLACE WRITTEN**

Peter wrote this letter from Rome around A.D. 67, when his death was imminent (1:14; cf. 2 Tim. 4:6, concerning Paul).

## **C. DESTINATION**

From 3:1 we conclude that the Christian exiles addressed in 1 Peter also received this letter. Others besides them may have been addressed in the second epistle, however.

## **D. OCCASION AND PURPOSE**

In his first epistle Peter had much to say about opposition to Christians originating outside the group, in the form of persecution. In this epistle he refers mostly to the more serious danger originating inside the group, namely, apostasy and false teaching. Thus his purpose in writing the epistle was to expose the false teachers and instruct the Christians on what they should do to combat the ugly threat of apostasy.

The following further comparisons of 1 and 2 Peter reveal more of the purposes of this second letter of Peter.⁴

# FIRST AND SECOND PETER COMPARED

1 Peter	2 Peter
emphasis: suffering	emphasis: false teaching
suffering of Christ	glory to follow
redemptive title: Christ	title of dominion: Lord
consolation	warning
hope, to face trial	full knowledge, to face error

## II. Survey

### A. FIRST READING

1. Scan the book quickly, noting such things as its length, as compared to 1 Peter.

2. Mark paragraph divisions in your Bible beginning at these verses: 1:1, 3, 16; 2:1, 4, 106, 17; 3:1, 11, 14.

3. Read the epistle in one sitting, paragraph by paragraph. What is the atmosphere? What are your first impressions of the letter?

4. What key words and verses stand out as

of this first reading?

## **B. FURTHER READINGS**

1. Read the letter again and assign a title to each paragraph.
2. What do you regard as the introduction and the conclusion of the epistle?
3. Do you see any grouping of paragraphs as to similar general content?
4. Observe references to true prophecy and to false prophecy.
5. Be on the constant lookout for key words and phrases. For example, observe how often the word *know* and its cognates appear in the book. Why would the subject of knowledge be emphasized in a book like 2 Peter, considering the dangers threatening the Christians?

6. Observe various exhortations and commands in the epistle.

7. Try making outlines of the epistle.

## **C. SURVEY CHART**

Chart 114 is a simplified diagram of the organization of 2 Peter. Note the following things.

1. The epistle opens and closes with the appeal to give diligence (identify the verses in the text).

2. The main body of the letter (1:16—3:10) is about prophecy. (This is forthtelling as well as foretelling; teaching as well as predicting.)

3. What are the three sections of 1:16—3:10?

4. Study the sequence of four parts in the

section *false prophets*.

5. Note the title assigned to the book.

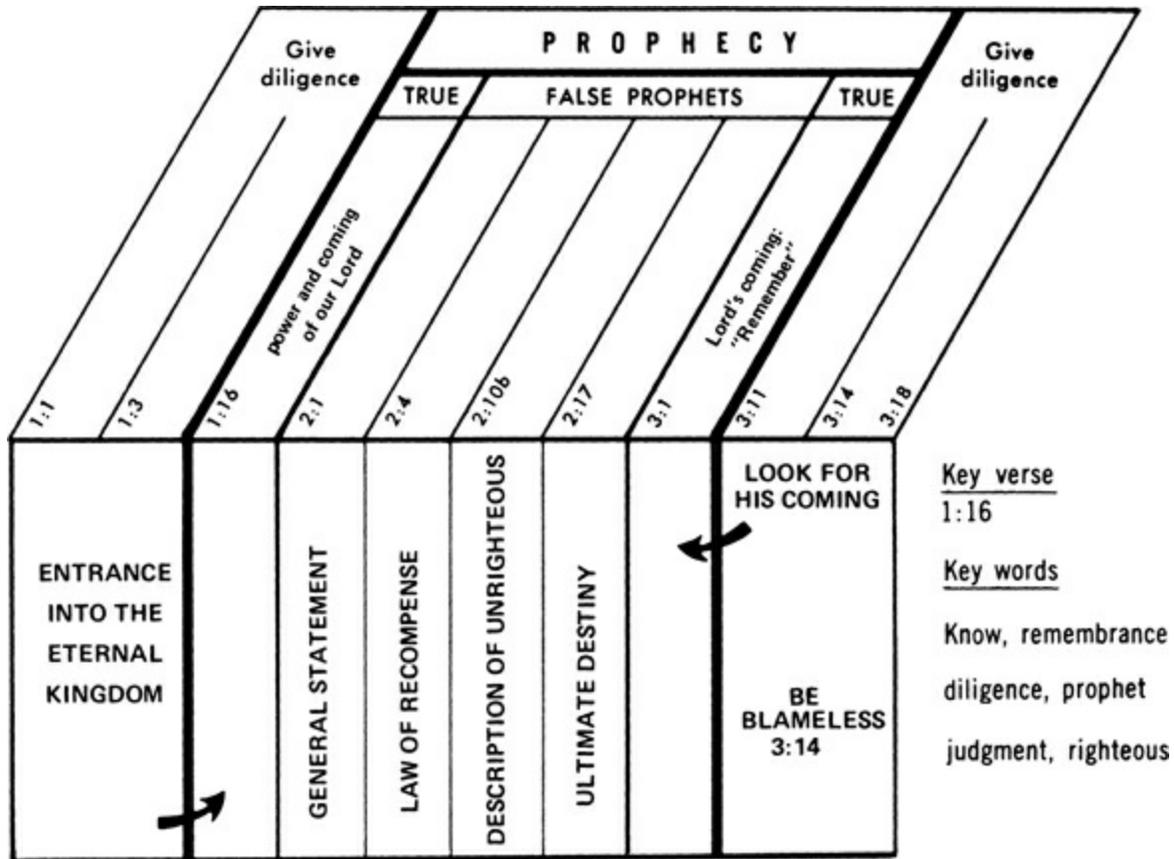
6. Expand on this survey chart with your own outlines.

### **III. Prominent Subjects**

#### **A. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (1:1-15)**

Peter was convinced that an intimate knowledge of God was an antidote to false teaching and apostasy, which were threatening the spiritual health of some Christians. So he writes about this in the first part of his letter. Follow this outline as you read the passage:

# CHART 114: 2 PETER: TRUE AND FALSE PROPHECY



## *The Man Who Knows God*

I. Is Blessed for This Knowledge (1:1-2)

II. Acts on This Knowledge (1:3-11)

III. Should Not Forget What He knows (1:12-15)

## B. TRUE AND FALSE PROPHECY (1:16—3:10)

Here Peter seeks to stir up his readers concerning things present and things to come. On the bright side, he reminds his Christian readers of the inspiring prophecy of Christ's return. What are the different references to this return in 1:16-21 and 3:1-10? On the dark side are his descriptions of the shocking state and destiny of false teachers and their followers. Observe how each of the four sections under *false prophets* (Chart 114) leads into the next section. For example:

2:1-3. General Statement. "There will also be false teachers"

2:4-10a. Law of Recompense. These unrighteous men will reap judgment (just as the righteous will be rewarded).

2:106-16. Description of the Unrighteous.  
(The one group of 2:4-10a is singled out.)

2:17-22. Destiny of the Unrighteous.  
(Their destiny is spelled out in more detail.)

### **C. DISSOLUTION OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD (3:7-10)**

Peter's description of the cataclysmic dissolution of the physical world is not a strange picture to this twentieth-century nuclear age. He writes that "the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up" (3:10).

The prophecy of this cataclysm was brought on by scoffers who challenged the truthfulness of prophecies of Christ's return, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

(3:4). Peter answered by citing three supernatural events that originated by decree of God (word of God):

a. *First.* The universe was created (heavens and earth, 3:5).⁵

b. *Later.* The world perished in the Flood (3:6). (The word “whereby” connects the Flood with God’s Word. Literally, the Greek is “through which things,” i.e., through the Word of God and the flood water.)⁶

c. *Yet to come.* Dissolution of the universe “by the same word of God” (3:7). Peter cites the Flood cataclysm to disprove historically the status quo argument of the scoffers. Having done that, Peter clinches his original point by saying that history can and will repeat itself — another cataclysm will take place, at God’s command, in the “day of judgment” (3:7).⁷ This will be the dissolution of the universe. The day of the

Lord *will* come, declares Peter (3:10).

#### **IV. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES**

State the theme of 2 Peter in your own words. What key words and verses did you observe in the epistle? How do they reflect the theme?

#### **V. APPLICATIONS**

1. Show how the steps of 1:5-7 can be the active experience of a Christian. Do you see a progression in the steps?

2. What does this epistle teach about living the Christian life in light of the imminent return of Christ?

#### **VI. REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Was 2 Peter quickly recognized in the early centuries as an inspired book?

2. Name some arguments supporting the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter.
3. Where and when did Peter write this letter?
4. Who were its original readers?
5. What were Peter's main purposes in writing?
6. Compare 1 and 2 Peter in various ways.
7. How is *know* a key word of the epistle?
8. Compare the opening (1:1-15) and closing (3:11-18) sections of 2 Peter.
9. Where in the epistle do the four paragraphs on *false prophets* appear?
10. What is the subject of the paragraphs on each side of that group of four?
11. Name some key words shown on Chart 114.
12. What title is assigned to 2 Peter on

# Chart 114?

## VII. FURTHER STUDY

1. Study what the Bible teaches about degrees of punishment in hell and degrees of reward in heaven.
2. Make an extensive comparative study of 1 and 2 Peter.

## VIII. OUTLINE

### 2 PETER: True and False Prophecy

SALUTATION AND BENEDICTION	1:1-2
THE MAN WHO KNOWS GOD	1:3-15
TRUE PROPHECY: SURETY OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING	1:16-21
FALSE PROPHECY	2:1-22
General Statement	2:1-3
Law of Recompense	2:4-10a
Description of the Unrighteous	2:10b-16
Destiny of the Unrighteous	2:17-22
TRUE PROPHECY: FACT AND DELAY OF CHRIST'S SECOND COMING	3:1-18a
DOXOLOGY	3:18b

## IX. SELECTED READING FOR 1 AND 2 PETER

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *The Non-Pauline Epistles*, pp. 105-58.

Tenney, Merrill C. "First and Second Epistle of Peter." In *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, pp. 642-44.

### COMMENTARIES

Clark, Gordon ?. *II Peter. A Short Commentary*.

Cramer, George H. *First and Second Peter*.

Lange, John Peter. *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: I, II Peter*.

Stibbs, A. M. *The First Epistle General of Peter*. The Tyndale New Testament

Commentaries.

## RELATED SOURCES

Rees, Paul S. *Triumphant in Trouble, Studies in 1 Peter*.

Robertson, A. T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*.

Thomas, W. H. Griffith. *The Apostle Peter*.

Wuest, Kenneth S. *In These Last Days*.

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**1. Merrill C. Tenney in *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 643, gives this reason: “The relative silence of the early Church may be explained by the brevity of the epistle, which could have made it more susceptible to being overlooked or lost.”**

**2. Some of the earliest manuscripts read**

only the name “Simeon.” But this is a reference to the same person. (Cf. Acts 15:14.)

3. Paul was executed by Nero in A.D. 67, probably the same year Peter wrote this second epistle.

4. From Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook*, p. 809.

5. *Today's English Version* interprets 3:56 in this way: “Long ago God spoke, and the heavens and earth were created.”

6. Cf. Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison, eds., *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1461.

7. The “day of judgment” is also called the “day of the Lord” (3:10) and “day of God” (3:12). This is not a 24-hour day, but an extended period of time, the dawn of which will be Christ's coming to rapture the church.

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## *23 Epistles of John and Jude*

*1 John: Fellowship with God and His Children*

*2 John: Truth and the Christian*

*3 John: Spiritual Health and Prosperity*

*Jude: Keeping Oneself in the Love of God*

About a half century after Christ ascended to heaven, the Spirit moved one man, John the Elder, to write the last five New Testament books (a gospel, three epistles, Revelation). The other twenty-two had been written and distributed from about A.D. 45 to the years just prior to the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70).

John's experience as the writer of New Testament books was unique. Besides his dramatic experience in old age of visions on the Island of Patmos (when he authored the

book of Revelation), the apostle had the blessed privilege of meditating long on the wonderful truths of Jesus' life. He recorded his reflections under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in a gospel record and in the three epistles of 1, 2, and 3 John. We have already studied his gospel. Now we turn our attention to his three letters. This will be followed by a survey of Jude, a short letter that appears immediately after John's letters in the New Testament canon.

## **I. PREPARATION FOR STUDY**

Think back over all the books of the New Testament that had been written up to the writing of John's letters and Revelation. Had any major areas of doctrine been overlooked? If not, what might have been God's reasons for adding new books to His collection of Scripture?

## II. THE MAN JOHN

It is very helpful to study biographical notes about this beloved disciple of Jesus. For to be acquainted with the man John is to stand in his shoes and empathize with him as he shares the truths so precious and glorious in his sight. ([Chapter 8](#) discussed some of these notes.)

### A. NAME

The name John was a common one in Jesus' day, just as it was in Old Testament days and as it is today. The Greek name is *Ioannes*, derived from the Hebrew *Yohanan*, which means literally, "Jehovah is gracious." Often this name was given to a child as a testimony of the parents' gratitude to God for the initial gift of a baby (cf. 1 Chron. 3:15).

There are five different men in the New Testament bearing the name John:

1. John the Baptist (e.g., Matt. 3:1; Luke 1:57-66)
2. John Mark (e.g., Acts 12:12; 2 Tim. 4:11)
3. Jona, or Jonas, father of Simon Peter (John 1:42; 21:15, 17)
4. John, a relative of Annas the high priest (Acts 4:6)
5. John, son of Zebedee (Matt. 4:21), an apostle of Jesus (Matt. 10:2), who called himself “the elder” in 2 John and 3 John. This John was the author of the epistles.

## **B. BIRTH**

The place of John’s birth may have been the city of Bethsaida, at the northern tip of

the Sea of Galilee. This was the hometown of Philip, Andrew, and Peter (John 1:44). We do not know the date of his birth, but he may have been at least five years younger than Jesus.

### **C. FAMILY**

John's mother was Salome (see Matt. 27:56, with Mark 15:40; 16:1). If, as suggested by John 19:25, Salome was a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, then Jesus and John were cousins. This would partly explain the special place John had in Jesus' "inner circle."

John's father was Zebedee (Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19), a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. John had at least one brother, James the apostle (Matt. 4:21), who was executed by Herod Agrippa I around A.D. 44

(Acts 12:1-2). Jesus surnamed both brothers Boanerges, or “sons of thunder,” a name indicating perhaps a fiery personality in the young men (see Luke 9:52-56). Before becoming a disciple of Jesus, John was in the fishing trade with his father and brother.

It appears that John’s parents were well to do, as suggested by the following:

1. Their household had servants (Mark 1:20).

2. Salome helped with the financial support of Jesus during His public ministry (cf. Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:3).

3. Salome bought spices for Jesus’ body (Mark 16:1).

4. John was a personal acquaintance of the high priest (John 18:15), and usually high priests were of the upper class.

## **D. EDUCATION**

John as a boy and youth very likely had a thorough Jewish religious training at home. Devout Jewish parents, such as Salome was, placed a priority on this. As noted earlier, the reference of Acts 4:13 to Peter's and John's being unschooled men simply tells us that these apostles did not have *formal* training in the rabbinical schools of that day. In present-day parlance, they were well-informed Christian laymen without a theology degree. As a disciple of John the Baptist (see John 1:35), John must have learned much from the forerunner of Jesus.

## **E. EXPERIENCE**

John's life may be divided into two eras: (1) before meeting Jesus, and (2) after meeting Jesus. Of that first era we know

practically nothing. The second era was of two periods, which we shall identify as (1) pre-Pentecost period (i.e., up to the event of Acts 2), and (2) post-Pentecost period. Let us now study each of these periods, keeping in mind that the John who, toward the end of his life, wrote the epistles of our study, is the John who was molded and perfected by the experiences of the periods.

1. *Pre-Pentecost period.* The approximately three and one-half years of Jesus' public ministry constituted this pre-Pentecost period. John was with Jesus most of this time. He was the disciple greatly loved by the Master (John 21:7, 20). Of the three disciples of Jesus' "inner circle" (Peter, James, and John), John was the most prominent, while Peter was the most active one. (Read Matthew 17:1; 26:37; Mark 5:37).

a. Stages of discipleship. The part John played in Jesus' public ministry may be broken down according to three stages. (Read all the passages cited.)

(1) FIRST STAGE (during the first year of Jesus' ministry).

(a) John meets Jesus, and becomes one of His disciples (John 1:35-39).

(b) John is with Jesus during most of the first year of Jesus' public ministry.

(c) John returns to the fishing occupation, at least temporarily. (We cannot be sure of this transfer of activity.)

(2) SECOND STAGE (at the beginning of the second year of Jesus'

ministry).

(a) Jesus calls disciples (Peter and Andrew; James and John) to become “fishers of men” (Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11).

(b) Jesus continues His training of the disciples to be witnesses for Him.

(3) THIRD STAGE (four months into the second year of Jesus’ public ministry).

(a) John with eleven others is ordained to the apostolate (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-19). What three aspects of this ordination are mentioned in Mark 3:14-15?

(b) John remains close to Jesus up to

His Gethsemane experience (read Matt. 26:37 ff.); then flees from His presence at His arrest (Matt. 26:56).

(c) John is one of the first ones to view the empty tomb of Jesus (John 20:1-10).

(d) John with the other apostles obeys Jesus' command to wait in Jerusalem for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them (Acts 1:8, 12-14).

b. Key experiences. There were many key experiences of John as he served his Master during this pre-Pentecost period. Here is a list of the references of most of these (when you read the passages, consider also the surrounding context in each case): Matthew 17:1; 26:37, 56; Mark 5:37; 9:2, 38; 10:35;

13:3; 14:33, 37; Luke 8:51; 9:28, 49, 54; 22:8; John 13:23, 25; 18:15-16; 19:26; 20:2-3; 21:1-7, 20-24.

2. *Post-Pentecost period.* From Galatians 2:9 we learn that Peter (Cephas), James, and John were leaders of the church at Jerusalem during the first years after Pentecost. Read the following passages, which record some of John's activities during that time: Acts 3:1 ff.; 4:1-22; 8:14-15. After chapter 8 of Acts there is no mention of John, though he surely attended the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 *if he* was in the vicinity at the time. There is no mention of him in Acts 21, when Paul was in Jerusalem, which could mean that by that time John at least had moved to another place.

The latter years of John's life were probably spent around Ephesus, hub city of

Asia Minor, where the apostle was teaching, preaching, and writing. The Bible books that he wrote (the gospel, three epistles, Revelation) probably were all written between A.D. 85 and 96. Ephesus was the city where Paul, on his third missionary journey, spent about three years evangelizing the pagan city and teaching the Word of God to many converts (Acts 19:1-20). How strong and spiritually mature the young Ephesian church became is suggested by Acts 19:20 and by the profound depths of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, which the apostle wrote from prison at Rome. It was among such Ephesian Christians that John ministered during the last years of his life.

While John's home may have been in Ephesus at this time, he was very well acquainted with churches in surrounding cities, such as Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. (Consult

Map V, page 337, for these locations.) These are the churches to whom he sent the scroll of his visions, which were received on the Island of Patmos about A.D. 95 (Rev. 1:9-11).

## F. DEATH

John apparently died in Ephesus soon after writing Revelation. His age at death was around 100. Read John 21:23 and note an interesting reference to the apostle made by Jesus. Of this, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* comments:

If to this [known lot of John, including the Patmos experience] we add that he must have outlived all, or nearly all, of those who had been the friends and companions even of his maturer years; that this lingering age gave strength to an

old impression that his Lord had promised him immortality (John 21:23); that, as if remembering the actual words which had been thus perverted, the longing of his soul gathered itself up in the cry, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20), we have stated all that has any claim to the character of historical truth.¹

Who would not like to know how soon after writing “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20) John’s spirit was ushered into the presence of Christ?

## **G. CHARACTER**

John, like Peter, is an example of a man with an intense, vigorous nature that Christ directed to the glory of God. At times John’s

intensity was unfortunately the channel for evil words and deeds. Read Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 9:38; 10:35; Luke 9:49, 54; and observe the apostle in the dark moments of intolerance, vindictive-ness, undue vehemence, and selfish ambition. For the most part, however, the New Testament's picture of John is an attractive and beautiful one. Charles C. Ryrie says, "In actions, in love for the brethren, in condemnation of heresy, John was the intense apostle."²

John is known as the apostle of love. Writes Tenney, "As Christ tamed his ardor and purified it of unrestrained violence, John became the apostle of love whose devotion was not excelled by that of any other writer of the New Testament."³² His tender concern for other Christians is manifested most clearly in his epistles where he addresses his readers as "my little children" and "beloved." As we study John's

epistles we will be learning more of the character of the one so loved of Christ.

### **III. BACKGROUND OF 1 JOHN**

#### **A. AUTHOR**

Let us now look at the evidences for John's authorship of his first epistle. Internal evidence and early church tradition give ample support to the view that the apostle John wrote the epistles as well as the fourth gospel.⁴³ Arguments favoring another author, such as a different John with the designation "John the elder," are not as strong.

Our starting point here is that the same author wrote the gospel of John and 1 John. Identification of the author of the fourth gospel is narrowed down to the one man

John the apostle when one considers the following descriptions of the author. (Note: Study this section not only for the identification of authorship, but also to learn more about the person John.)

1. *He was a Palestinian Jew.* This is shown, for example, by his use of the Old Testament (John 6:45; 13:18; 19:37); by his knowledge of Jewish traditions (John 1:19-49; 2:6, 13; 3:25; 4:25; 5:1; 6:14-15; 7:26 ff.; 10:22; 11:55; 12:13; 13:1; 18:28; 19:31, 42); and by his knowledge of Palestine (John 1:44, 46; 2:1; 4:47; 5:2; 9:7; 10:23; 11:54).

2. *He was an eyewitness.* This is shown by the exactness of details in his reporting (e.g., John 1:29, 35, 43; 2:6; 4:40, 43; 5:5; 12:1, 6, 12; 13:26; 19:14, 20, 23, 34, 39; 20:7; 21:6), and by the intimate character descriptions he gives of such men as Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Nathanael, and

Nicodemus.

3. *He was one of Jesus' intimate associates, the "beloved disciple."* (See John 13:23; 18:15-16; 19:26-27). Of these associates, James was killed in the early years of the church's life (Acts 12:2), and Peter, Thomas, and Philip are referred to in the gospel in the third person so frequently that they may be eliminated as possible authors. This leaves John, son of Zebedee, as the most likely author of the gospel.

Now the question is, Did the author of the fourth gospel also write 1 John? Most scholars agree that both books were written by the same man. Internal evidence, based mainly on similarities between the books, answers *Yes to the question*. This evidence includes:

a. similarities in the openings of each book (compare John 1:1-18 and 1 John 1:1-

4)

b. common phrases in the two books — for example, “only begotten” (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9; cf. 5:1, 18), and “born of God” (e.g., John 1:13; 1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18)

c. similar grammatical and stylistic structure

d. common themes prominent in both books — for example, love, light, life, abide, darkness, world, eternal life, new commandment, the Word, beginning, believe (ninety-eight times in the gospel, nine times in the epistle), witness (thirty-three times in the gospel, six times in the epistle).

e. evidence in both books that the author personally knew Jesus (for 1 John, read 1:1-4 and 4:14).

When external evidence (such as testimony of the early church Fathers) is

added to this strong internal evidence, the firm conclusion is reached that it was the apostle John who wrote the epistle as well as the gospel.

## **B. DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING**

Although John's epistles do not identify where they were written, it is generally believed that the apostle wrote them from Ephesus. This conclusion is based on the concurrence of two data: (1) the epistles were written in the latter years of John's life; and (2) John spent his latter years in Ephesus.

The date of the writing of 1 John is approximately A.D. 85-90. The time is narrowed down to these years in the following way:

The epistle was written before the

persecution of A.D. 95 under Emperor Domitian (otherwise the epistle might have made mention of this).

The epistle was written near the end of the century. Tenney suggests these hints: (1) the church and synagogue had become separate, (2) the controversy over faith versus works had largely died out, (3) philosophical inquiries into the nature of Christ had begun.⁵

Of his five books, John wrote Revelation last (c. A.D. 95). The gospel and 1 John were published about the same time. The logical relationship between the gospel and the epistle favors the former being written first.

## JOHN'S GOSPEL AND FIRST EPISTLE COMPARED

Gospel	1 John
written to arouse faith (Jn 20:31)	written to establish certainty regarding that faith (1 Jn 5:13)
the good news historically	the good news experientially

Refer to Chart 1, page 20, and observe when John wrote his epistles. How many years had elapsed between the writings of Peter and John? Why do you think God inspired John's books to be written so long after the other New Testament books? What emphases might you expect to see in letters written at this time? Why?

### **C. ADDRESSEES**

The readers of 1 John were probably a congregation or group of congregations of Asia Minor closely associated with the apostle. Read 2:7, 18, 20, 21, 24, 27; 3:11 for suggestions that the readers had been believers for a long time. Various teachers

and preachers had ministered to the people living in the vicinity of Ephesus long before John wrote his books. (Among those who ministered were Paul, Acts 18:19; 19:1-20; Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18:18-19, 24-26; Trophimus, Acts 21:29; the family of Onesiphorus, 2 Tim. 1:16-18; 4:19; and Timothy, 1 Tim. 1:3.) That most of John's readers were converts from heathenism is only intimated by the absence of Old Testament quotations and by the warning regarding idols in the last sentence of the epistle (5:21).

Whoever the readers were, John knew them intimately. Hence the very personal, warm atmosphere of this letter to his "children."

#### **D. OCCASION AND PURPOSE**

John wrote this letter to Christians who were falling prey to the deceptive devices of Satan so common in our own day. Christians were fighting each other, and John was frank to declare that “the one who hates his brother is in the darkness ... and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes” (2:11). Christians were beginning to love the evil things of the world, and John wanted to warn them of the tragic consequences.

And then there were the false teachers — John calls them antichrists — who were trying to seduce the believers by false doctrine to draw them away from Christ. John warned his readers about such false teachers and encouraged them to stand true to the message of the gospel and to abide in Christ.

Also there were those who were doubting

their own salvation. So John wrote to instill confidence, that such doubters might *know* that they had eternal life (5:13). In his gospel his purpose was to arouse a saving faith (John 20:31); in 1 John his purpose was to establish certainty regarding that faith.

The false teaching that John was especially trying to combat in his epistle was a form of Gnosticism in its infant stage. The basic tenet of the Gnostics was that matter was evil and spirit was good. One of the heresies that grew from this came to be known as Docetism, which held that Jesus did not have a real body (for then God would be identified with evil matter, or flesh), but that he *seemed* (Greek *dokeo*) to people to have a body. John makes it very clear in this epistle that Jesus, the Son of God, appeared to man in real, human flesh. Read 1:1 and 4:2-3 and observe how

unequivocally John declares this truth about Christ.

John's first letter also may have been addressed in part to two other false views: (1) that of the Ebionites, who denied the deity of Christ; and (2) that of the Cerinthians, who denied the eternal union of the divine and human natures of Christ.

Four times in the epistle, John specifically tells why he is writing this epistle. Read these verses and record John's purposes: 1:4; 2:1, 26; 5:13.

## **E. FORM AND STYLE**

1 . *Form*. The first epistle of John has a unique combination of form and style qualities. It is classified as an epistle, even though it does not have the usual opening salutation, personal conclusion, references to

proper names (except that of Jesus), or specific references to details of the lives of either the readers or the writer. Its many personal references to *writing* (e.g., “My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin,” 2:1a) are enough justification for considering the book as an epistle. On the basis of its contents one may say that the book is a personal letter of an aged Christian leader to congregations of mature Christians with whom the writer was acquainted.

More will be said about the form, or structure, of the epistle in the Survey section of this chapter.

2. *Style*. In Hebraistic style, John writes short, simple, straightforward, picturesque sentences. The extended opening sentence (1:1-3) is the one exception to the short pattern. Parallelisms and contrasts abound in

the book. Concerning the latter, one writer comments, “His colours are black and white; there is no grey.”⁶ John speaks with a tone of authority and finality based on experience (“we have seen,” 1:1). And yet there is a paternal tenderness about the epistle that makes the reader want to pause and meditate over the great truths being declared. Concerning this combination of tenderness and authority, Merrill Tenney writes, “The mellowness of the teaching ... is not to be confused with vagueness of belief or with theological indecision.”⁷⁶

F. W. Farrar has written this very accurate appraisal of the epistle’s style: “It is a style absolutely unique, supremely original, and full of charm and sweetness. Under the semblance of extreme simplicity, it hides unfathomable depths. It is to a great extent intelligible to the youngest child, to the humblest Christian; yet to enter into its full

meaning exceeds the power of the deepest theologian.”⁸

## **IV. SURVEY OF 1 JOHN**

### **A. A FIRST READING**

1. Prepare mind and heart to search diligently for all the grand truths that God would have you learn in this study. Humbly ask God to reveal Himself to you in a fresh, vivid way as you examine the Bible text. Maintain an attitude of dependency on the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment throughout your survey study of this epistle.

2. Mark new paragraph divisions in your Bible beginning at these verses:

1:1, 5, 8

2:1, 3, 7, 12, 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28

3:1, 4, 11, 19

4:1, 7, 13, 17

5:1, 4, 6, 9, 13, 14, 18.

3. Keep pencil or pen in hand for marking your Bible and recording observations on paper as you read.

4. Have a sheet of paper available for recording observations.

5. Now read the five chapters in one sitting. If possible, read the book aloud. As you read, do not tarry over details. Seek rather to catch the large emphases of the epistle.

6. You may want to underline words and phrases that appear prominent during this first reading.

7. After you have completed this reading, ask yourself these two questions: What is the

tone or atmosphere of this epistle? What main point is John trying to get across? If you cannot arrive at an answer for either of these, try reading the epistle in a modern paraphrase such as J. B. Phillips's *The New Testament in Modern English* or *The Living Bible*.

## **B. FURTHER READINGS**

1. Now read the epistle a little more slowly, with paragraph divisions in mind. Choose a word or phrase from each paragraph to represent its contents (paragraph titles).

2. On Chart 115, record the paragraph titles, similar to the ones shown. This simple exercise will give you initial momentum as you begin your study of the text.

## CHART 115: PARAGRAPH TITLES FOR 1 JOHN

1:1	1:5	1:8	2:1	2:3	2:7	2:12	2:15	2:18	2:20	2:22	2:24	2:26	2:28	3:1	3:4	3:11	3:19	4:1	4:7	4:13	4:17	5:1	5:4	5:8	5:9	5:13	5:14	5:18
FROM THE BEGINNING																												
GOD IS LIGHT																												

3. After you have recorded the paragraph titles, read the entire group in succession. You may not see a pattern or progression here, because the group of paragraph titles is not intended to show an outline as such; but this is a helpful exercise to review some of the highlights of John's letter.

4. Do you see any groups of paragraphs with similar content?

5. Scan the epistle for every reference to God. Record your observations on paper. Meditate on how much is known of God from these statements.

6. Read the following verses, which refer

to the Father: 1:2, 3; 2:1, 13, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24; 3:1; 4:14; 5:7.

7. Go through the epistle and note the various contrasts that John uses to emphasize his points. (As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, John does not paint with the color gray — the predominant colors are the contrasting black and white.) Compare your observations with this list: light and darkness, truth and error, love and hate, love of the Father and love of the world, children of God and children of the devil, life and death, Christ and antichrist, believers and unbelievers. Why is the Bible written in such bold contrasts?

8. The word *know* and its cognates appear more than thirty times in the epistle. Make a study of the appearances of the phrase “we know,” and record what is known in each instance: 2:3, 5, 29 (“you know”); 3:14, 16,

19, 24; 4:13, 16 (“we have come to know”); 5:15, 18, 19, 20.

9. Two of the grandest statements of the epistle are “God is light” (1:5) and “God is love” (4:8, 16). See how these two themes are referred to throughout the book.

10. Observe where and how John refers to false teaching in his epistle.

## **C. STRUCTURE OF 1 JOHN**

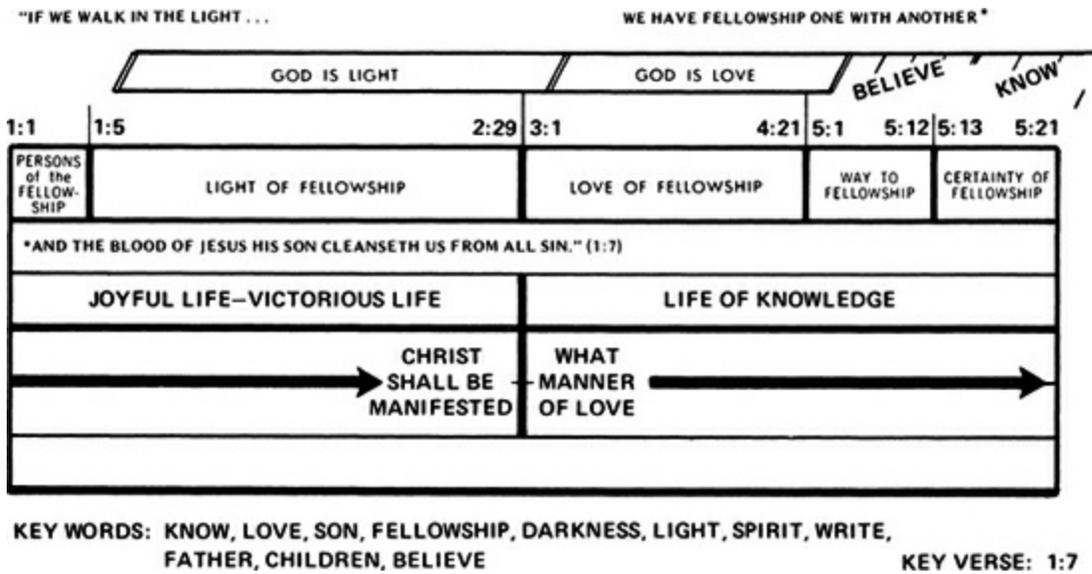
1. Compare the opening paragraph (1:1-4) with the concluding one (5:18-21). For example, note in their context such similar terms as “eternal life.”

2. Various attempts have been made to outline this epistle.⁹ Most students of this book agree that an outline is not too obvious because John’s approach is not logical and argumentative but contemplative. Having

stated his theme in the opening paragraph (1:1-4), John proceeds to support the theme in various ways, item added to item, until he arrives at the conclusion of his letter (5:13-21).

Although an outline, as such, is difficult to detect in the core of the epistle (1:5—5:12), one cannot help but feel that John reaches a turning point at 3:1, where he wants to pursue the subject of fellow-ship from a slightly different vantage point. Read chapter 2 again, and then read 3:1 ff., to see if there appears to you to be a turning point at 3:1. See Chart 116, which shows the epistle built around this turning point.

# CHART 116: 1 JOHN: FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND WITH HIS CHILDREN



3. Note the outline on *fellowship* shown on the chart. This may suggest outlines on other subjects, which you will want to develop in this survey study. For example, try making an outline on the subject, “What the Christian Life Is.”¹⁰

4. Observe near the top of Chart 116 the two statements *God is light* and *God is love*. Locate each in the text of the epistle. Then go through the epistle paragraph by paragraph and see how its two main parts (1:5—2:29 and 3:1—4:21) are represented

by those two statements.

5. Study the other parts of Chart 116 if you have not already done so. Read the Bible text to observe how the last two segments (5:1-12 and 5:13-21) focus on the key words “believe” and “know.”

6. Note the key words shown at the bottom of Chart 116. Add to the list other words and phrases that you may have observed in your study so far.

## **V. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 1 JOHN**

### **A. FELLOWSHIP (1:1—2:2)**

1. *Persons of the fellowship.* The center of John’s message is not a theological system or religious creed, but a person — Jesus Christ. He is the one whom John writes about first (1:1 ff.).

John also has much to say in his epistle concerning God the Father, whom he introduces in the opening paragraph (1:2-3). And when the apostle thinks about how Jesus the Son and God the Father are related to believers like himself, the first grand truth that comes to his mind is that of *fellowship*. The Son and the Father are the *persons* of the fellowship.

2. *Conditions for fellowship with God.* In 1:5—2:2 the apostle identifies the conditions or requirements of fellowship with God, so that there will be no question in the minds of his readers regarding how one can enjoy the full blessings that such a fellowship brings.

Observe in the passage these three conditions:

- a. walk in the light (1:5-7)
- b. confess sins (1:8-10)
- c. do not sin (2:1-2).

## B. ANTICHRISTS (2:8-29)

Up to this point in the epistle, John has written much about sin, Satan (the “wicked one”), the world, and darkness. Now he introduces another hostile element — a personal one that he labels antichrist (Greek *antichristos*).¹¹ The apostle calls the enemies of Christ, as described in this passage, “antichrists.” How many were there, as of his time (2:18)? How did they oppose Christ?

Note John’s reference to an antichrist in 2:18. Compare this with 4:3-4. In John’s day, Christians knew that a personal antichrist would one day appear in this world. The Old Testament, Jesus, and Paul’s writings all taught about such a person as the “man of sin.” Compare 2 Thessalonians 2:4 with Daniel 11:36-37; Revelation 13:1-8 with Daniel 7:8, 20 ff.; 8:24; 11:28-30. Read

also Ezekiel 38-39; Zechariah 12-14; Matthew 24:15, 24; Mark 13:22; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Revelation 17:8.

### **C. TRUTH AND LOVE (4:1-21)**

Chapter 4 is about two main subjects: truth in doctrine (vv. 1-6) and love in action (vv. 7-21). John had briefly mentioned this relationship between truth and love in 3:18: “Love ... in truth.” Now he dwells on the subject in detail. True doctrine is the foundation of life with God; Christian love is the natural expression of life with God.

In what ways does John write about true doctrine in 4:1-6? What does he teach about love in 4:7-21?

### **D. ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE (5:13-**

21)

John's inspiring epistle could not end on a higher, more climactic note than that of assurance and security. The last segment of nine verses is bathed in this atmosphere, with the words "we know" resounding over and over again in a symphony of triumph. In writing his epistle, John wanted to show that those who believe and obey the message of the gospel can and do know with assurance that the prize of eternal life, with all its attendant blessings, is their own present and abiding possession.

Read the passage and record all that it teaches about assurance.

## **VI. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES FOR 1 JOHN**

What key words and verses did you observe in your survey of 1 John? What is

the epistle's theme, in your own words?

## VII. APPLICATIONS FROM 1 JOHN

1. Recall from the passage about antichrists (2:18-29) what basic truths concerning Christ and God are denied by such men. Is this spirit of denial prevalent in Christendom today? What do modern liberal theologians, who profess to be Christians, deny about Christ? What stand and action do you think born-again Christians ("born of him," 2:29) should take in view of the alarming "antichrist" movement in the world today?

2. Apply the truths of 1 John to everyday living in these areas:

a. the Christian's hope

b. the Christian's righteous walk

c. love among Christians

d. the Christian's assurances.

## **VIII. REVIEW QUESTIONS ON 1 JOHN**

1. What does the Hebrew word for John mean, literally?

2. Who are the different Johns of the New Testament? Which one is the biblical author?

3. Describe what is known of this John's family.

4. Reconstruct a probable biography of John's life up to his meeting Jesus for the first time. How did he compare in age with Jesus?

5. Review the three stages of John's ministry in his association with Jesus.

6. Why do you think Jesus chose John to

be one of His closest disciples?

7. What was John's ministry after Pentecost while he remained in Jerusalem?

8. What was John's ministry at Ephesus up to the time of his death?

9. What Bible books did John write, and when did he write them?

10. Write a paragraph describing the character of John.

11. What evidence points to John's being the author of the fourth gospel *and* 1 John?

12. Where and when did John write his first epistle? How old was he at the time? Justify your answers.

13. To whom may John have written this epistle? Did he know his readers intimately?

14. What were the needs of John's readers, and how did he attempt to help them in those needs?

15. Describe the epistle concerning its form and style. In these respects compare it with an epistle like Romans.

16. For what specific reasons do you think God included 1 John in the New Testament canon?

17. From your survey study, what would you say is the main theme of 1 John? Cite a key verse to support this.

18. Identify or describe the two main divisions of the letter.

19. Try to recall the outline on *fellowship* beginning with *persons of the fellowship*.

20. What are some of the key words and phrases of the epistle?

21. What is the tone or atmosphere of the book? Does this throw any light on John's purpose in writing?

22. What are two of the grandest

statements of the epistle? How much is the world in need of hearing these truths today?

## IX. FURTHER STUDY OF 1 JOHN

1. Make a topical study of the word *fellowship* (Greek *koinonia*) as it is used in the New Testament. (It is interesting to note that this word is mainly found in the Pauline writings, 1 John being the exception.) Use an exhaustive concordance to locate the various places where the word is used. Among the passages that you will want to consult are: Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 8:4; Philippians 1:5; 3:10.

2. Study the words *sin*, *know*, and the phrase *eternal life* as these appear in the Bible.

## X. OUTLINE

# 1 JOHN: Fellowship with God and His Children

## JOHN'S GOSPEL AND FIRST EPISTLE COMPARED

PERSONS OF THE FELLOWSHIP	1:1-4
LIGHT OF FELLOWSHIP	1:5—2:29
Conditions for Fellowship with God	1:5—2:2
Abiding in Christ	2:3-17
Antichrists and Christians	2:18-29
LOVE OF FELLOWSHIP	3:1—4:21
Beloved Sons of God	3:1-24
Truth and Love	4:1-21
WAY TO FELLOWSHIP	5:1-12
CERTAINTY OF FELLOWSHIP	5:13-21

## XI. BACKGROUND OF 2 JOHN

One very valuable contribution of John's second and third epistles is their picture of typical local churches. These churches were existing a half century after Christ's ascension to heaven. Problems in churches today are not unique to our age. Concerning

John's third epistle, Charles Ryrie says, "This brief and very personal letter shatters the notion that the state of things was ideal, or nearly so, in the first century. Contrariwise, it reveals the problems of a vigorously growing faith."¹² When considering this, one begins to see something of God's purpose in including such short letters as 2 and 3 John in His Holy Book.

## **A. AUTHOR**

The writer identifies himself only as "the elder." Internal evidence and tradition point to the apostle John as the author.

## **B. ADDRESSEES**

The epistle was written to "the chosen lady and her children." This designation has

two possible interpretations.

1 . *Figurative*. By this the “chosen lady” refers to a local church or the church as a whole; and “her children” refers to members of the church.

2. *Literal*. By this “the chosen lady” is an unnamed lady; or her name is Cyria (Greek *eklekta kuria*, translated “elect Cyria”), or Electa (translating the Greek as “the lady Electa”). The lady was a Christian friend of John, mother of children, well known in her community, whose sister’s children were probably residents of Ephesus.

The informal, personal style of the epistle favors the literal view.

## **C. DATE AND PLACE WRITTEN**

Written around A.D. 90 from the city of Ephesus.

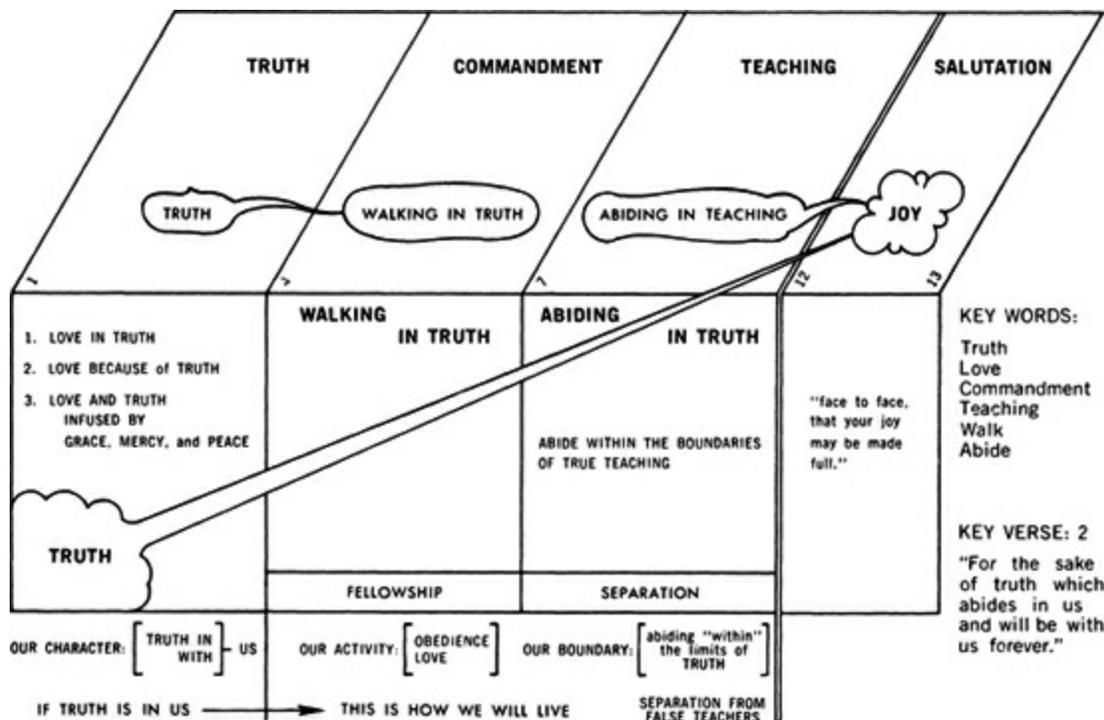
## **D. CANONICITY**

The second and third epistles of John were not recognized as Holy Scripture by the church as quickly as John's other writings. This is mainly because the letters took longer in becoming part of the churches' public reading programs because of their brevity and their appearance as merely private letters.¹³ But the internal and external evidence is strong in favoring canonicity of these letters.

## **E. OCCASION AND PURPOSE**

You will observe these as you survey this short epistle.

# CHART 117: 2 JOHN: TRUTH AND THE CHRISTIAN



## XII. SURVEY OF 2 JOHN

1. Read this short letter a few times, observing key words and phrases. Mark your Bible as you read.

2. According to the text, what were some of the conditions existing at this time that occasioned the writing of the epistle? What were some of John's main purposes in writing the letter?

3. Mark your Bible to show paragraph beginnings at these verses: 1, 4, 7, 12. Read the paragraphs and assign a title for each. What is the main subject of each paragraph? Is there an introduction and conclusion?

4. Compare the paragraphs starting with verses four and seven.

5. Study the subject of *truth* from paragraph to paragraph.

6. Study Chart 117. Compare its outlines and solitary entries with observations you have already made. For new items, refer to the Bible text to justify the entries.

7. Note the title assigned to 2 John.

### **XIII. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 2 JOHN**

Study the Bible text and record what John teaches about each of these subjects: truth (1-3); commandment (4-6); teaching (7-11).

## **XIV. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES FOR 2 JOHN**

What key words and verses do you observe in 2 John? Compare these with the ones shown on Chart 117.

In your own words, what is the theme of 2 John?

## **XV. APPLICATIONS OF 2 JOHN**

Write a list of applications based on this second letter of John. For example, what does it mean for a Christian to walk in the truth?

## **XVI. REVIEW QUESTIONS ON 2 JOHN**

1. How is the author identified in the text?
2. To whom was this letter sent?
3. When and where was it written?

4. Why was the early church's recognition of the divine inspiration of 2 and 3 John delayed?

5. What is the main point of each of the four paragraphs?

6. Name some key words, and quote a key verse.

## **XVII. FURTHER STUDY OF 2 JOHN**

Topical studies on each of the three words, *grace*, *mercy*, and *peace* are recommended.

## **XVIII. OUTLINE**

**2 JOHN: Truth and the Christian**

## **JOHN'S GOSPEL AND FIRST EPISTLE COMPARED**

SALUTATION

vv. 1-3

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

4-6

Report	4
Appeal	5-6
ABIDING IN THE TRUTH	7-11
Warning Against False Teachers	7-9
Prohibition against Aiding False Teachers	10-11
GREETINGS	12-13

## **XIX. BACKGROUND OF 3 JOHN**

### **A. AUTHOR, DATE AND PLACE WRITTEN**

The author is John the apostle; date and place are essentially the same as for 2 John: A.D. 90, the city of Ephesus.

### **B. ADDRESSEE**

Third John is addressed to a man, Gaius, whereas 2 John is addressed to a woman. There is no way to identify who this Gaius was. The name itself was one of the most commonly used names of the Roman

Empire. Men of the New Testament with this name are:

1. Gaius of Macedonia (Acts 19:29)
2. Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20:4)
3. Gaius of Corinth (Rom. 16:23)
4. Gaius whom Paul baptized, who may be the same as Gaius of Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14).

There is no reference in 3 John to Gaius's being an official in the church. We may regard him as an active lay member, a personal friend of John.

### **C. OCCASION**

An immediate occasion for writing this letter was Diotrephes's rejection of messengers of the gospel whom John had sent to the church, of which Gaius and Diotrephes were members (3 John 9-10).

## XX. SURVEY OF 3 JOHN

1. First, compare the length of this letter with that of 2 John.
2. Compare 2 and 3 John concerning:
  - a. salutation and conclusion
  - b. similar repeated words and phrases
  - c. tone
  - d. church problems
  - e. what is taught about God and Christ (account for the small amount of theological teaching in 3 John).
3. Mark your Bible to show paragraphs beginning at these verses: 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 13.
4. Read the letter a few times and underline key words, phrases, and verses as you read. What are your impressions of the

letter?

5. Assign paragraph titles. What is the subject of each paragraph?

6. What is the epistle mainly about — doctrine, narrative, command, warning, prophecy, personal communication?

7. Where in the epistle does John write about truth? Construct an outline revolving around that concept.

8. What three men are mentioned by name in 3 John?

9. Where in the letter does John write about love?

10. Study Chart 118. Compare the outlines and recorded points with observations you have made in your survey of the epistle.

11. What title is assigned to 3 John on the chart? What is the title derived from, as

shown on the chart?

## **XXI. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF 3 JOHN**

### **A. THE LOCAL CHURCH**

The local church is prominent in the lines of 3 John. As you study the letter, keep before your mind the church of the twentieth century. Observe what the epistle teaches, interpret the meanings, and apply these to the contemporary scene. Of course, because of its brevity, the epistle cannot speak about many of the aspects of church life. But it does single out important items, thereby fulfilling its intended purpose.

### **B. CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY**

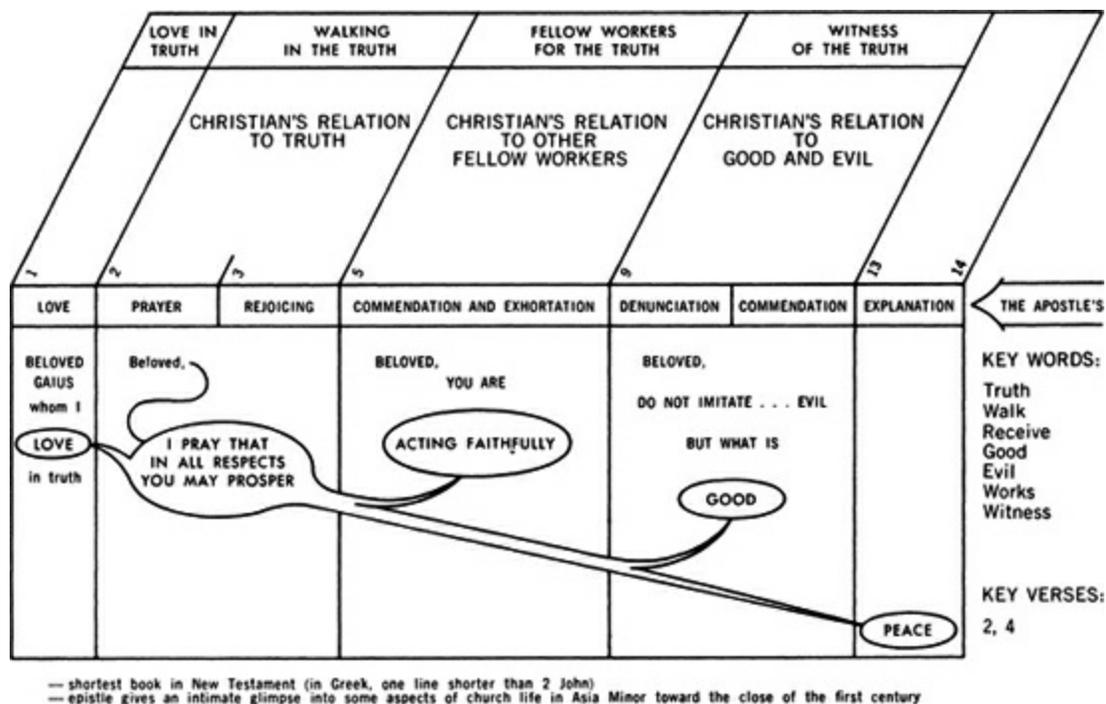
Study the letter, especially verses 5-8, for

what it teaches about the important ministry of Christian hospitality for God's people.

### **C. WARM CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS**

John's epistles end on a bright, warm note in the last two words: "by name" (3 John 14). The words are an appropriate reflection of the man who wrote them. A. Plummer writes, "S. John as shepherd of the Churches of Asia would imitate the Good Shepherd and know all his sheep by name."¹⁴

# CHART 118: 3 JOHN: SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND PROSPERITY



## XXII. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES FOR 3 JOHN

What key words and verses did you observe in your study? Compare them with the list on Chart 118. How would you identify the theme of this personal letter?

## XXIII. APPLICATIONS FROM 3 JOHN

Make a list of ten practical lessons for

today taught by this epistle.

## **XXIV. REVIEW QUESTIONS ON 3 JOHN**

1. Who is the author of 3 John? To whom did he write the letter?
2. What was one immediate situation that brought on the writing of this letter?
3. What does John write in the introduction (1) and conclusion (13-14) of the letter?
4. What is the main point of these three parts: 2-4; 5-8; 9-12?
5. Name some key words and quote a key verse of 3 John.
6. Describe the tone of this letter.

## **XXV. FURTHER STUDY OF 3 JOHN**

With the help of outside sources, study

the three persons mentioned in 3 John: Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius.

## XXVI. OUTLINE

3 JOHN: Spiritual Health and Prosperity

### JOHN'S GOSPEL AND FIRST EPISTLE COMPARED

Salutation	v. 1
CHRISTIAN'S RELATION TO TRUTH	2-4
CHRISTIAN'S RELATION TO OTHER FELLOW WORKERS	5-8
CHRISTIAN'S RELATION TO GOOD AND EVIL	9-12
Greetings	13-14

## XXVII. BACKGROUND OF JUDE

The epistle of Jude is a passionate plea to Christians to beware of spiritual contamination by evil men. Jude had originally intended to write a doctrinal epistle, dwelling on the grand subject of salvation. But the infiltration of false

teachers and immoral persons into Christian circles had become so widespread that Jude was constrained by the Spirit to devote most of his letter to warning his fellow believers about that serious threat.

## **A. AUTHOR AND ADDRESSEES**

The author is identified in verse 1 by name: Jude; kinship: brother of James; and relation to Christ: servant (bondslave). There are strong reasons for believing that this James was the half brother of Jesus, which associates Jude to Jesus in the same way. (On James, read Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18 ff.; Gal. 1:19; 2:9.) If Jude was Jesus' half brother, then he became a believer after Christ's resurrection (see John 7:5 and Acts 1:14). From verse 17 we gather that Jude did not class himself as

an apostle.

Those to whom Jude wrote this letter may have been members of Jewish churches of Palestine or Asia Minor, where he probably was ministering at this time.

## **B. DATE**

A suggested date for the writing of the epistle is around A.D. 67-68, shortly before the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70).¹⁵

## **C. OCCASION AND PURPOSE**

Jude clearly states in his epistle what impelled him to write what he did. The leaven of such evils as gross immorality, antinomianism, rejection of the lordship of Christ, and mockery was beginning to spread in the churches through the influences of

“certain men” (e.g., v. 4).¹⁶⁵ This stirred Jude to write what Dean Alford has called “an impassioned invective, in the impetuous whirlwind of which the writer is hurried along ... laboring for words and images strong enough to depict the polluted character of the licentious apostates against whom he is warning the Church.”¹⁷⁶ It is for this content that S. Maxwell Coder calls the book of Jude “The Acts of the Apostates.” Read verses 3, 17, 21, and 22 for Jude’s commands to his readers in view of the threatening situation.

## **D. CANONICITY**

Like 2 and 3 John, Jude was not recognized as canonical as early as were the longer books of the New Testament. Its brevity, nonapostolic authorship, polemical

character, and apparent use of apocryphal sources delayed the church's acceptance. But the acceptance came, and the epistle deservedly found its place among the other inspired New Testament books.¹⁸

## E. REFERENCES TO OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

For background to Jude's references to past history, read the passages cited in the accompanying chart.

### JUDE'S REFERENCES TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

JUDE PASSAGE	EVENT REFERRED TO
v. 5 (Israelites)	Num. 13-14 (cf. 1 Cor. 10:5-10)
v. 6 (fallen angels)	cf. 2 Pet. 2:4
v. 7 (Sodom and Gomorrah)	Gen. 18-19
v. 11 (Cain)	Gen. 4
v. 11 (Balaam)	Num. 22-24
v. 11 (Korah)	Num. 16
v. 14 (Enoch)	cf. Gen. 5:18-24

## XXVIII. SURVEY OF JUDE

### A. READINGS

1. First mark paragraph divisions in your Bible beginning at verses 1, 3, 5, 8, 14, 17, 24.

2. Read the epistle once or twice for initial observations. What are your first impressions? Assign a title to each paragraph.

3. What is the general tone of the epistle? What is Jude's main burden?

4. How much Old Testament history does Jude use to support his message?

5. What paragraphs mainly have an Old Testament historical association? What paragraphs diagnose the times of Jude's writing?

6. Observe every appearance of the word “beloved” and the phrase “but you, beloved.”

7. Compare the first two and the last two verses.

8. Where is there a main turning point in the epistle?

9. Jude has been called the “vestibule to the book of Revelation.” What future events are cited?

10. From the things Jude says, how intimately did he know his readers?

## **B. SURVEY CHART**

1. Study Chart 119 carefully, and compare outlines and observations with those you made in your survey studies.

2. How is the turning point shown on the

chart?

3. What paragraphs are mainly *exhortation*?

4. Note the three central paragraphs of *warning*. How is each identified? Refer to the Bible text to justify this outline.

5. What title is given to this epistle?

6. Would you say that the organization of the epistle is very orderly?

## **XXIX. PROMINENT SUBJECTS OF JUDE**

### **A. JUDGMENTS OF GOD**

Jude cites past judgments of God (5-7) to strengthen the prophecies of judgments to come (13-16). The sins and sinners of judgments are graphically described in verses 8-13.

One of Jude's references to God's judgments is his citing of Enoch's prophecy (read vv. 14-15). Of the apocryphal book of Enoch. Wuest writes:

This book, known to the Church Fathers of the second century, lost for some centuries with the exception of a few fragments, was found in its entirety in a copy of the Ethiopic Bible in 1773 by Bruce. It consists of revelations purporting to have been given to Enoch and Noah. Its object is to vindicate the ways of divine providence, to set forth the retribution reserved for sinners, and to show that the world is under the immediate government of God.¹⁹

Bible scholars are not in agreement as to whether Jude is here quoting from the

apocryphal book of Enoch, or referring to an unrecorded prophecy of the Enoch of Genesis.²⁰

Jude writes to warn his readers about these awful judgments. But he also gives *positive* counsel to guard Christians against the snares of ungodly persons. Two key exhortations are “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (v. 3); and “keep yourselves in the love of God” (v. 21).

## **B. ANGELS**

Angels are part of Jude’s message. Note the two references.

1. Fallen angels “angels who did not keep their own domain” (v. 6). Peter also teaches the fact of the fall of evil angels (2 Pet. 2:4). Some identify Lucifer, who became Satan, as

one of these angels. Such commentators derive their interpretation from Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:12-19; Matthew 25:41; and Revelation 12:4. Others hold that Jude 6 refers to Genesis 6:1-4.²¹ Many Bible students feel that no Bible account records the details of this event.



## **XXX. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES FOR JUDE**

What key words and verses do you identify with Jude? State the theme of the epistle in your own words.

## **XXXI. APPLICATIONS FROM JUDE**

1. What forces threaten Christ's church today, similar to those mentioned in the epistle?

2. In your own words, paraphrase Jude 17-25 as the verses apply to Christians today.

## **XXXII. REVIEW QUESTIONS ON JUDE**

1. Identify the author of Jude.

2. To whom was the epistle written?

3. When did Jude write the letter?

4. What were some of Jude's purposes in

writing?

5. Why was there a delay in the church's recognition of Jude as part of the inspired Scriptures?

6. What is the main section of Jude (5-16) mostly about?

7. Where in Jude is there a turning point?

8. Name five key words of Jude, and quote a key verse.

### **XXXIII. FURTHER STUDY OF JUDE**

1. Study the similarities of the epistles of Jude and 2 Peter. With the aid of outside sources, reach a conclusion regarding how these similarities can be accounted for. (For example, did Jude use Peter's letter as a source?)

2. Read what various authors have written concerning these subjects:[22](#)

- a. the Bible's full teaching about the evil angels' fall (v. 6)
- b. Jude's sources for his references to Michael the archangel (v. 9) and Enoch (vv. 14-15).

## **XXXIV. OUTLINE**

**JUDE: Keeping Oneself in the Love of God**

### **JOHN'S GOSPEL AND FIRST EPISTLE COMPARED**

SALUTATION	1-2
WARNINGS ABOUT UNGODLY MEN	3-16
Occasion of the Letter	3-4
Historical Fate of Ungodly Men	5-7
Description of Ungodly Men	8-16
EXHORTATIONS TO BELIEVERS AMID APOSTASY	17-23
DOXOLOGY	24-25

## **XXXV. SELECTED READING FOR THE EPISTLES OF JOHN AND JUDE**

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Drummond, R. J., and Morris, Leon. “1, 2, 3 John.” In *The New Bible Commentary*, pp. 1259-60; 1270-71.

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *An Introduction to the Non-Pauline Epistles*. Pages 159-80 (Jude); pp. 181-228 (1, 2, 3 John).

Ryrie, Charles C. “I, II, III John,” In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, pp. 1463-66.

## COMMENTARIES

Candlish, R. S. *The First Epistle of John*.

Coder, S. Maxwell. *Jude: the Acts of the Apostates*.

Leaney, A.R.C. *The Letters of Peter and Jude*.

Plummer, A. *The Epistles of St. John*.

## OTHER RELATED SOURCES

Findlay, G. C. *Fellowship in the Life Eternal*.

Ironside, H. A. *Addresses on the Epistle of John*.

Thomas, Robert L., ed. *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.

Thomas, W. H. Griffith. *Life and Writings of the Apostle John*.

Vincent, Marvin R. *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 2.

Wuest, Kenneth S. *In These Last Days*.

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1. Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 597.
  2. Charles C. Ryrie, "I, II, III John," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1463.
  3. Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, rev. ed., p. 189.

4. Testimony is by such church Fathers as Polycarp, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian.

5. Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, p. 376.

6. W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, Vol. 2, p. 346.

7. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, p. 381.

8. F. W. Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, pp. 520-21.

9. Such variety is evidenced by these possible breakdowns in the structure of the epistle:

Twofold: 1:5—2:27; 2:28—5:5

Threefold: 1:1—2:11; 2:12—4:6; 4:7—5:21

Fourfold: 1:5—2:11; 2:12-28; 2:29—3:22; 3:23—5:17

Fivefold: 1:5—2:11; 2:12-27; 2:28—3:24a; 3:24b—4:21; 5:1-21

(Cf. James Moffatt, *An Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, p. 584.)

10. Such an outline by one author is: (1) A Joyful Life, (2) A Victorious Life, (3) A Guarded Life, (4) A Life of Knowledge. (From Robert Lee, *The Outlined Bible*.)

11. The word *antichrist* is used only by John in the New Testament, at these places: 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7. The prefix *anti* of the Greek may be translated either “against” or “instead of.” *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* says, “The word antichrist may mean either an enemy of Christ or one who usurps Christ’s name and rights,” p. 47.

12. Charles C. Ryrie, “I, II, III John,” *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1483.

13. These are the two shortest books of the Bible, 3 John being one line shorter than 2 John in the Greek text.

14. A. Plummer, *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 153.

15. See Chart 1, page 20. If verses 17 and 18 refer to things Peter wrote in 2 Peter

(e.g., 3:3), then Jude was written after Peter's epistles.

16. The word *antinomianism* comes from *anti-nomos* ("against law"), and represents a libertine spirit that rejects the restrictions of commandments as such.

17. Quoted by J. H. Kerr, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 308.

18. See D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Non-Pauline Epistles*, pp. 159-64, for a discussion of the canonicity of Jude.

19. Kenneth S. Wuest, *In These Last Days*, p. 251.

20. See Charles C. Ryrie, "I, II, III John," *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1489.

21. See S. Maxwell Coder, *Jude: The Acts of the Apostates*, pp. 36-43, for a defense of this view.

22. A highly recommended book for supplementary study is S. Maxwell Coder, *Jude: The Acts of the Apostates*.

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**Part 4**  
**THE CLIMAX**  
*Christ Triumphant*

The book of Revelation is the climax of God's Book, the last chapter of world history. The opening book of Genesis records the beginnings of the universe and the human race, and this closing book prophetically views the coming eternal new heaven and new earth. In Revelation, Genesis's reporting of man's Fall and consequent curse sees its fulfillment in divine judgments for sin, which reaches into eternity.

Truly a study of the Bible is incomplete without a study of Revelation.

REVELATION

# *24Apocalypse: The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

The book of Revelation (Apocalypse) is the written record of dramatic, God-sent visions given to one of God's servants. John says he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (1:10) when he heard and saw the things that he was commanded to write down. A study of this last book of the Bible can be one of the most fascinating and awe-inspiring experiences you can have.

## **I. BACKGROUND**

This section of the background of Revelation should be studied carefully as a solid preparation for surveying the Bible text.

### **A. AUTHOR**

Four times the author is identified by name as John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). Read the verses and note how John relates himself to others. Both internal and external witness is strong in identifying this John as the beloved apostle, author of the gospel and the three epistles. It is interesting to note that John does not name himself in the gospel or in his epistles, whereas he does so here. This may be because the very nature of prophecy calls for identification and credentials of the author.

## **B. DATE AND DESTINATION**

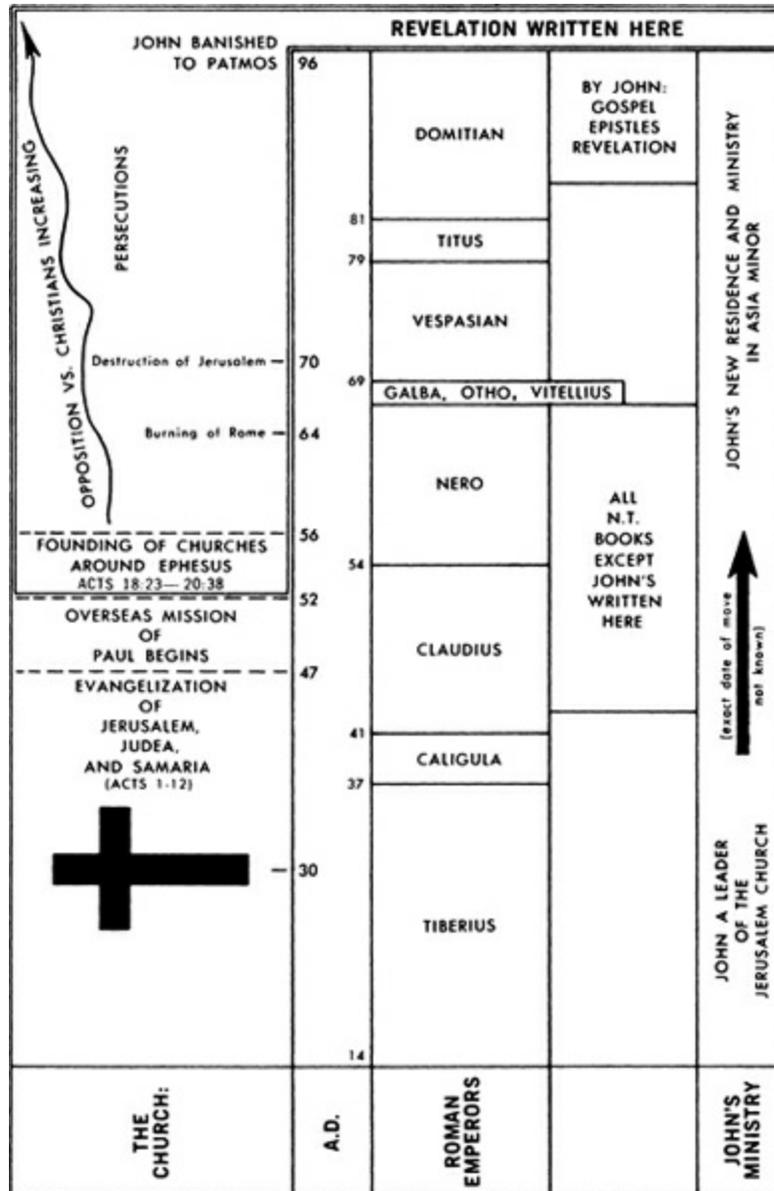
John probably wrote this book around A.D. 96, at the end of the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96). Domitian banished John to the Island of Patmos (see Map Y) because of his Christian stand (Rev.

1:9). In such trying circumstances the apostle received visions from God, which he recorded on a scroll.

# MAP Y



# CHART 120: HISTORICAL SETTING OF REVELATION



God directed John to send his inspired manuscript to seven churches in western Asia Minor (Turkey). Read the list of churches in 1:11, and observe on the map how the order of the list was determined. There were other churches in Asia Minor at

this time, such as the church at Colossae, to whom Paul wrote Colossians. But in the sovereign design of God the *designated* local recipients of this original manuscript were only the seven listed churches. The larger intended audience of the book, however, was all people, everywhere, of all centuries (2:7, 11, 17, 19; 3:6, 13, 22).

## **C. HISTORICAL SETTING**

Study Chart 120 for an overview of the historical setting of the book of Revelation.¹ Observe the following from the chart:

1. The change of area of John's ministry from Jerusalem to Asia Minor (particularly the city of Ephesus).

2. The age of the local churches of Asia Minor when Revelation was written.

3. An increasing intensity of imperial

opposition to Christianity.²

4. John's writings, separated from the other New Testament books by a period of fifteen to twenty years, were given to the Christian church to complete the body of divine Scripture.

## **D. TITLE OF THE BOOK**

Our English title *Revelation* is taken from the first word of the book (read 1:1). The Greek word is *apokalypsis*, which means the unveiling or uncovering of something previously hidden. Read the following verses where the words *reveal* and *revelation* or their equivalents appear with that meaning: Romans 8:18; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Galatians 1:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 4:13; 5:1.

## E. THEME

The opening verses of Revelation (1:1-3) identify this basic twofold theme of the book: (1) revelation of the Person, Jesus Christ; (2) revelation of instruction for Christians.³ As the book unfolds, the following specifics appear over and over again:

### *1. Revelation of the Person Jesus Christ.*

. About Him. Christ is the Judge, Redeemer, and triumphant King. The book of Revelation is the climax of the Christocentric theme of the Bible. See Chart 41, page 180.

. From and by Him. This in word (e.g., 1:2; 2:1—3:22), and in deed (e.g., 5:5).

### *2. Revelation of instruction for Christians.*

- . Prophecy. Most of the book predicts events future to John's day, especially those of the end of time. And most of that predictive section describes divine judgments of sin; the last few chapters describe the glorious triumphs of Christ culminating in a thousand-year reign (20:1-6) and in an eternal heaven (chaps. 21-22).
- . Historical perspective. Revelation shows world history of the end times as God views it, and it describes His application of justice to both individuals and nations. World history is sovereignly controlled by God and will culminate in the Person of Jesus Christ (read 11:15).
- . Doctrinal instruction. If Revelation were the only book of the Bible, we would still have much light on the vital areas of truth, such as man, sin, angels, Satan,

judgment, salvation, church, worship, heaven, hell, and the Trinity.

- . Spiritual application. Exhortation is another aspect of the theme of Revelation, made very prominent in the book. As an example, read 1:3 and note the three words “read,” “hear,” and “heed.”

## **F. PURPOSES**

Revelation is addressed to believers (God’s “bond-servants,” 1:1), although its message is a loud and clear warning to unbelievers as well. It is a book “for a troubled age ... in which the darkness deepens, fear spreads over all mankind, and monstrous powers, godless and evil, appear on the stage of history.”⁴

The book encourages Christians to persevere under the stress of persecution, in

hope of justice that must ultimately triumph at the enthronement of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. Christians living in John's day, under the growing threat of imprisonment, and even death, by Emperor Domitian, found comforting refuge in the message of Revelation, even as have persecuted Christians of all the ages since then.

The book of Revelation also warns Christians against the treacherous swamplands of apostasy, and it appeals for a faithful allegiance to Christ. The letters of chapters 2 and 3 especially emphasize such warnings and appeals.

Revelation does not aim to give all the prophetic details of the end times. Nor is the program of church history spelled out. Enough details are recorded to (1) describe the crucial events (such as the great white

throne judgment, 20:11-15); (2) portray the large movements and trends of world history; and (3) teach spiritual principles underlying God's sovereign plan.

## **G. APOCALYPTIC WRITING**

Revelation is prophetic in character and apocalyptic in form.⁵ Here are some of its major features as apocalyptic literature:⁶

1. mainly eschatological (*eschatos*: last times)
2. written during times of persecution
3. visions abound
4. style generally figurative, with an abundance of symbols.

## **H. SYMBOLISM OF REVELATION**

As noted earlier, Revelation is filled with symbols, such as numbers, colors, animals, stones, persons, groups, places, and actions. Three categories of symbols appear in the book: (1) those interpreted in the text itself (e.g., 1:20); (2) those to be interpreted in the light of Old Testament usage; (3) symbols of no apparent biblical connection. (See Further Study.)

## **I. SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION**

Basically, there are four different schools of interpretation of the book of Revelation. These are shown on Chart 121. Observe on the chart where each view places each of the twenty-two chapters of Revelation. This is one of the best ways to see the major differences between the schools. Observe the following descriptions of the different views.

1. The symbolic view interprets Revelation as only a series of pictures teaching spiritual truths. It sees no prophecy of specific historical events in Revelation. The first and last chapters of the book are a clear argument against such a static view.

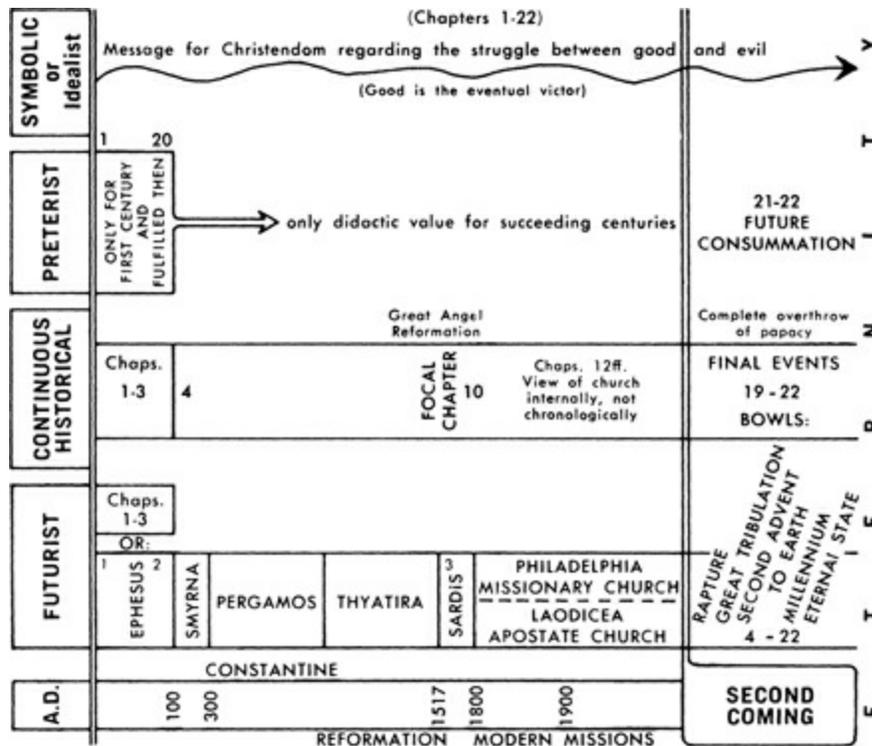
2. The preterist view sees all of Revelation historically fulfilled in the first century, with eternal destinies taught in the last two chapters. This view suffers much of the anemia of the symbolic view.

3. The continuous-historical view applies Revelation prophetically to all the centuries since the time of Christ. Only chapters 19-22 foretell events after Christ's second coming. Proponents of this view differ widely in identifying historical events prophesied in chapters 4-18. Some typical interpretations are shown on the chart (e.g., the mighty angel of chap. 10 is the Reformation).

4. Of the four schools, the futurist position sees most of Revelation (chaps. 4-22) as prophetic of the *end times*.

5. There are two kinds of futurists: (1) those who hold that the seven churches of chapters 2-3 represent periods of church history up to the rapture (as shown on the chart); and (2) those who hold that chapters 2-3 are intended not to be prophetic, but rather descriptive of the churches in John's day, with chapter 4 beginning the predictive section. This view also sees the seven letters as descriptive of local churches of all ages, up to the end times.

# CHART 121: THE FOUR MAIN SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION



## J. MILLENNIAL VIEWS

The Millennium passage of 20:1-6 is the classic passage giving rise to three different viewpoints of the “thousand years.” Here are the main tenets of these schools of eschatology:

1. *Premillennialism.* Christ will come to the earth *before* (hence the prefix *pre*) the

Millennium begins, to rule the world with His saints, for a literal one thousand years. Satan is bound, as to activity and power, during this time.

2. *Postmillennialism*. The second coming of Christ is at the end of, or after (*post*) the Millennium. This millennium is a period of time (not necessarily a literal thousand years) of blessedness, prosperity, and well-being for God's kingdom in the world. According to this view, we are now living in the Millennium. This school has relatively few adherents today, for the simple reason of the apparent intense current activity of Satan throughout the world.

3. *Amillennialism*. There is no (prefix *a*) literal reign of Christ on this earth for a literal thousand years. A common view is that the Millennium is a spiritual reign of Christ with His saints in heaven at the

present time.

Chart 122 shows in a general way how each of these millennial schools views the scope of the entire book of Revelation.

# CHART 122: MILLENNIAL VIEWS OF REVELATION

Revelation	1-3	4-18	19-22
Premillennial	First-century churches; (possibly representative of historical stages)	generally same as futurist school	—Christ returns to set up a literal millennial kingdom —great white throne judgment —new heaven and new earth
Postmillennial	First-century churches	generally same as continuous-historical school	—second coming of Christ —last judgments —new heaven and new earth
Amillennial	First-century churches	symbolic, preterist, or continuous-historical school	—second coming of Christ —last judgments —new heaven and new earth

It should be noted here that the Millennium passage of Revelation (20:1-6) constitutes a very small proportion of Revelation because the book does not purpose to give a detailed description of the church and Israel in the end times.

## K. RELATION TO OTHER SCRIPTURES

The book of Revelation is the natural climax and conclusion to all the other Scriptures. Genesis is the book of beginnings (“In the beginning,” Gen. 1:1); Revelation is

the book of consummation (“for ever and ever,” Rev. 22:5). And, as Revelation 22:13 boldly asserts, Jesus is the key to all of history, for He is “Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

1. *Relation to the Old Testament.* Allusions to Old Testament imagery and prophecy appear throughout Revelation, though there are no direct quotations as such. Of its 404 verses, it has been observed that 265 contain lines that embrace approximately 550 Old Testament references. A few examples of allusions to the Old Testament are listed in the accompanying chart. Read the passages involved.

## REVELATION’S ALLUSIONS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

OT	Revelation	OT	Revelation
Jer 51	chap. 18 (Babylon)	Dan 7:13; Zec 12:10, 12	1:7
Dan. 7, 8	chap. 13 (2 beasts)	Dan 7:9, 13; 10:5	1:14
Zec 4	chap. 11 (olive trees and cand'esticks)	Dan 10:6; Eze 1:24	1:15
Dan 12:7	12:14 (time periods)	Is 11:4; 49:2	1:16
Ex 19:6	1:6	Is 44:6; 48:12	1:17
		Is 38:10	1:18

## 2. *Relation to the New Testament as a whole.*

Review Chart 41, page 180, which shows some of this relationship. Spend more time thinking about how Revelation is a vital complement to the other New Testament books.

## 3. *Relation to the Olivet discourse* (Matt.

24:1—25:46; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36). This would be a good time for you to reread this prophetic discourse of Jesus, which concerns the end times and His second coming. Keep its prophecies in mind as you study Revelation. Some expositors consider the Olivet discourse to be the key to an understanding of the prophetic calendar of Revelation.⁷

4 . *Relation to John's other writings.* John was given the happy privilege of writing about the gospel of *life* in three different kinds of Scripture. These may be compared in this way:

*The fourth gospel* (biography):

Eternal *life* for the Christian

*Three epistles* (letters):

Divine *life* in Christian living  
today

*The Revelation* (visions):

Victorious *life* now and for  
eternity

It was not by coincidence that the last three inspired sentences penned by John were on such a victorious note: "Yes, I [Jesus] am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen" (22:20-21).

## **II. SURVEY**

### **A. FIRST READINGS**

Scan through the entire book of Revelation in one sitting, not reading every word as such, but glancing at its content in a general way. Record your first impressions. For example, how much of the book is action? How much is description?

One effective way of viewing the overall movement of a book is to observe the opening phrases of most of its paragraphs. Do this for the paragraphs of Revelation. What does this scanning reveal concerning the general contents of Revelation?

### **B. FURTHER READINGS**

1. Go through the book again to identify

the main subject of each chapter. Record chapter titles on a worksheet.

2. Look for *groups* of chapters according to content. What chapters record the following groups: letters to the churches; judgments of seals; trumpets; bowls? Record those on your work sheet.

3. Songs: Mark in your Bible the songs of Revelation.⁸ What is the usual theme of the songs?

4. Time references: The phrases “after this I saw” and “and I saw” appear often, suggesting an orderly *sequence* in the course of the book. Do you see any other patterns?

5. Christ: Christ appears in various forms, such as a lamb. Merrill Tenney’s outline shows the overall ministry of Christ in the book.⁹

1:1	1:9	4:1	17:1	21:9	22:6
Christ Communicating	Christ in the Church: The Living One	Christ in the Cosmos: The Redeemer	Christ in Conquest: The Warrior	Christ in Consummation: The Lamb	Christ Challenging

6. God: Much about God can be learned from Revelation. The name “God the Almighty” appears eight times. Read these verses: 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:15; 21:22.

7. Other prominent subjects appearing in the book include: angels (seventy-six times in the text), wars, sin, Satan, beasts, thrones, the number seven, church, temple, kingdom, and geographical names. What other subjects have you observed?

8. In your survey reading did you observe the recurrence of certain phrases? Compare your observations with this list: “I was in the Spirit” (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10); “and I saw” (over forty times); “lightning ... thunder” (4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18); “It is done” (16:17;

21:6); “Blessed is (are)” (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).

9. How would you compare these three divisions of Revelation, on the basis of your study so far: chapters 1-5; 6-20; 21-22? This is an important exercise in your survey study.

## C. SURVEY CHART

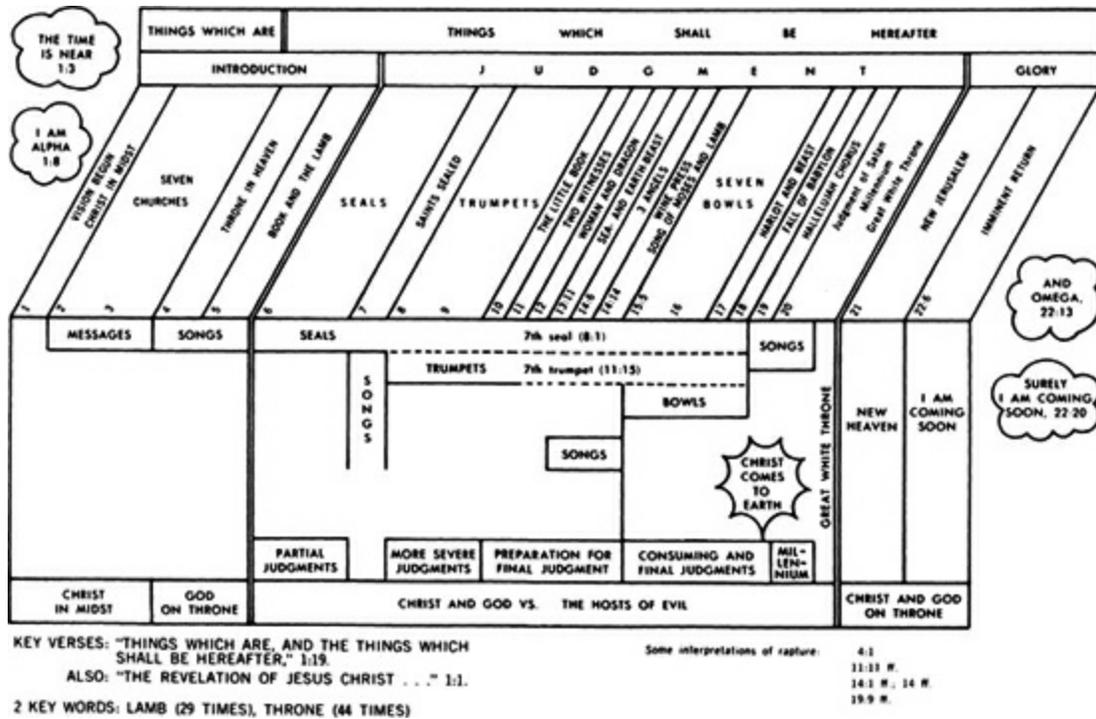
One of the clearest ways to show the structure of a book’s content is by use of the survey chart. This especially applies to a book like Revelation, in which there are so many parts, movements, and complex relationships. One of the advantages of a survey chart is that one can see the many parts of the book *simultaneously* and make comparisons.

Study carefully Chart 123. Observe the

following, comparing the items with your own survey.

1. There are three main divisions of Revelation. What are they? Why is a main division made at chapter 6? Why one at chapter 21? Note also the outline that divides the book into two parts: “things which are;” “things which shall be hereafter.” These phrases come

# CHART 123: REVELATION: THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST



from 1:19, where the time references are brought out clearly: "Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things." Why is the division point for this outline made at chapter 4? As of John's day, what proportion of Revelation was history yet to be fulfilled? Compare also 1:1.

2. Judgments do not appear until chapter

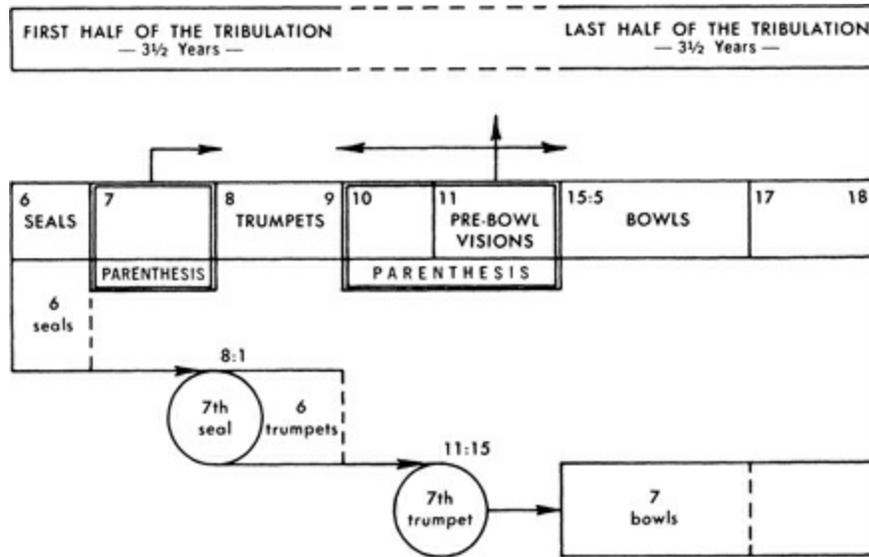
6. How are chapters 1-5 introductory to the judgments?

3. For clarity's sake, a proportionately larger space is devoted on the chart to the three series of judgments than to the other events. This trio (*seals* → *trumpets* → *bowls*) is the unifying element of the judgments division (chaps. 6-20).

4. How are the judgment series (seals, trumpets, and bowls) related to each other? Observe, for example, that the seventh seal (8:1) constitutes the whole series of trumpets; and the seventh trumpet (11:15) constitutes the whole series of bowls. Is there a seventh bowl? (See chapter 16.)

5. Note that there is a parenthesis, or interlude, between the seals and trumpets and between the trumpets and bowls. How many chapters are involved in each parenthesis? (See Chart 124.)

# CHART 124: THE CONTEXT OF REVELATION 10:1-15:4



6. Observe the progression on Chart 123: partial judgments — more severe judgments — consuming and final judgments.

7. The great white throne judgment (chap. 20) is the final judgment for mankind. Beyond this there are no further judgments cited in Revelation.

8. Observe on the chart how *songs* appear just before each event or era of judgment.

9. Quantitatively, most of Revelation is about judgment and conflict. What does this reveal concerning one of the purposes of

# Revelation?

10. How do chapters 21 and 22 differ from the general content of chapters 6-20?

11. Make a list of the chronological sequence of periods appearing in Revelation. Include the event of Christ's return to earth. Compare your list with the following:

- a. The church in the first century and onward (chaps. 1-5)
- b. Judgments of end times (chaps. 6-20)
- c. Christ's return to earth (chap. 19)
- d. The Millennium (20:1-6)
- e. Heaven (chaps. 21-22)

12. Continue your survey of Revelation until you are satisfied that you have a grasp of its structure, theme, and emphases, and a grasp of why God included it in the canon of Scripture.

## III. PROMINENT SUBJECTS

### A. VISIONS OF CHRIST, GOD, AND THE

# LAMB (Chapters 1-5)

John reports three of his key visions in the introductory chapters of the book. Read each passage, using the following outlines as you read:

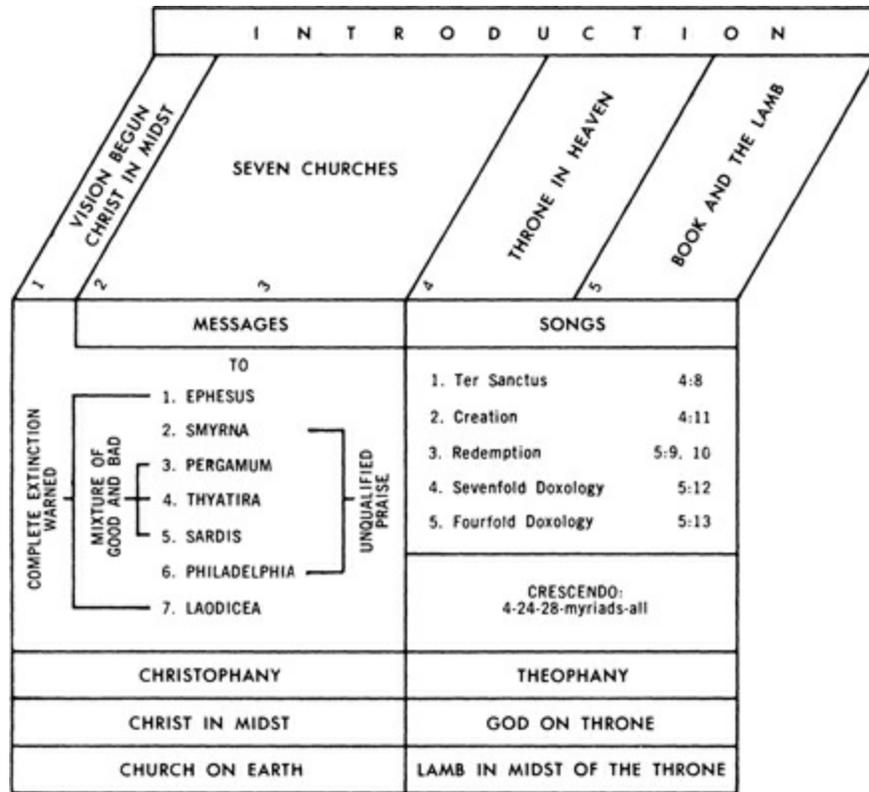
Vision of Christ (Christophany)	1:9-20
<i>Jesus Christ the Son of Man</i>	
1. He commissions us	vv. 9-11
2. He stands with us	12-16
3. He consoles and inspires us	17-20
Vision of God (Theophany)	4:1-11
<i>The Worthy God</i>	
1. His throne	vv. 1-6a
2. His character	6b-8
3. His work	9-11

## B. LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (2:1—3:22)

Mainly because of the chapters' clear content, this is the section of Revelation most familiar to Christians. The section is mostly descriptive and does not have an

abundance of difficult symbols and prophecies. It is like a mirror for the reader, as he sees himself and his local church described in the text.

# CHART 125: REVELATION 1-5: MESSAGES AND SONGS



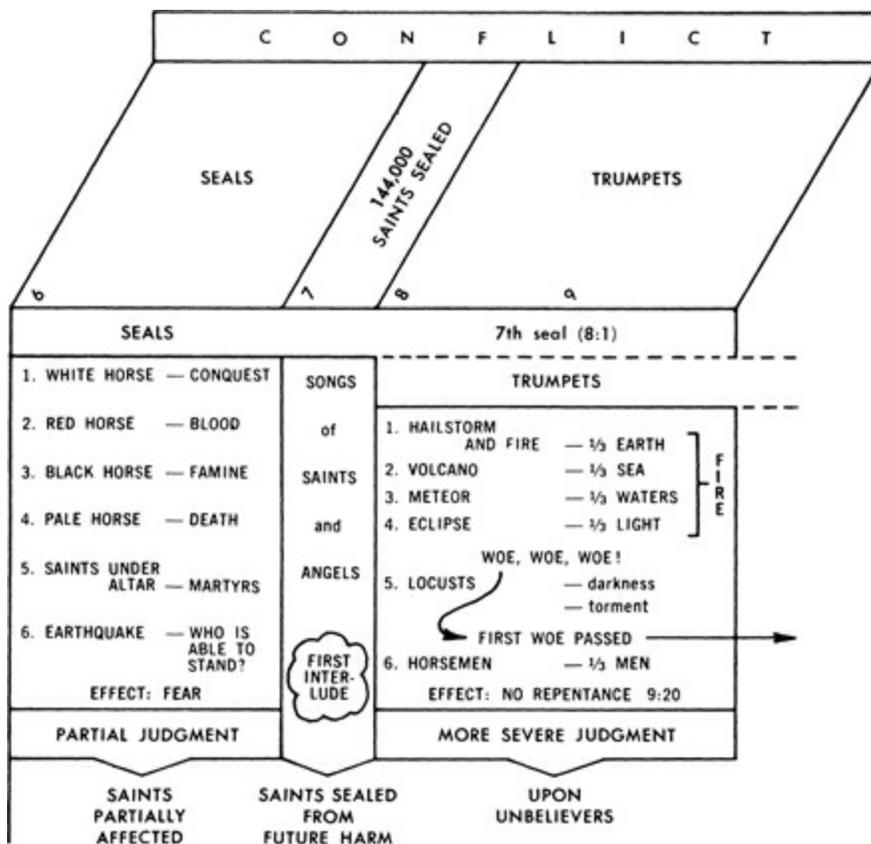
Four different views have been held concerning the purpose of the seven letters of Revelation, 2:1—3:22 (Chart 125):

- Historical — local churches of John's day are described as examples (good or bad)
- Representative — the different kinds of local churches also represent other of the same kinds of local churches,

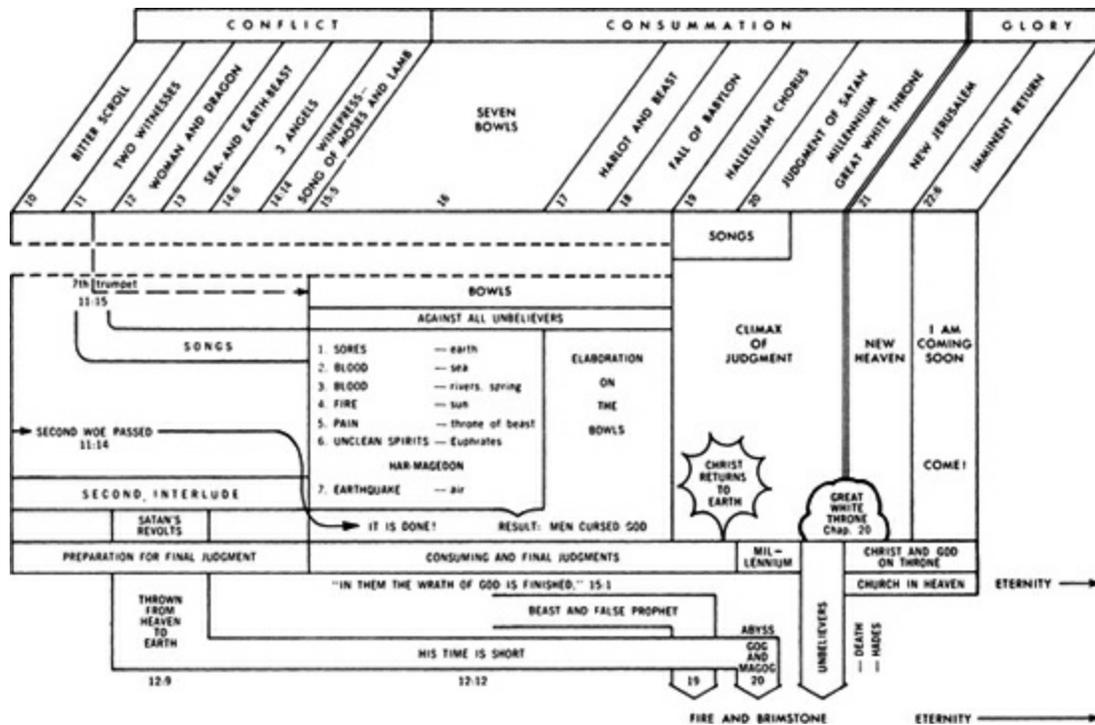
which coexist down through the ages

. Restorative — the particular churches will be literally restored in the end times, as predicted

# CHART 126: REVELATION 6-9: SEALS AND TRUMPETS



# CHART 127: REVELATION 10-22: EVENTS OF THE END TIMES



4. Futuristic — each local church symbolizes the spiritual state of the universal church during a particular era of Christianity, up until the end of the world. The order in which the churches appear in the Bible text coincides with the chronological order of the church history eras. Chart 125 lists the seven churches of Asia Minor. (See also Map Y, page 494.)

## **C. SEALS OF JUDGMENT (6:1—7:17)**

Of the three series of judgments (seals, trumpets, bowls), the seals are the mildest. Only six seals are opened at this time; the seventh is opened later, when the trumpet judgments are about to be announced (8:1). (See Chart 126.) Of the six seals, the first four form a group; the fifth and sixth are of a different kind.

## **D. TRUMPETS OF JUDGMENT (8:1—9:21)**

The trumpet judgments are more intense and destructive than the seal judgments. The spiritual impact of the trumpet judgments upon mankind is “no repentance” (9:20), whereas the impact of the seal judgments was a sense of fear. The first four of the six trumpet judgments involve fire. (See Chart 126.) The seventh trumpet does not sound

until Revelation 11:15, in anticipation of the bowls, the last series of judgments.

## **E. BOWLS OF JUDGMENT (15.1—16:21)**

The bowls constitute the final and most awful of the three woes that are announced to the inhabitants of the earth just before the fifth trumpet (8:13). And when the last of the bowls is poured, heaven's pronouncement is terse, yet triumphant "It is done" (16:17).

The seven bowl judgments are listed on Chart 127. Refer to the chart as you read the Bible text. Observe the spiritual impact of these judgments upon the hearts of earth's inhabitants — men curse God.

Note on Chart 127 that chapters 17 and 18 are an elaboration of the bowl judgments.

# REVELATION 19:1—20:15

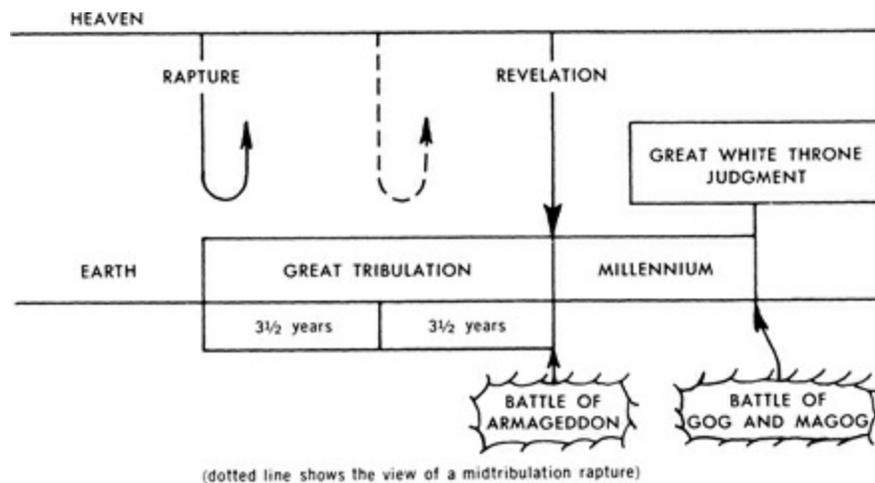
19:1	19:11	20:1	20:7	20:11 20:15
—SONGS —MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB	—CHRIST'S RETURN TO EARTH —WAR: ARMAGEDDON	MILLENNIUM	—SATAN'S LOOSING —WAR: GOG AND MAGOG	GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

## F. FINAL JUDGMENTS (19:1—20:15)

These two chapters conclude the judgment section of the book of Revelation (chaps. 6-20). Five units of the passage are identified by subject in the accompanying table.

The two battles and the great white throne judgment are shown on the premillennial timetable of Chart 128. What transpires between the two battles?

# CHART 128: THE WORLD'S LAST TWO BATTLES



What is the last phrase of judgment in the biblical text? (20:15)

## G. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

When John wrote Revelation he recorded Christ's clear words that He would return to this earth. Among those references are: 2:25, "Hold fast until I come;" 3:11, "I am coming quickly;" 22:20 (after the visions end at 22:5), "Yes, I am coming quickly."

There are references in Revelation that show that Christ will be on this earth when

the particular vision being recorded is fulfilled. For example, in chapter 19, Christ the “Faithful and True” (v. 11), is shown in combat against the kings of the earth (v. 19).

The premillennialist position sees two phases of Christ’s second coming, as shown on Chart 128.¹⁰ The first is the rapture, when Christ comes to the “air” (atmosphere) above the earth to “catch up” deceased and living saints (1 Thess. 4:14-17). The second phase (sometimes known as the revelation) is His coming to earth with the already-raptured saints, to conquer the hosts of Satan at the end of the Great Tribulation and to inaugurate His millennial reign. Normal questions to ask here are, Can two phases of Christ’s second coming be seen in Revelation? If so, where?

Although the second coming of Christ is

an important teaching of the book of Revelation, some detailed events attending it, such as the rapture, are noticeably absent. On this Walvoord writes,

**The rapture as a doctrine is not a part of the prophetic foreview of the book of Revelation. This is in keeping with the fact that the book as a whole is not occupied primarily with God's program for the church. Instead the primary objective is to portray the events leading up to and climaxing in the second coming of Christ and the prophetic kingdom and the eternal state which ultimately will follow.¹¹**

Most premillennialists place the rapture either at 4:1 or between 3:22 and 4:1. Christ's return to the earth is clearly identified in 19:11-21.

## H. MILLENNIUM (20:1-6)

This is the one New Testament passage explicitly referring to the Millennium (“thousand years”). Most of the Bible’s descriptions of the Millennium appear in the Old Testament. What will the Millennium be like, according to these prophecies: Psalm 72; Isaiah 2:2-4; 9:6-7; 11:4-9; 30:15-33; chapters 35, 44, 49; 65:17—66:14; Jeremiah 23:5-6?

The millennial kingdom is primarily God’s restoration to Israel of an earthly kingdom in the last days, promised through His Old Testament prophets (see Ezekiel 20:34-38). It will come to an end after one thousand years and will be followed by the new heaven and the new earth (21:1 ff.). (See Chart 129.)

How does the chart show the Millennium to be the dwelling place of both Jewish

believers and non-Jewish believers?

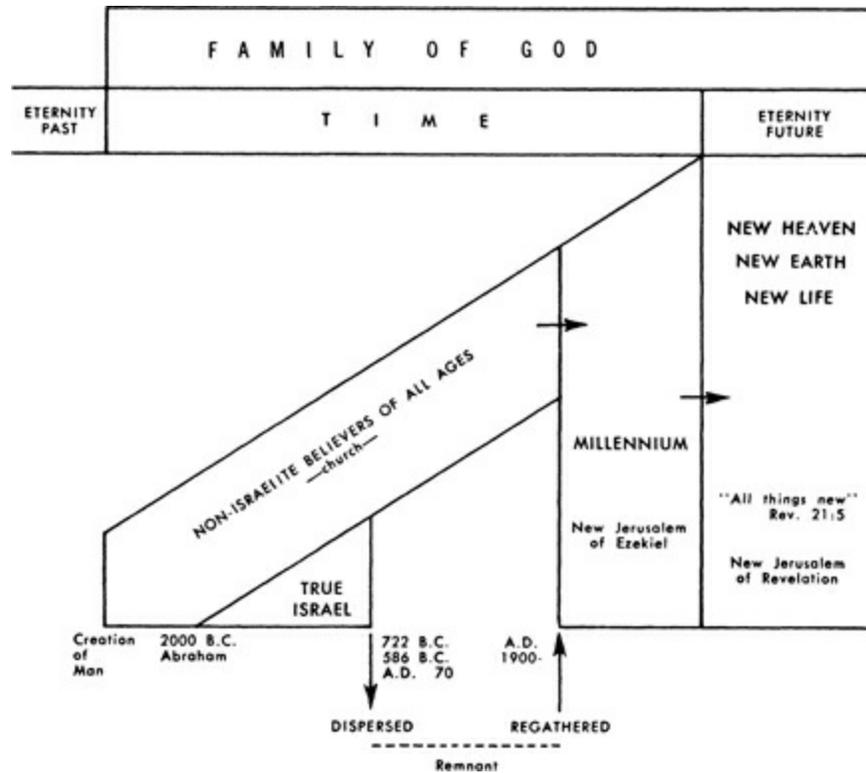
## **I. HEAVEN (21:1—22:21)**

The Bible opens with the story of the creation of the heavens and earth, followed by man's sin and the curse it incurred (Gen. 1-3). The Bible closes with the appearance of a new heaven and new earth, followed by a description of the saints' eternal home, where sin and curse will have no part (Rev. 21-22).

This final section of Revelation is the brightest part of the book. Any Christian reading its pages must feel relieved to move from the long, dark catacombs of the judgment chapters (6-20) to the fresh, heavenly air of John's last visions. This glorious message for believers is God's last recorded words.

No earthly words can fully describe heaven. John's vision was of a city — New Jerusalem — a glimpse of heaven. Use the following outline as you read the text:

# CHART 129: THE MILLENNIUM IN GOD'S TIMETABLE



## THE NEW JERUSALEM

- |                                       |             |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Its Appearance in the New Universe | (21:1—22:5) |
| 2. Its Inhabitants                    | 21:1-5      |
| 3. Its Description                    | 21:6-8      |
| a. structure                          | 21:9-21     |
| b. dimensions                         | 21:9-14     |
| c. adornments                         | 21:15-17    |
| 4. Its Exclusions                     | 21:18-21    |
| 5. Its Life                           | 21:22-27    |
|                                       | 22:1-5      |

What does John write about in the last section of Revelation (22:6-21)? Does he refer to heaven?

Compare verses 20 and 21. How do they conclude the Bible?

## IV. THEME, KEY WORDS AND VERSES

What key words and verses did you observe in your study of Revelation? Compare these with the entries on Chart 123.

What is the theme of Revelation, in your own words?

## V. APPLICATIONS

Various applications of Revelation may be made, for believers and for the nonbelieving world. A few areas are listed below. Add to the list others that you noted in your survey.

1. Christians enduring persecution for their faith.
2. Church life and conduct.
3. Sin and its judgment.
4. Witnessing as a Christian.

5. Satan and his hosts as enemies of the believer.
6. The status and destiny of the world today.
7. The ministry of Christ in redemption and judgment.
8. The hope of heaven.

## **VI. REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Recall what you have learned about this book's author, date of writing, and destination.
2. Describe the state of the Christian church in the Roman Empire when Revelation was written.
3. In your own words, identify the theme of Revelation. Make a list of its main subjects.
4. In what ways was Revelation very

relevant to the needs of Christians at the turn of the first century?

5. Do you think the original readers understood all the details of Revelation? Do you think John did? Is the book more understandable today in light of what is now history and in light of current events? Explain.

6. What are some of the main characteristics of Revelation as an apocalyptic writing?

7. What are the distinctive contributions of Revelation to the canon of Holy Scripture?

8. What are the three main divisions of the book of Revelation?

9. How much of Revelation is about judgment?

10. Identify, by chapter, where these

groups appear: letters to seven churches, seals, trumpets, bowls.

11. Where does the Millennium appear in the text?

12. What will be the last two battles of the world?

13. Name some key words of Revelation.

14. Name and describe the different schools of interpretation of Revelation. According to which view is most of Revelation still future?

15. Compare premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillen-nialism concerning their views of the Millennium.

## **VII. FURTHER STUDY**

Because of Revelation's variety of coverage, many subjects for further study appear as one surveys the text. Here are a

few:

- . what the Bible teaches about God as Judge
- . eternal judgment
- . Ezekiel and the book of Revelation compared
- . the nation of Israel in last times
- . the world of evil spirits
- . Antichrist
- . the rapture in Revelation
- . the church in Revelation
- . the Millennium
- . heaven
- . symbols in Revelation. (Recommended sources for study of this important subject are J. P. Lange, *Revelation*,

pp. 14-41; Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, pp. 186-93; and John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 25-30.)

## VIII. OUTLINE

REVELATION: The Revelation of Jesus Christ	
INTRODUCTION	1:1-8
VISIONS, MESSAGES AND SONGS	1:9—5:14
John's Vision of Christ	1:9-20
Letters to the Seven Churches	2:1—3:22
Visions of God and the Lamb	4:1—5:14
JUDGMENTS	6:1—20:15
Seals of Judgment	6:1—7:17
Trumpets of Judgment	8:1—9:21
Little Book, Two Witnesses, and Seventh Trumpet	10:1—11:19
The Woman, Dragon, and Two Beasts	12:1—14:20
Bowls of Judgment	15:1—16:21
Fall of Babylon	17:1—18:24
Final Judgment	19:1—20:15
GLORY	21:1—22:20
Eternal Home of the Saints	21:1—22:5
"I am Coming Soon"	22:6-20
BENEDICTION	22:21

## IX. SELECTED READING

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Smith, Wilbur, M. "Revelation." In *The*

*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, pp. 1491-1501.

Thiessen, Henry C. *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 316-29.

## COMMENTARIES

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Lange, John Peter. *Revelation*.

Newell, William R. *The Book of Revelation*.

Ryrie, Charles C. *Revelation*. Everyman's Bible Commentary.

Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*.

## OTHER RELATED SOURCES

Jensen, Irving L. *Revelation. A Self-Study Guide.*

Payne, J. Barton. *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy.*

Pentecost, J. Dwight. *Prophecy for Today.*

Sauer, Erich. *From Eternity to Eternity.*

Smith, Wilbur M. *The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven.*

Tenney, Merrill C. *Interpreting Revelation.*

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1. For a very informative discussion of the status of Judaism and Christianity in the Roman Empire when Revelation was written, consult Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, pp. 20-27.

2. The worst persecution was yet to come for Christians, when John wrote Revelation. This made the ominous message of Revelation all the more relevant.

3. In the Greek, the genitive “of Jesus Christ” in 1:1 is either an objective genitive (i.e., Jesus is the one revealed) or a subjective genitive (i.e., Jesus is the one revealing). The intention of the passage is probably both, that is, revelation *about* Christ and revelation *from* Christ.

4. Wilbur M. Smith, “Revelation,” in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 1492.

5. Other apocalyptic books of the Bible are Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. Because Revelation’s apocalyptic form made it so different from the other New Testament books, there was delay in this book’s being accepted as canonical by the Eastern church. The Western church, however, early recognized Revelation’s divine inspiration.

6. In many ways Revelation differs from noncanonical apocalyptic writings, such as in its overall optimism, moral urgency, and identification of authorship.

7. See Wilbur M. Smith, *A Treasury of Books*

*for Bible Study*, pp. 235-42, for an extensive comparative study of the two scriptures.

8. The NASB identifies most of the songs by setting them in indented and blocked form (e.g., 4:11).

9. Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, p. 33. Such an outline is arrived at in the later, more advanced stages of survey study.

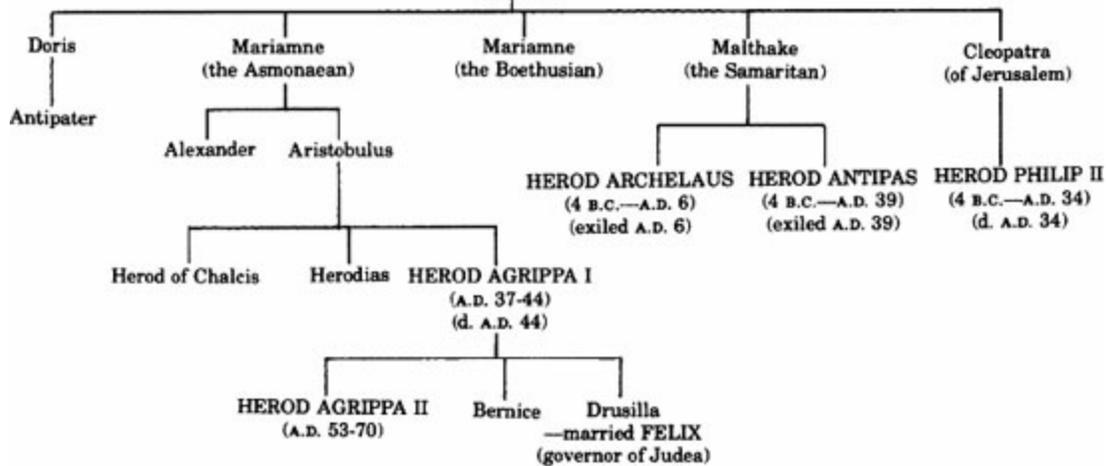
10. Chart 128 shows the view of a mid-tribulation rapture (dashed line). There is also a posttribulation view that places the rapture at the end of the Tribulation, followed immediately by Christ's return to the earth.

11. John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 103. Walvoord's reference to "second coming" here is to Christ's return to the *earth* (19:11-21), which is a key event of Revelation.

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# Appendix A

The Herodian Family  
**HEROD THE GREAT***  
 King of Judea  
 37-4 B.C.



* Names of kings noted in the New Testament are capitalized

# Appendix B

**AN APPROXIMATE CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF PAUL  
 SHOWING HIS CONTACTS WITH TIMOTHY AND TITUS**

EVENT	SCRIPTURE	DATE
1. Birth		around the time of Christ's birth
2. Conversion	Ac 9:1-19a	A.D. 33
3. First missionary journey <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">TIMOTHY CONVERTED AT DERBE, probably in his late teens</div> Galatians written possibly at the end of the mission, from Antioch	Ac 13:1—14:28	47-48
4. At the Jerusalem council <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">TITUS ACCOMPANIES PAUL</div>	Ac 15:1-35 Ga 2:1	49
5. Second missionary journey <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">TIMOTHY JOINS PAUL</div> Included the first mission to Thessalonica 1 and 2 Thessalonians written from Corinth	Ac 15:36—18:22	49-52
6. Third missionary journey <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">ABOUT 3 YEARS IN EPHEBUS, WITH TIMOTHY</div> Included at least two visits to Macedonia (cf. Ac. 20:1-3; 2 Co 2:12-13) <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin: 5px auto;">TITUS MINISTERS IN CORINTH</div> 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans written on this journey	Ac 18:23—21:17  2 Co 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16, 23	52-56
7. Arrest at Jerusalem	Ac 21:18—23:30	56
8. Appearances before governors Felix and Festus	Ac 23:31—25:12	56-58

**AN APPROXIMATE CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF PAUL (CONT.)**

9. Appearance before King Agrippa	Ac 25:13—26:32	58
10. Journey to Rome and imprisonment Written from prison: Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, Philippians	Ac 27:1—28:31	58-61
11. Release from prison	cf. Phile 22; Phil 1:25	62
12. Travels after release Eventually reaches Asia Minor  <b>LEAVES TIMOTHY AT EPHESUS (1 Ti 1:3)</b>  Goes to Macedonia  <b>WRITES TO TIMOTHY</b>  Possibly returns to Ephesus Goes to Crete  <b>LEAVES TITUS AT CRETE (TITUS 1:5)</b>  Goes to Corinth  <b>WRITES TO TITUS</b>  Other journeys ¹		62-66   62      66
13. Burning of Rome; increased persecution of Christians by Nero		64
14. Second arrest (at Troas?)	cf. 2 Ti 1:16-17; 4:6-18	66 or 67
15. Second imprisonment at Rome  <b>WRITES SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY</b>		67
16. Death Executed by Nero		67

1. Paul may have visited Spain either at the beginning or end of this period of freedom. The details of Paul's travels in between the two imprisonments are very sketchy. See D. Edmond Heibert, *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, pp. 322-23, for a suggested chronology.

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