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#### THANKS.

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In all seriousness though, thanks for being a crew committed to the Gospel.

RIVERVIEW EXISTS TO PROCLAIM THE LIBERATING POWER OF THE GOSPEL AS WE GROW, SERVE, AND GO.



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### INTRODUCTION

The stale book in the hotel drawer: the Holy Bible.

The gold-leafed book featured prominently on grandma's mantel: the Word.

The sentences screaming from posters at pride rallies: the Law.

The Torah. The Message. The Good News. The Living Water. **The Gospel.** 

The collection of sixty-six books, poems, prophecies, and letters that we've come to know as the Bible is the foundation of Christianity. Sometimes it can be daunting to open it up and know what's what and how a poem of anger or personal letter to someone else can have an impact on our lives.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

#### 2 TIMOTHY 3:16

Our goal with this book is to help you understand the Bible both as individual books and as a whole. The stories in the Old Testament point to the character of God and foreshadow the coming of Jesus. The genealogies teach us about God's grace and mercy as He holds true to His promises despite people being jacked up.

Again and again the entirety of Scripture points to a wholeness that is available for a bunch of broken people (that includes you and me by the way). It's really just a ton of little pieces of literature that point like neon flashing arrows to the person and work of Christ.

We want you to know this, not because we said so, but because you've come to see it as true. If we ever twist the truth of Scripture, call us out, for we want to hold firm the weight and power of the Bible as we submit our lives to it's authority. As followers of Christ, the Word must influence and guide us. It changes lives, just ask someone in your Life Group or in the chair next to you. There's a story behind that face that points to the power of Scripture.

These next sixty-six weeks are going to be a journey together as we follow Jesus through all of the Bible. Write down your questions as we hit books you've never cracked open. Bring a story to Life Group that you came across in your reading for the first time. If you only know the Bible for the numbers "3:16" written on some athlete's face or you've recited the books of the Bible in order since you were six, please join us on this (admittedly kinda crazy) literary journey over the next sixteen months.

In this book we will walk through each genre of the Bible and how to read it normally. We've included summaries for each individual book with foreshadowings of Jesus pointed out, a few verses that really capture its core message, and other info to help in your study. At the back you'll find four reading plan options. They vary in intensity, but all of them are a challenge to set aside intentional time each week to get into the Word.

At the end of the day this isn't about learning history, memorizing names, or even reading through the whole Bible in a string of consecutive days. Our prayer is that we would point ourselves and others to the person and work of Jesus.

The whole of Scripture does just that.



Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy



# HOW DOES THIS TYPE OF LITERATURE FIT INTO THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE?

The entirety of the Bible is built upon and looks back to the first five books of the Bible; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, collectively known as "the Law." These scriptures attest to the goodness of creation, the sorrow and pervasiveness of sin, and God's redeeming purposes through Abraham and his descendants in the nation of Israel. We quickly learn that the beloved people made in God's image have rebelled, and the consequences of sin is death and fractured relationships with God and each other. Fortunately, God acted to establish a people guided by His words, laws, and presence, who would eventually produce the savior of the World, Jesus Christ (Genesis 3:15).

The Law is crucial to understanding not just many core biblical doctrines and themes, but more broadly a Judeo-Christian worldview to answer many of life's greatest questions, like:

- Where did I come from? (God created humanity Genesis I:I)
- Why am I here? (to have a relationship with God Genesis 15:5)
- Where am I going? (we have a destination after death Genesis 25:8)
- How am I supposed to live? (according to God's ways Exodus 20)

### **HOW DO WE READ THE LAW NORMALLY?**

Though originally given to wandering Hebrews who had just been led out of Egypt, the Law lays the foundation for everyone to understand that there is but one God, a creator who possesses perfect moral character and is involved in human life. While sincere believers may debate the age of the earth and exactly how the earliest parts of the Genesis story actually unfolded, the first five books of the Bible provides a universal account of humanity, a national story for Israel, and expectations for how we are ought to live in light of our accountability to God. Reading the Law normally involves seeing its connection to history, characters and themes presented later in the Bible, and by noting the seeds of most major doctrines (e.g. the imputation of sin, atonement, depravity, wrath, grace, sovereignty, and responsibility) that will blossom throughout the rest of scripture.

# HOW DOES THIS PART OF THE BIBLE POINT TO JESUS?

The Gospel of Matthew immediately points out that Jesus was a descendant of Abraham and the Jewish lineage that came from him (Matthew I:I). As the fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham, Jesus brought salvation from the Jews to the rest of the world. This salvation is a better deliverance than the Exodus, where Jesus saves His people from sin and death into a life meaning, purpose, and relationship with God. Jesus' holy life and substitutionary death completely fulfilled the demands of the Levitical sacrifice system. When people acknowledge their unholiness and place their trust in Jesus, believers graciously receive Christ's holiness and can therefore truly rest in a better promised land of right standing before God.

# HOW DOES THE LAW FIT INTO OUR LIVES TODAY?

Our posture toward laws (especially those we think are stupid) is largely negative. This is even more pronounced in our posture toward the Law (both the 613 laws God gave Israel and many of the narratives contained in the first five books of the Bible). We find much on these pages to be archaic, distasteful, or (at best) irrelevant. The Apostle Paul takes a different approach, calling the Law "good if one uses it properly" (I Timothy I:9). How do we do that? By looking at how Jesus used the Law: "And beginning with Moses [The Law] and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

The Law shows us how far we, and Israel before us, have fallen from God's perfect standard. Thankfully, it also shows us that where we fail, Jesus succeeds. By faith in Him, we can find ourselves transformed more and more into His loving image, which ends up fulfilling the Law. "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14).

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# **GENESIS**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The author of Genesis is not clearly identified. Traditionally, the author has always been assumed to be Moses and there is no conclusive reason to deny his authorship of Genesis.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Genesis doesn't state when it was written. The date of authorship is likely between I440 and I400 BC, between the time Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and his death.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Genesis has sometimes been called the "seed-plot" of the entire Bible. Most of the major doctrines in the Bible are introduced in "seed" form in Genesis. Along with the fall of man, God's promise of salvation or redemption is recorded (Genesis 3:15). The doctrines of creation, imputation of sin, justification, atonement, depravity, wrath, grace, sovereignty, responsibility, and many more are all addressed in this book of origins called Genesis.

Many of the great questions of life are answered in Genesis.

- Where did I come from? (God created us Genesis I:I)
- Why am I here? (we are here to have a relationship with God Genesis 15:6)
- Where am I going? (we have a destination after death Genesis 25:8)

Genesis appeals to the scientist, the historian, the theologian, the student, the farmer, the traveler, and the man or woman of God. It is a fitting beginning for God's story of His plan for mankind, the Bible.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

#### **GENESIS 1:1**

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

#### **GENESIS 3:15**

And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

#### **GENESIS 12:2-3**

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

**GENESIS 50:20** 

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The book of Genesis can be divided into two sections: Primitive History and Patriarchal History.

#### PRIMITIVE HISTORY RECORDS:

- Creation (Genesis chapters I-2)
- The Fall of Man (Genesis chapters 3-5)
- The Flood (Genesis chapters 6-9)
- The Dispersion (Genesis chapters 10-11)

#### PATRIARCHAL HISTORY RECORDS:

- Abraham (Genesis 12-25:8)
- Isaac (Genesis 21:1-35-29)
- Jacob (Genesis 25:21-50:14)
- Joseph (Genesis 30:22-50:26)

God created a universe that was good and free from sin. God created humanity to have a personal relationship with Him. Adam and Eve sinned and thereby brought evil and death into the world. Evil increased steadily in the world until there was only one family in which God found anything good. God sent the Flood to wipe out evil, but delivered Noah and his family along with the animals in the Ark. After the Flood, humanity began again to multiply and spread throughout the world.

God chose Abraham, through whom He would create a chosen people and eventually the promised Messiah. The chosen line was passed on to Abraham's son Isaac, and then to Isaac's son Jacob. God changed Jacob's name to Israel, and his twelve sons became the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. In His sovereignty, God had Jacob's son Joseph sent to Egypt by the despicable actions of Joseph's brothers. This act, intended for evil by the brothers, was intended for good by God and eventually resulted in Jacob and his family being saved from a devastating famine by Joseph, who had risen to great power in Egypt.

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

Many New Testament themes have their roots in Genesis. Jesus Christ is the Seed of the woman who will destroy Satan's power (Genesis 3:15). As with Joseph, God's plan for the good of mankind through the sacrifice of His Son was intended for good, even though those who crucified Jesus intended it for evil. Noah and his family are the first of many remnants pictured in the Bible. Despite overwhelming odds, difficult circumstances, and continually rebelling people, God always preserves a remnant of the faithful for Himself. The remaining Israelites returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. God preserved a remnant through all the persecutions described in Isaiah and Jeremiah. Seven thousand priests were hidden from the wrath of Jezebel. God promised that a remnant of Jews will one day embrace their true Messiah (Romans II). The faith displayed by Abraham would be the gift of God and the basis of salvation for both Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews II).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The overriding theme of Genesis is God's eternal existence and His creation of the world. There is no effort on the part of the author to defend the existence of God; he simply states that God is, always was, and always will be, almighty over all. In the same way, we have confidence in the truths of Genesis, despite the claims of those who would deny them. All people, regardless of culture, nationality or language, are accountable to the Creator. Because of sin introduced into the world at the Fall, we are separated from God. But through one small nation, Israel, God's redemptive plan for mankind was revealed and made available to all.

God created the universe, the earth, and every living being. We can trust Him to handle the concerns in our lives. God can take a hopeless situation, like Abraham and Sarah being childless, and do amazing things if we will simply trust and obey. Terrible and unjust things may happen in our lives, as with Joseph, but God will always bring about a greater good if we have faith in Him and His sovereign plan. "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

## **MY NOTES**

# **EXODUS**

### WHO WROTE IT?

Moses was the author of the book of Exodus (Exodus 17:14; 24:4-7; 34:27).

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Exodus was written between 1440 and 1400 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The word "exodus" simply means departure. In God's timing, the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt marked the end of a period of oppression for Abraham's descendants (Genesis 15:13), and the beginning of the fulfillment of the covenant promise to Abraham that his descendants would not only live in the Promised Land, but would also multiply and become a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3, 7). The purpose of the book may be expressed as tracing the rapid growth of Jacob's descendants from Egypt to the establishment of the theocratic nation in their Promised Land.

## **SOME KEY VERSES**

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

#### EXODUS 1:8

And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

**EXODUS 2:24-25** 

'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.' And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

#### **EXODUS 12:27**

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.

EXODUS 20:2-3

# A QUICK SUMMARY

Exodus begins where Genesis leaves off as God deals with His chosen people, the Jews. It traces the events from the time Israel entered Egypt as guests of Joseph, who was powerful in Egypt, until they were eventually delivered from the cruel bondage of slavery into which they had been brought by "...a new king...who did not know Joseph" (Exodus I:8).

Chapters I-I4 describe the conditions of oppression of the Jews under Pharaoh, the rise of Moses as their deliverer, the plagues God brought upon Egypt for the refusal of their leader to submit to Him, and the departure from Egypt. God's sovereign and powerful hand is seen in the miracles of the plagues—ending with the plague of death of the firstborn and the institution of the first Passover—the deliverance of the Israelites, the parting of the Red Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptian army.

The middle portion of Exodus is dedicated to the wandering in the wilderness and the miraculous provision by God for His people. But even though He gave them bread from heaven, sweet water from bitter, water from a rock, victory over those who would destroy them, His Law written on tablets of stone by His own hand, and His presence in the form of pillars of fire and cloud, the people continually grumbled and rebelled against Him.

The last third of the book describes the construction of the Ark of the Covenant and the plan for the Tabernacle with its various sacrifices, altars, furniture, ceremonies, and forms of worship.

### **FORESHADOWINGS**

The numerous sacrifices required of the Israelites were a picture of the ultimate sacrifice, the Passover Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. The night of the last plague on Egypt, an unblemished lamb was killed and its blood applied to the doorposts of the houses of God's people, protecting them from the angel of death. This foreshadowed Jesus, the Lamb of God without spot or blemish (I Peter I:I9), whose blood applied to us ensures eternal life. Among the symbolic presentations of Christ in the book of Exodus is the story of the water from the rock in Exodus 17:6. Just as Moses struck the rock to provide life-giving water for the people to drink, so did God strike the Rock of our salvation, crucifying Him for our sin, and from the Rock came the gift of living water (John 4:IO). The provision of manna in the wilderness is a perfect picture of Christ, the Bread of Life (John 6:48), provided by God to give us life.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The Mosaic Law was given in part to show mankind that they were incapable of keeping it. We are unable to please God by law-keeping; therefore, Paul exhorts us to put our "faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

God's provision for the Israelites, from deliverance from captivity to the manna and quail in the wilderness, are clear indications of His gracious provision for His people. God has promised to supply all our needs. "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (I Corinthians I:9).

We are to trust in the Lord, for He can deliver us from anything. But God does not allow sin to go unpunished forever. As a result, we can trust Him in His retribution and justice. When God removes us from a bad situation, we should not seek to go back. When God makes demands of us, He expects us to comply, but at the same time He provides grace and mercy because He knows that, on our own, we will not be able to fully obey.

# **MY NOTES**

# **LEVITICUS**

### WHO WROTE IT?

Moses was the author of the book of Leviticus.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Leviticus was written between 1440 and 1400 BC.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Because the Israelites had been held captive in Egypt for 400 years, the concept of God had been distorted by the polytheistic, pagan Egyptians. The purpose of Leviticus is to provide instruction and laws to guide a sinful, yet redeemed people in their relationship with a holy God. There is an emphasis in Leviticus on the need for personal holiness in response to a holy God. Sin must be atoned for through the offering of proper sacrifices (chapters 8-10). Other topics covered in the book are diets (clean and unclean foods), childbirth, and diseases which are carefully regulated (chapters II-I5). Chapter I6 describes the Day of Atonement when an annual sacrifice is made for the cumulative sin of the people. Furthermore, the people of God are to set apart their personal, moral, and social living from the then-current practices of the heathen cultures around them (chapters I7-22).

### **SOME KEY VERSES**

He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

**LEVITICUS 1:4** 

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

#### **LEVITICUS 17:11**

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as your-self: I am the Lord.

**LEVITICUS 19:18** 

# **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Chapters I–7 outline the offerings required of all the people and the priests. Chapters 8–IO describe the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. Chapters II–I6 are the prescriptions for various types of uncleanness. The final IO chapters are God's guidelines to His people for practical holiness. Various feasts were instituted in the people's worship of God, practiced according to God's laws. Blessings or curses would accompany either the keeping or neglect of God's commandments (chapter 26). Vows to the Lord are covered in chapter 27.

The primary theme of Leviticus is holiness. God's demand for holiness in His people is based on His own holy nature. A corresponding theme is that of atonement. Holiness must be maintained before God, and holiness can only be attained through a proper atonement.

#### **FORESHADOWINGS**

Much of the ritualistic practices of worship picture in many ways the person and work of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 10 tells us that the Mosaic Law is "only a shadow of the good things that are coming" by which is meant that the daily sacrifices offered by the priests for the sin of the people were a representation of the ultimate Sacrifice—Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice would be once for all time for those who would believe in Him. The holiness imparted temporarily by the Law would one day be replaced by the absolute attainment of holiness when Christians exchanged their sin for the righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

God takes His holiness very seriously, and so should we. The trend in the postmodern church is to create God in our own image, giving Him the attributes we would like Him to have instead of the ones His Word describes. God's complete holiness, His transcendent splendor, and His "unapproachable light" (I Timothy 6:16) are foreign concepts to many Christians. We are called to walk in the Light and to put away the darkness in our lives so that we may be pleasing in His sight. A holy God cannot tolerate blatant, unashamed sin in His people and His holiness requires Him to punish it. (A simple but effective metaphor here is to think of oil and water—they physically cannot mix.) We dare not be flippant in our attitudes toward sin or God's loathing of it, nor should we make light of it in any way.

Praise the Lord that because of Jesus' death on our behalf, we no longer have to offer animal sacrifices. Leviticus is all about substitution. The death of the animals was a substitute penalty for those who had sinned. In the same way, but infinitely better, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is the substitute for our sins. Now we can stand before a God of complete holiness without fear because He sees us positionally in the righteousness of Christ.

#### MY NOTES

### IV

# **NUMBERS**

### WHO WROTE IT?

Moses was the author of the book of Numbers.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Numbers was written between 1440 and 1400 BC.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The message of Numbers is universal and timeless. It reminds us of the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged, for Numbers is the book of the service and walk of God's people. The book of Numbers essentially bridges the gap between the Israelites receiving the Law (Exodus and Leviticus) and preparing them to enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy and Joshua).

#### SOME KEY VERSES

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

#### **NUMBERS 6:24-26**

And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and

not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"

#### **NUMBERS 12:6-8**

Not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected. But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.

NUMBERS 14:30-34

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Most of the events of the book of Numbers take place in the wilderness, primarily between the second and fortieth years of Israel's wandering. The first 25 chapters of the book chronicle the experiences of the first generation of Israel in the wilderness, while the rest of the book describes the experiences of the second generation. The theme of obedience and rebellion followed by repentance and blessing runs through the entire book, as well as the entire Old Testament.

The theme of the holiness of God is continued from the book of Leviticus into Numbers, which reveals God's instruction and preparation of His people to enter the Promised Land of Canaan. The importance of the book of Numbers is indicated by its being referred to in the New Testament many times. The Holy Spirit called special attention to Numbers in I Corinthians IO:I-I2. The words "now these things took place as examples" refers to the sin of the Israelites and God's displeasure with them.

In Romans II:22, Paul speaks about the "kindness and severity of God." That, in a nutshell, is the message of Numbers. The severity of God is seen in the death of the rebellious generation in the wilderness, those who never entered the Promised Land. The goodness of God is realized in the new generation. God protected, preserved,

and provided for these people until they possessed the land. This reminds us of the justice and love of God, which are always in sovereign harmony (even when we don't see or understand it in the moment).

### **FORESHADOWINGS**

God's demand for holiness in His people is completely and finally satisfied in Jesus Christ, who came to fulfill the Law on our behalf (Matthew 5:17). The concept of the promised Messiah pervades the book. The story in chapter 19 of the sacrifice of the red heifer "without defect or blemish" points to Christ, the Lamb of God without spot or blemish who was sacrificed for our sins. The image of the bronze snake lifted up on the pole to provide physical healing (chapter 21) also points to the lifting up of Christ, either upon the cross, or in the ministry of the Word, that whoever looks to Him by faith may have spiritual healing.

In chapter 24, Balaam's fourth oracle speaks of the star and the scepter who is to rise out of Jacob. Here is a prophecy of Christ who is called the "morning star" in Revelation 22:16 for His glory, brightness, and splendor, and for the light that comes by Him. He may also be called a scepter, that is, a scepter bearer, because of His royalty. He not only has the name of a king, but has a kingdom, and rules with a scepter of grace, mercy, and righteousness.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

A major theological theme developed in the New Testament from Numbers is that sin and unbelief, especially rebellion, earns the judgment of God. The book of I Corinthians specifically says—and Hebrews 3:7-4:13 strongly implies—that these events were written as examples for believers to observe and avoid. We are not to "set our hearts on evil things" (v. 6), or be sexually immoral (v. 8), or put God to the test (v. 9) or gripe and complain (v. 10).

Just as the Israelites wandered in the wilderness 40 years because of their rebellion, God sometimes allows us to wander away from Him and suffer loneliness and lack of blessings. But God is faithful and just, and just as He restored the Israelites to their rightful place in His heart, He will always restore Christians to fellowship with Him if we repent and return to Him (I John I:9).

# **MY NOTES**

V

# **DEUTERONOMY**

### WHO WROTE IT?

Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy, which is in fact a collection of his sermons to Israel just before they crossed the Jordan River. "These are the words that Moses spoke" (I:I). Someone else (Joshua, perhaps) may have written the last chapter (seeing as it recounts Moses' death).

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

These sermons were given during the 40-day period prior to Israel's entering the Promised Land. The first sermon was delivered on the first day of the IIth month (I:3), and the Israelites crossed the Jordan 70 days later, on the tenth day of the first month (Joshua 4:19). Subtract 30 days of mourning after Moses' death (Deuteronomy 34:8), and we're left with 40 days. The year was I406 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

A new generation of Israelites was about to enter the Promised Land. This population had not experienced the miracle at the Red Sea or heard the Law given at Sinai, and they were about to enter a new land with many dangers and temptations. The book of Deuteronomy was given to remind them of God's law and God's power.

## SOME KEY VERSES

You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.

**DEUTERONOMY 4:2** 

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

#### **DEUTERONOMY 6:4-7**

He said to them, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess."

DEUTERONOMY 32:46-47

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The Israelites are commanded to remember four things: God's faithfulness, God's holiness, God's blessings, and God's warnings. The first three chapters recap the trip from Egypt to their current location, Moab. Chapter 4 is a call to obedience, to be faithful to the God who was faithful to them.

Chapters 5 through 26 are a repetition of the Law. The Ten Commandments, the Laws concerning sacrifices and specials days, and the rest of the Law are given to the new generation. Blessings are promised to those who obey (5:29; 6:17-19; II:13-15), and famine is promised to those who break the Law (II:16-17).

The theme of blessing and cursing is continued in chapters 27-30. This portion of the book ends with a clear choice set before Israel: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse." God's desire for His people is found in what Moses recommends: "choose life" (30:19).

In the final chapters, Moses encourages the people, commissions his replacement Joshua, records a song; and gives a final blessing to each of the tribes of Israel. Chapter 34 relates the circumstances of Moses' death. He climbed Mt. Pisgah, where the

Lord showed him the Promised Land that he could not enter. At 120 years old, but still with good eyesight and the strength of youth, Moses died in the presence of the Lord. The book of Deuteronomy ends with a short obituary on this great prophet.

### **FORESHADOWINGS**

Many New Testament themes are present in the book of Deuteronomy. The foremost among them is the necessity of keeping perfectly the Law and the impossibility of doing so. The endless sacrifices necessary to atone for the sins of the people—who continually disobeyed the Law—would find their fulfillment in the final "once for all" sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews IO:IO). Because of Jesus' atoning work on the cross, we need no further sacrifices for sin.

God's choosing of the Israelites as His special people foreshadows His choosing of those who would believe in Christ (I Peter 2:9). In Deuteronomy I8:I5-I9, Moses prophesies of another prophet—the ultimate Prophet to come who is the Messiah. Like Moses, He would receive and preach divine revelation and He would lead His people (John 6:I4; 7:40).

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The book of Deuteronomy underscores the importance of God's Word. It is a vital part of our lives. Although we are no longer under the Old Testament law, we are still responsible to submit to the will of God in our lives. Simple obedience brings blessing, and sin has its own consequences.

None of us is "above the Law." Even Moses, the leader and prophet chosen by God, was required to obey. The reason that he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land was that he disobeyed the Lord's clear command (Numbers 20:13).

During the time of His testing in the wilderness, Jesus quoted from the book of Deuteronomy three times (Matthew 4). In so doing, Jesus illustrated for us the necessity of hiding God's Word in our hearts that we might not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11).

Just as Israel remembered God's faithfulness, so should we. The crossing of the Red Sea, the holy presence at Sinai, and the blessing of manna in the desert should be an encouragement to us as well. A great way to keep going forward is to take some time to look back and see what God has done (in your life, in the lives of others, and in these recorded histories).

We also have a beautiful picture in Deuteronomy of a loving God who desires a relationship with His children. The Lord names love as the reason that He brought Israel out of Egypt "with a mighty hand" and redeemed them (Deuteronomy 7:7-9). What a wonderful thing to be free from the bondage of sin and loved by an all-powerful God.

### MY NOTES



Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther



# HOW DOES THIS TYPE OF LITERATURE FIT INTO THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE?

After the Exodus and Moses' leadership, God used Joshua to lead the Israelites into the promised land, a place of victorious rest. However, the people rebelled by turning away from God by following false religions and practicing oppression in a depressing cycle of disobedience and the tragic consequences that stem from sin. Through different judges (like Samson), prophets (like Samuel) and kings (like Saul & David), God sought to lead His people toward Himself through righteous leadership. However, when the kings and people turned away from the Law, God expelled Israel and Judah from the Promised Land into Babylonian exile. After the Persians defeated Babylon, God brought the exiles back to Jerusalem and rebuilt His temple.

# HOW DO WE READ THE HISTORIES NORMALLY?

The books of Old Testament history present the stories contained within them as just that, history. When reading these scriptures, it is important keep in mind that God was working out His redemptive plans through real human events primarily in the people of Israel, observed and recorded (mostly) by eyewitnesses who experienced them. The books of history show us God faithfully working despite the individuals and nations, who often give us negative examples, yet nonetheless provide evidence for God's graciousness and unthwarted plans.

# HOW DOES THIS PART OF THE BIBLE POINT TO JESUS?

Interestingly, the name "Jesus" is a Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua" (roughly meaning 'the Lord saves'). As a better Joshua, Jesus fought with His people as God and demonstrated that victory over sin and death comes from God alone. Thankfully, Jesus took our sin and the consequences of our rebellion (I Corinthians 15:56-57). God therefore exalted Jesus (Philippians 2:9) -as a better David- to a position of eternal kingship righteously presiding over all past, present, and future rulers. Jesus dealt graciously with exiles of sin, and through His physical resurrection rebuilt His own destroyed temple (John 2:19).

# HOW DO THE HISTORIES FIT INTO OUR LIVES TODAY?

When we open the Bible we are not only opening up a religious text, we are opening up a living history. Consider Esther: nowhere in her story is God mentioned, rather the author invites us to look for God's activity as one ironic reversal after another comes to pass in favor of the Israelites. This account, and many more like in the Bible, invite us to see God's faithfulness as God works out His purposes in and through people. The historical books remind us that the end goal of God blessing Israel was never to elevate them over the nations; it was always for Israel to be a conduit of God's grace and blessing to all the nations. This narrative's unique and definitive trajectory is resolved ultimately in the person and work of Jesus Christ. As His followers, we can look to Him as our present day proof of God's historical faithfulness.

## VI

# **JOSHUA**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The book of Joshua does not explicitly name its author. More than likely Joshua the son of Nun, the successor of Moses as leader over Israel, penned much of this book. The latter part of the book was written by at least one other person after the death of Joshua. It is also possible that several sections were edited/compiled following Joshua's death.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Joshua was likely written between 1400 and 1370 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Joshua provides an overview of the military campaigns to conquer the land area that God had promised. Following the exodus from Egypt and the subsequent forty years of the wilderness wanderings, the newly-formed nation is now poised to enter the Promised Land, conquer the inhabitants, and occupy the territory. The overview that we have here gives abbreviated and selective details of many of the battles and the manner in which the land was not only conquered, but how it was divided into tribal areas.

# **SOME KEY VERSES**

Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the Law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have

good success wherever you go. This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

#### **JOSHUA 1:6-9**

Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

JOSHUA 24:14-15

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The book of Joshua continues the story of the Israelites after the exodus from Egypt. The book chronicles the 20ish years of Joshua's leadership of the people after Moses anointed him at the end of Deuteronomy. The twenty-four chapter divisions of the book of Joshua can be summarized as follows:

- Chapters I-I2: Entering and conquering the Promised Land.
- Chapters 13-22: Instructions for distributing the portions of the Promised Land.
- Chapters 23-24: Joshua's farewell address

### **FORESHADOWINGS**

The story of Rahab the harlot and her great faith in the God of the Israelites gives her a place with those honored for their faith in Hebrews II:31. Hers is a story of God's grace to sinners and salvation by faith alone. Most importantly, by God's grace she was in the messianic line (Matthew I:5).

One of the ceremonial rituals of Joshua 5 finds its perfect fulfillment in the New Testament. Verses I-9 describe God's commandment that those who were born in the wilderness were to be circumcised when they came into the Promised Land. By so doing, God "rolled away the reproach of Egypt" from them, meaning that He cleansed them from the sins of their former life. Colossians 2:IO-I2 describes believers as having been circumcised in their hearts by Christ Himself, by whom we have put off the sinful nature of our former lives without Christ.

God established cities of refuge so that those who accidentally killed someone could live there without fear of retribution. Christ is our refuge to whom we "have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us" (Hebrews 6:18).

The book of Joshua has an overriding theological theme of rest. The Israelites, after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, finally entered the rest God had prepared for them in the land of Canaan. The writer of Hebrews uses this incident as a warning to us not to let unbelief keep us from entering into God's rest in Christ (Hebrews 3:7-12).

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

One of the key verses of the book of Joshua is 1:8 "Do not let this book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it." The Old Testament is replete with stories of how the people "forgot" God and His Word and suffered terrible consequences. For the Christian, the Word of God is our lifeblood. If we neglect it, our lives will suffer accordingly. But if we take to heart the principle of verse 1:8, we will be complete and able to be of use in God's kingdom (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and we will find that God's promises in Joshua 1:8-9 will be ours as well.

Joshua is a prime example of the benefits of a worthy mentor. For years he remained close to Moses. He watched Moses as he followed God in an almost flawless manner. He learned to pray in a personal way from Moses. He learned how to obey through the example of Moses. Joshua apparently also learned from the negative example that cost Moses the joy of actually entering the Promised Land. If you are alive, you are a mentor. Someone, somewhere, is watching you. Some younger person or someone that you are influencing is seeing how you live and how you react. Someone is learn-

ing from you. Someone will follow your example. Mentoring is far more than the words that are spoken by the mentor. His or her entire life is on display.

### VII

# **JUDGES**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The book of Judges does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that the Prophet Samuel was the author of Judges. Internal evidence indicates that the author of Judges lived shortly after the period of the judges. Samuel fits this qualification.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Judges was likely written between 1045 and 1000 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Judges can be divided into two sections: I) Chapters I-16 which gives an account of the wars of deliverance beginning with the Israelites' defeat of the Canaanites and ending with the defeat of the Philistines and the death of Samson; 2) Chapters I7-2I which is referred to as an appendix and does not relate to the previous chapters. These chapters are noted as a time "when there was no king in Israel" (Judges I7:6; 18:I; 19:I; 21:25). The book of Ruth was originally a part of Judges, but in AD 450 it was removed to become a book of its own.

#### **SOME KEY VERSES**

Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so. Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved

them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. But whenever the judge died, they turned back and were more corrupt than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them. They did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways.

#### JUDGES 2:16-19

And the people of Israel said to the Lord, "We have sinned; do to us whatever seems good to you. Only please deliver us this day."

#### **JUDGES 10:15**

In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

**JUDGES 21:25** 

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The book of Judges is a tragic account of how Yahweh [God] was taken for granted by His children year after year, century after century. Judges is a sad contrast to the book of Joshua which chronicles the blessings God bestowed on the Israelites for their obedience in conquering the land. In Judges, they were disobedient and idolatrous, leading to their many defeats. Yet God has never failed to open His arms in love to His people whenever they repent from their wicked ways and call upon His name (Judges 2:18). Through the 15 judges of Israel, God honored His promise to Abraham to protect and bless his offspring (Genesis 12:2-3).

After the death of Joshua and his contemporaries, the Israelites returned to serving Baal and Ashtaroth. God allowed the Israelites to suffer the consequences of worshiping false gods. It was then that the people of God would cry out to Yahweh for help. God sent His children judges to lead them in righteous living. But time after time they would turn their backs on God and return to their lives of wickedness. However, keeping His part of the covenant with Abraham, God would save His people from their oppressors throughout the 480-year span of the book of Judges.

Probably the most notable judge was the 12th judge, Samson, who came to lead the Israelites after a 40-year captivity under the rule of the ruthless Philistines. Samson led God's people to victory over the Philistines where he lost his own life after 20 years as judge of Israel.

### **FORESHADOWINGS**

The announcement to Samson's mother that she would bear a son to lead Israel is a foreshadowing of the announcement to Mary of the birth of the Messiah. God sent His Angel to both women and told them they would "conceive and bear a son" (Judges I3:7; Luke I:3I) who would lead God's people.

God's compassionate delivery of His people despite their sin and rejection of Him presents a picture of Christ on the cross. Jesus died to deliver His people—all who would ever believe in Him—from their sin. Although most of those who followed Him during His ministry would eventually fall away and reject Him, still He remained faithful to His promise and went to the cross to die for us.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Disobedience always brings judgment. The Israelites present a perfect example of what we are not to do. Instead of learning from experience that God will always punish rebellion against Him, they continued to disobey and suffer God's displeasure and discipline. If we continue in disobedience, we invite God's discipline, not because He enjoys our suffering, but "because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son" (Hebrews 12:6).

The book of Judges is a testament to God's faithfulness. Even "if we are faithless, He will remain faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13). Though we may be unfaithful to Him, as the Israelites were, still He is faithful to save us and preserve us (I Thessalonians 5:24) and to forgive us when we seek forgiveness (I John I:9). "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (I Corinthians I:8-9).

### VIII

# RUTH

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The book of Ruth does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that the book of Ruth was written by the Prophet Samuel.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The exact date Ruth was written is uncertain, but the prevalent view is a sometime between IOII and 93I BC.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Ruth was written to the Israelites. It teaches that genuine love at times may require uncompromising sacrifice. Regardless of our lot in life, we can live according to the precepts of God. Genuine love and kindness will be rewarded. God abundantly blesses those who seek to live obedient lives. Obedient living does not allow for "accidents" in God's plan. God extends mercy to the merciful.

#### **SOME KEY VERSES**

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God."

**RUTH 1:16** 

He said, "Who are you?" And she answered, "I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer."

#### **RUTH 3:9**

And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

**RUTH 4:17** 

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The setting for Ruth begins in the heathen country of Moab, a region northeast of the Dead Sea, but then moves to Bethlehem. This true account takes place during the dismal days of failure and rebellion of the Israelites, called the period of the judges. A famine forces Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, from their Israelite home to the country of Moab. Elimelech dies and Naomi is left with her two sons, who soon marry two Moabite girls, Orpah and Ruth. Later both of the sons die, and Naomi is left alone with Orpah and Ruth in a strange land. Orpah returns to her parents, but Ruth determines to stay with Naomi as they journey to Bethlehem. This story of love and devotion tells of Ruth's eventual marriage to a wealthy man named Boaz, by whom she bears a son, Obed, who becomes the grandfather of David and the ancestor of Jesus. Obedience brings Ruth into the privileged lineage of Christ.

### **FORESHADOWINGS**

A major theme of the book of Ruth is that of the kinsman-redeemer. Boaz, a relative of Naomi on her husband's side, acted upon his duty as outlined in the Mosaic Law to redeem an impoverished relative from his or her circumstances (Leviticus 25:47-49). This scenario is repeated by Christ, who redeems us, the spiritually impoverished, from the slavery of sin. Our heavenly Father sent His own Son to the cross so that we might become children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ. By being our Redeemer, He makes us His kinsmen.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The sovereignty of our great God is clearly seen in the story of Ruth. He guided her every step of the way to become His child and fulfill His plan for her to become an ancestor of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5). In the same way, we have assurance that God has a plan for each of us. Just as Naomi and Ruth trusted Him to provide for them, so should we.

We see in Ruth an example of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. In addition to being devoted to her family (Ruth 1:15-18; Proverbs 31:10-12) and faithfully dependent upon God (Ruth 2:12; Proverbs 31:30), we see in Ruth a woman of godly speech. Her words are loving, kind, and respectful, both to Naomi and to Boaz. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 "opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the Law of kindness" (v. 26). We could search far and wide to find a woman today as worthy of being our role model as Ruth.

## IX

# 1 SAMUEL

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The author is anonymous. We know that Samuel wrote a book (I Samuel 10:25), and it is very possible that he wrote part of this book as well. Other possible contributors to I Samuel are the prophets/historians Nathan and Gad (I Chronicles 29:29).

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Originally, the books of I and 2 Samuel were one book. The translators of the Septuagint separated them, and we have retained that separation ever since. The events of I Samuel span approximately IOO years, from about IIOO BC to IOOO BC. The events of 2 Samuel cover another 40 years. The date of writing, then, would be sometime after 960 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of I Samuel records the history of Israel in the land of Canaan as they move from the rule of judges to being a unified nation under kings. Samuel emerges as the last judge, and he anoints the first two kings, Saul and David.

### SOME KEY VERSES

But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.

1 SAMUEL 8:6-7

And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God, with which he commanded you. For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you."

#### 1 SAMUEL 13:13-14

And Samuel said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king."

#### 1 SAMUEL 15:22-23

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The book of I Samuel can be neatly divided into two sections: the life of Samuel (chapters I-I2) and the life of Saul (chapters I3-3I).

The book starts with the miraculous birth of Samuel in answer to his mother's earnest prayer. As a child, Samuel lived and served in the temple. God singled him out as a prophet (I Samuel 3:19-21), and the child's first prophecy was one of judgment on the corrupt priests.

The Israelites go to war with their perennial enemies, the Philistines. The Philistines capture the ark of the covenant and are in temporary possession of it, but when the Lord sends judgment, the Philistines return the ark. Samuel calls Israel to repentance (I Samuel 7:3-6) and then to victory over the Philistines.

The people of Israel, wanting to be like other nations, desire a king. Samuel is displeased by their demands, but the Lord tells him that it is not Samuel's leadership they are rejecting, but His own. After warning the people of what having a king

would mean, Samuel anoints a Benjamite named Saul, who is crowned in Mizpah (I Samuel 10:17-25).

Saul enjoys initial success, defeating the Ammonites in battle (chapter II). But then he makes a series of missteps: he presumptuously offers a sacrifice (chapter I3), he makes a foolish vow at the expense of his son Jonathan (chapter I4), and he disobeys the Lord's direct command (chapter I5). As a result of Saul's rebellion, God chooses another to take Saul's place. Meanwhile, God removes His blessing from Saul, and an evil spirit begins goading Saul toward madness (I Samuel I6:14).

Samuel travels to Bethlehem to anoint a youth named David as the next king (chapter 16). Later, David has his famous confrontation with Goliath the Philistine and becomes a national hero (chapter 17). David serves in Saul's court, marries Saul's daughter, and is befriended by Saul's son. Saul himself grows jealous of David's success and popularity, and he attempts to kill David. David flees, and so begins an extraordinary period of adventure, intrigue, and romance. With supernatural aid, David narrowly but consistently eludes the bloodthirsty Saul (chapters 19-26). Through it all, David maintains his integrity and his friendship with Jonathan.

Near the end of the book, Samuel has died, and Saul is a lost man. On the eve of a battle with Philistia, Saul seeks for answers. Having rejected God, he finds no help from heaven, and he seeks counsel from a medium instead. During the seance, Samuel's spirit rises from the dead to give one last prophecy: Saul would die in battle the next day. The prophecy is fulfilled; Saul's three sons, including Jonathan, fall in battle, and Saul commits suicide.

### **FORESHADOWINGS**

The prayer of Hannah in I Samuel 2:I-IO makes several prophetic references to Christ. She extols God as her Rock (v. 2), and we know from the gospel accounts that Jesus is the Rock upon whom we should build our spiritual houses. Paul refers to Jesus as the "rock of offense" to the Jews (Romans 9:33). Christ is called the "spiritual Rock" who provided spiritual drink to the Israelites in the wilderness just as He provides "living water" to our souls (I Corinthians IO:4; John 4:IO). Hannah's prayer also makes reference to the Lord who will judge the ends of the earth (v. 2:IO), while Matthew 25:3I-32 refers to Jesus as the Son of Man who will come in glory to judge everyone.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The tragic story of Saul is a study in wasted opportunity. Here was a man who had it all—honor, authority, riches, good looks, and more. Yet he died in despair, terrified of his enemies and knowing he had failed his nation, his family, and his God.

Saul made the mistake of thinking he could please God through disobedience. Like many today, he believed that a sensible motive will compensate for bad behavior. Perhaps his power went to his head, and he began to think he was above the rules. Somehow he developed a low opinion of God's commands and a high opinion of himself. Even when confronted with his wrongdoing, he attempted to vindicate himself, and that's when God rejected him (I Samuel 15:16-28).

Saul's problem is one we all face—a problem of the heart. Obedience to God's will is necessary for success, and if we rebel against Him in pride, we set ourselves up for loss.

David, on the other hand, did not seem like much at first. Even Samuel was tempted to overlook him (I Samuel I6:6-7). But God sees the heart and saw in David a man after His own heart (I Samuel I3:I4). The humility and integrity of David, coupled with his boldness for the Lord and his commitment to prayer, set a good example for all of us.

X

# 2 SAMUEL

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The book of 2 Samuel does not identify its author. It could not be the Prophet Samuel, since he died in I Samuel. Possible writers include Nathan and Gad (see I Chronicles 29:29).

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Originally, the books of I and 2 Samuel were one book. The translators of the Septuagint separated them, and we have retained that separation ever since. The events of I Samuel span approximately IOO years, from about IIOO BC to IOOO BC. The events of 2 Samuel cover another 40 years. The date of writing, then, would be sometime after 960 BC.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of 2 Samuel is the record of King David's reign. This book places the Davidic Covenant in its historical context.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.

#### **2 SAMUEL 7:16**

The king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, "O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

2 SAMUEL 19:4

He said, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies."

2 SAMUEL 22:2-4

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The book of 2 Samuel can be divided into two main sections—David's triumphs (chapters I-IO) and David's troubles (chapters II-2O). The last part of the book (chapters 2I-24) is a non-chronological appendix which contains further details of David's reign.

The book begins with David receiving news of the death of Saul and his sons. He proclaims a time of mourning. Soon afterward, David is crowned king over Judah, while Ish-bosheth, one of Saul's surviving sons, is crowned king over Israel (chapter 2). A civil war follows, but Ish-bosheth is murdered, and the Israelites ask David to reign over them as well (chapters 4-5).

David moves the country's capital from Hebron to Jerusalem and later moves the Ark of the Covenant (chapters 5-6). David's plan to build a temple in Jerusalem is vetoed by God, who then promises David the following things: I) David would have a son to rule after him; 2) David's son would build the temple; 3) the throne occupied by David's lineage would be established forever; and 4) God would never take His mercy from David's house (2 Samuel 7:4-16).

David leads Israel to victory over many of the enemy nations which surrounded them. He also shows kindness to the family of Jonathan by taking in Mephibosheth, Jonathan's crippled son (chapters 8-IO).

Then David falls. He lusts for a beautiful woman named Bathsheba, commits adultery with her, and then has her husband murdered (chapter II). When Nathan the prophet confronts David with his sin, David confesses, and God graciously forgives. However, the Lord tells David that trouble would arise from within his own household.

Trouble does come when David's firstborn son, Amnon, rapes his half-sister, Tamar. In retaliation, Tamar's brother Absalom kills Amnon. Absalom then flees Jerusalem rather than face his father's anger. Later, Absalom leads a revolt against David, and some of David's former associates join the rebellion (chapters 15-16). David is forced out of Jerusalem, and Absalom sets himself up as king for a short time. The usurper is overthrown, however, and—against David's wishes—is killed. David mourns his fallen son.

A general feeling of unrest plagues the remainder of David's reign. The men of Israel threaten to split from Judah, and David must suppress another uprising (chapter 20).

The book's appendix includes information concerning a three-year famine in the land (chapter 21), a song of David (chapter 22), a record of the exploits of David's bravest warriors (chapter 23), and David's sinful census and the ensuing plague (chapter 24).

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

The Lord Jesus Christ is seen primarily in two parts of 2 Samuel. First, the Davidic Covenant as outlined in 2 Samuel 7:16: "your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever" and reiterated in Luke 1:31-33 in the words of the angel who appeared to Mary to announce Jesus' birth to her: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Christ is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant; He is the Son of God in the line of David who will reign forever.

Second, Jesus is seen in the song of David at the end of his life (2 Samuel 22:2-51). He sings of his rock, fortress and deliverer, his refuge and savior. Jesus is our Rock (I Corinthians IO:4; I Peter 2:7-9), the Deliverer of Israel (Romans II:25-27), the fortress to whom we "have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18 KJV), and our only Savior (Luke 2:II; 2 Timothy I:IO).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Anyone can fall. Even a man like David, who truly desired to follow God and who was richly blessed by God, was susceptible to temptation. David's sin with Bathsheba should be a warning to all of us to guard our hearts, our eyes and our minds. Pride over our spiritual maturity and our ability to withstand temptation in our own strength is the first step to a downfall (I Corinthians IO:12).

God is gracious to forgive even the most heinous sins when we truly repent. However, healing the wound caused by sin does not always erase the scar. Sin has natural consequences, and even after he was forgiven, David reaped what he had sown. His son from the illicit union with another man's wife was taken from him (2 Samuel 12:14-24) and David suffered the misery of a break in his loving relationship with his heavenly Father (Psalms 32 and 51). How much better to avoid sin in the first place, rather than having to seek forgiveness later!

## XI

# 1 KINGS

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The book of I Kings does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that it was written by the Prophet Jeremiah.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of I Kings was likely written between 560 and 540 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

This book is the sequel to I and 2 Samuel and begins by tracing Solomon's rise to kingship after the death of David. The story begins with a united kingdom, but ends in a nation divided into two kingdoms, known as Judah and Israel. I and 2 Kings are combined into one book in the Hebrew Bible.

#### **SOME KEY VERSES**

As I swore to you by the Lord, the God of Israel, saying, 'Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,' even so will I do this day.

#### 1 KINGS 1:30

And the Lord said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time."

#### 1 KINGS 9:3

And when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, "What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, David." So Israel went to their tents.

#### 1 KINGS 12:16

So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

#### 1 KINGS 12:28

Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."

1 KINGS 17:1

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The book of I Kings starts with Solomon and ends with Elijah. The difference between the two gives you an idea as to what lies between. Solomon was born after a palace scandal between David and Bathsheba. Like his father, he had a weakness for women that would bring him down. Solomon did well at first, praying for wisdom and building a temple to God that took seven years to construct. But then he spent thirteen years building a palace for himself. His accumulation of many wives led him to worship their idols and away from God. After Solomon's death, Israel was ruled by a series of kings, most of whom were evil and idolatrous. The nation fell further away from God, and even the preaching of Elijah could not bring them back. Among the most evil kings were Ahab and his queen, Jezebel, who brought the worship of Baal to new heights in Israel. Elijah tried to turn the Israelites back to the worship of Yahweh, challenging the idolatrous priests of Baal to a showdown with God on Mount Carmel. Of course, God won. This made Queen Jezebel angry (to say the least). She ordered Elijah's death, so he ran away and hid in the wilderness. Depressed and exhausted, he said, "take away my life" (I Kings 19:4). But God sent food and encouragement to the prophet and spoke to him in "a low whisper" and in the process saved his life for further work (I Kings 19:12).

### **FORESHADOWINGS**

The Temple in Jerusalem, where God's Spirit would dwell in the Holy of Holies, foreshadows believers in Christ in whom the Holy Spirit resides from the moment of our salvation. Just as the Israelites were to forsake idolatry, we are to put away anything that separates us from God. We are His people, the very temple of the living God. 2 Corinthians 6:16 tells us, "what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Elijah the prophet was for forerunner of Christ and the Apostles of the New Testament. God enabled Elijah to do miraculous things in order to prove that he was truly a man of God. He raised from the dead the son of the widow of Zarephath, causing her to exclaim, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth" (I Kings 17:24). In the same way, men of God who spoke His words through His power are evident in the New Testament. Not only did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead, but He also raised the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14-15) and Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:52-56). The Apostle Peter raised Dorcas (Acts 9:40) and Paul raised Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The book of I Kings has many lessons for believers. We see a warning about the company we keep, and especially in regard to close associations and marriage. The kings of Israel who, like Solomon, married foreign women exposed themselves and the people they ruled to evil. As believers in Christ, we must be very careful about whom we choose as friends, business associates, and spouses. "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals'" (I Corinthians 15:33).

Elijah's experience in the wilderness also teaches a valuable lesson. After his incredible victory over the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, his joy turned to sorrow when he was pursued by Jezebel and fled for his life. Such "mountaintop" experiences are often followed by a letdown and the depression and discouragement that can follow. We have to be on guard for this type of experience in the Christian life. But our God is faithful and will never leave or forsake us. The quiet, gentle sound that encouraged Elijah will encourage us.

## XII

# 2 KINGS

### WHO WROTE IT?

The book of 2 Kings doesn't name its author. The tradition is that the prophet Jeremiah was the author of both I and 2 Kings.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of 2 Kings, along with I Kings, was likely written between 560 and 540 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of 2 Kings is a sequel to I Kings. It continues the story of the kings over the divided kingdom (Israel and Judah). The book of 2 Kings concludes with the final overthrow and deportation of the people of Israel and Judah to Assyria and Babylon, respectively.

## **SOME KEY VERSES**

And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced.

2 KINGS 17:7-8

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

#### 2 KINGS 22:1-2

And the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldeans and bands of the Syrians and bands of the Moabites and bands of the Ammonites, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by his servants the prophets.

#### 2 KINGS 24:2

Yet the Lord was not willing to destroy Judah, for the sake of David his servant, since he promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever.

2 KINGS 8:19

## A QUICK SUMMARY

2 Kings depicts the downfall of the divided kingdom. Prophets continue to warn the people that the judgment of God is at hand, but they will not repent. The kingdom of Israel is repeatedly ruled by wicked kings, and, even though a few of Judah's kings are good, the majority of them lead the people away from worship of the Lord. These few good rulers, along with God's prophets, cannot stop the nation's decline. The northern kingdom of Israel is eventually destroyed by the Assyrians, and about 136 years later the southern kingdom of Judah is destroyed by the Babylonians.

There are three prominent themes present in 2 Kings. First, the Lord will judge His people when they disobey and turn their backs on Him. The Israelites' unfaithfulness was reflected in the evil idolatry of the kings and resulted in God exercising His righteous wrath against their rebellion. Second, the word of the true prophets of God always comes to pass. Because the Lord always keeps His word, so too are the words of His prophets always true. Third, the Lord is faithful. He remembered His promise

to David (2 Samuel 7:10-13), and, despite the disobedience of the people and the evil kings who ruled them, the Lord did not bring David's family to an end.

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

Jesus uses the stories of the widow of Zarephath from I Kings and Naaman in 2 Kings to illustrate the great truth of God's compassion toward those the Jews deemed unworthy of God's grace—the poor, the weak, the oppressed, tax collectors, Samaritans, Gentiles. By citing the examples of a poor widow and a leper, Jesus showed Himself to be the Great Physician who heals and ministers to those in the greatest need of divine sovereign grace. This same truth was the basis of the mystery of the body of Christ, His Church, which would be drawn from all levels of society, male and female, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 3:1-6).

Many of the miracles of Elisha foreshadowed those of Jesus Himself. Elisha raised the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:34-35), healed Naaman of leprosy (2 Kings 5:I-19), and multiplied loaves of bread to feed a hundred people with some left over (2 Kings 4:42-44).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

God hates sin and He will not allow it to continue indefinitely. If we belong to Him, we can expect His discipline when we disobey Him. A loving Father corrects His children for their benefit and to prove that they indeed belong to Him. God may at times use unbelievers to bring correction to His people, and He gives us warning before delivering judgment. As Christians, we have His Word to guide us and warn us when we go astray from His path. Like the prophets of old, His Word is trustworthy and always speaks truth. God's faithfulness to His people will never fail, even when we do.

The stories of the widow and the leper are examples for us in regard to the Body of Christ. Just as Elisha had pity on these from the lowest levels of society, we are to welcome all who belong to Christ into our churches. God "shows no partiality" (Acts IO:34), and neither should we.

## XIII

# 1 CHRONICLES

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The book of I Chronicles does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that I and 2 Chronicles were written by Ezra.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of I Chronicles was likely written between 450 and 425 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The books of I & 2 Chronicles cover mostly the same information as I & 2 Samuel and I & 2 Kings. I & 2 Chronicles focus more on the priestly aspect of the time period. I Chronicles was written after the exile to help those returning to Israel understand how to worship God. The history focused on the southern kingdom—the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi. These tribes tended to be more faithful to God.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

Then all Israel gathered together to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and flesh. In times past, even when Saul was king, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the Lord your God said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over my people Israel.'"

#### 1 CHRONICLES 11:1-2

Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is very great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man."

#### 1 CHRONICLES 21:13

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all.

1 CHRONICLES 29:11

## A QUICK SUMMARY

The first 9 chapters of I Chronicles are dedicated to lists and genealogies. Further lists and genealogies are scattered throughout the rest of I Chronicles. In between, I Chronicles records David's ascension to the throne and his actions thereafter. The book concludes with David's son Solomon becoming King of Israel. Briefly outlined, I Chronicles is as follows:

- Chapters 1:1-9:23 Selective Genealogies
- Chapters 9:24-12:40 David's ascent
- Chapters 13:1-20:30 -David's reign

#### **FORESHADOWINGS**

In David's song of thanksgiving to God in I Chronicles I6:33, he refers to the time when God will come "to judge the earth." This foreshadows Matthew 25, in which Jesus describes the time when He will come to judge the earth. Through the parables of the ten virgins and the talents, He warns that those who are found without the blood of Christ covering their sins will be cast into "outer darkness." He encourages His people to be ready because when He comes, He will separate the sheep from the goats in judgment.

Part of the Davidic Covenant which God reiterates in chapter 17 refers to the future Messiah who would be a descendant of David. Verses 13-14 describe the Son who will be established in God's house and whose throne will be established forever. This can only refer to Jesus Christ.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Genealogies such as the ones in I Chronicles may seem dry to us, but they remind us that God knows each of His children personally, even down to the number of hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:30). We can take comfort in the fact that who we are and what we do is written forever in God's mind. If we belong to Christ, our names are written forever in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 13:8).

God is faithful to His people and keeps His promises. In the book of I Chronicles, we see the fulfillment of God's promise to David when he is made king over all Israel (I Chronicles II:I-3). We can be sure that His promises to us will be fulfilled as well. He has promised blessings to those who follow Him, who come to Christ in repentance, and who obey His Word.

Obedience brings blessing; disobedience brings judgment. I Chronicles, as well as I & 2 Samuel and I & 2 Kings, is a chronicle of the pattern of sin, repentance, forgiveness, and restoration of the nation of Israel. In the same way, God is patient with us and forgives our sin when we come to Him in true repentance (I John I:9). We can take comfort in the fact that He hears our prayer of sorrow, forgives our sin, restores us to fellowship with Him, and sets us on the path to joy.

#### XIV

# 2 CHRONICLES

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The book of 2 Chronicles does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that I and 2 Chronicles were written by Ezra.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of 2 Chronicles was likely written between 450 and 425 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

I & 2 Chronicles cover mostly the same information as I & 2 Samuel and I & 2 Kings. The books of I & 2 Chronicles focus more on the priestly aspect of the time period. 2 Chronicles is essentially an evaluation of the nation's religious history.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

Now Solomon purposed to build a temple for the name of the Lord, and a royal palace for himself.

#### 2 CHRONICIES 2:1

Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them.

#### 2 CHRONICLES 29:1-3

All the officers of the priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted the house of the Lord that he had made holy in Jerusalem.

#### 2 CHRONICLES 36:14

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him. Let him go up.'

2 CHRONICLES 36:23

#### A QUICK SUMMARY

The book of 2 Chronicles records the history of the southern kingdom of Judah, from the reign of Solomon to the conclusion of the Babylonian exile. The decline of Judah is disappointing, but emphasis is given to the spiritual reformers who zealously seek to turn the people back to God. Little is said about the bad kings or of the failures of good kings; only goodness is stressed. Since 2 Chronicles takes a priestly perspective, the northern kingdom of Israel is rarely mentioned because of their false worship and refusal to acknowledge the Temple of Jerusalem. 2 Chronicles concludes with the final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

#### **FORESHADOWINGS**

As with all references to kings and temples in the Old Testament, we see in them a reflection of the true King of Kings—Jesus Christ—and of the temple of the Holy Spirit—His people. Even the best of the kings of Israel had the faults of all sinful men and led the people imperfectly. But when the King of Kings comes to live and reign on the earth in the millennium, He will establish Himself on the throne of all the earth as the rightful heir of David. Only then will we have a perfect King who will reign in righteousness and holiness, something the best of Israel's kings could only dream of.

Similarly, the great temple built by Solomon was not designed to last forever. Just I5O years later, it was in need of repair from decay and defacing by future generations who turned back to idolatry (2 Kings I2). But the temple of the Holy Spirit—those who belong to Christ—will live forever. We who belong to Jesus are that temple, made not by hands but by the will of God (John I:I2-I3). The Spirit who lives within us will never depart from us and will deliver us safely into the hands of God one day (Ephesians I:I3; 4:30). No earthly temple contains that promise.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The reader of the Chronicles is invited to evaluate each generation from the past and discern why each was blessed for their obedience or punished for their wickedness. But we are also to compare the plight of these generations to our own, both corporately and individually. If we or our nation or our church is experiencing hardships, it is to our benefit to compare our beliefs and how we act upon those beliefs with the experiences of the Israelites under the various kings. God hates sin and will not tolerate it. But if the Chronicles teach us anything, it is that God desires to forgive and heal those who will humbly pray and repent (I John I:9).

If you could have anything you wished from God, what would you ask for? Fabulous wealth? Perfect health for you and your loved ones? The power over life and death? Amazing to think about it, isn't it? But more amazing is that God made such an offer to Solomon and he chose none of these things. What he asked for was wisdom and knowledge to complete the task God had assigned to him and to do it well. The lesson for us is that God has given each of us a commission to fulfill and the greatest blessing we can seek from God is the ability to carry out His will for our lives. For that, we need the "wisdom from above" (James 3:17) to discern His will, as well as the understanding and intimate knowledge of Him in order to motivate us to be Christ-like in both deed and attitude (James 3:13).

#### XV

# **EZRA**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

Ezra doesn't specifically name its author. The tradition is that the prophet Ezra wrote it. It's interesting to note that once Ezra appears on the scene in chapter 7, the author switches from writing in the third person to first person. This would also lend credibility to Ezra being the author.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Ezra was likely written between 460 and 440 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Ezra is devoted to events occurring in the land of Israel at the time of the return from the Babylonian captivity and subsequent years, covering a period of approximately one century, beginning in 538 BC. The emphasis in Ezra is on the rebuilding of the Temple. The book contains extensive genealogical records, principally for the purpose of establishing the claims to the priesthood on the part of the descendants of Aaron.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel."

**EZRA 3:11** 

This Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given, and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was on him.

**EZRA 7:6** 

#### **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The book may be divided as follows:

- Chapters I-6—The First Return under Zerubbabel, and the Building of the Second Temple
- Chapters 7-10—The Ministry of Ezra

Since well over half a century elapsed between chapters 6 and 7, the characters of the first part of the book had died by the time Ezra began his ministry in Jerusalem. Ezra is the one person who is prominent in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Both books end with prayers of confession (Ezra 9; Nehemiah 9) and a subsequent separation of the people from the sinful practices into which they had fallen. Some concept of the nature of the encouraging messages of Haggai and Zechariah, who are introduced in this narrative (Ezra 5:I), may be seen in the prophetic books that bear their names.

Ezra covers the return from captivity to rebuild the Temple up to the decree of Artaxerxes, the event covered at the beginning of the book of Nehemiah. Haggai was the main prophet in the day of Ezra, and Zechariah was the prophet in the day of Nehemiah.

#### **FORESHADOWINGS**

We see in the book of Ezra a continuation of the biblical theme of the remnant. Whenever disaster or judgment falls, God always saves a tiny remnant for Himself: Noah and his family from the destruction of the flood, Lot's family from Sodom and Gomorrah, the 7000 prophets preserved in Israel despite the persecution of Ahab and Jezebel. When the Israelites were taken into captivity in Egypt, God delivered His remnant and took them to the Promised Land. Some fifty thousand people return to the land of Judea in Ezra 2:64-67, and yet, as they compare themselves with the numbers in Israel during its prosperous days under King David, their comment is, "we are left a remnant that has escaped" (Ezra 9:15). The remnant theme is

carried into the New Testament where Paul tells us that "at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace" (Romans II:5). Although most people of Jesus' day rejected Him, there remained a set of people whom God had reserved and preserved in His Son, and in the covenant of His grace. Throughout all generations since Christ, there is the remnant of the faithful whose feet are on the narrow road that leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:I3-I4). This remnant will be preserved through the power of the Holy Spirit who has sealed them and who will deliver them safely at the last day (2 Corinthians I:22; Ephesians 4:30).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The book of Ezra is a chronicle of hope and restoration. For the Christian whose life is scarred by sin and rebellion against God, there is great hope that ours is a God of forgiveness, a God who will not turn His back on us when we seek Him in repentance and brokenness (I John I:9). The return of the Israelites to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple are repeated in the life of every Christian who returns from the captivity of sin and rebellion against God and finds in Him a loving welcome home. No matter how long we have been away, He is ready to forgive us and receive us back into His family. He is willing to show us how to rebuild our lives and resurrect our hearts, wherein is the temple of the Holy Spirit. As with the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, God superintends the work of renovating and rededicating our lives to His service.

The opposition of the adversaries of God to the rebuilding of the temple displays a pattern that is typical of that of the enemy of our souls. Satan uses those who would appear to be in sync with God's purposes to deceive us and attempt to thwart God's plans. Ezra 4:2 describes the deceptive speech of those who claim to worship Christ but whose real intent is to tear down, not to build up. We are to be on guard against such deceivers, respond to them as the Israelites did, and refuse to be fooled by their smooth words and false professions of faith.

#### XVI

# **NEHEMIAH**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

Nehemiah does not specifically name its author, but both Jewish and Christian traditions recognize Ezra as the author. This is based on the fact that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Nehemiah was likely written between 445 and 420 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Nehemiah, one of the history books of the Bible, continues the story of Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

#### **NEHEMIAH 1:3**

O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

#### **NEHEMIAH 1:11**

So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

**NEHEMIAH 6:15-16** 

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Nehemiah was a Hebrew in Persia when the word reached him that the Temple in Jerusalem was being reconstructed. He grew anxious knowing there was no wall to protect the city. Nehemiah invited God to use him to save the city. God answered his prayer by softening the heart of the Persian king, Artaxerxes, who gave not only his blessing, but also supplies to be used in the project. Nehemiah is given permission by the king to return to Jerusalem, where he is made governor.

In spite of opposition and accusations, the wall was built and the enemies silenced. The people, inspired by Nehemiah, give tithes of much money, supplies, and manpower to complete the wall in a remarkable 52 days. But, Nehemiah leaves for a while and everyone falls back into their sinful habits. After 12 years he returned to find the walls strong but the people weak. He set about the task of teaching the people morality and he didn't mince words. "And I confronted them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair" (Nehemiah 13:25). He reestablishes true worship through prayer and by encouraging the people to revival by reading and adhering to the Word of God.

#### **FORESHADOWINGS**

Nehemiah was a man of prayer and he prayed passionately for his people (Nehemiah I). His zealous intercession for God's people foreshadows our great Intercessor, Jesus Christ, who prayed fervently for His people in His high-priestly prayer in John 17. Both Nehemiah and Jesus had a burning love for God's people which they poured out in prayer to God, interceding for them before the throne.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Nehemiah led the Israelites into a respect and love for the text of Scripture. Nehemiah, because of his love for God and his desire to see God honored and glorified, led the Israelites towards the faith and obedience God had desired for them for so long. In the same way, Christians are to love and revere the truths of Scripture, commit them to memory, meditate on them day and night, and turn to them for the fulfillment of every spiritual need. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that "all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." If we expect to experience the spiritual revival of the Israelites (Nehemiah 8:1-8), we must begin with God's Word.

Each of us should have genuine compassion for others who have spiritual or physical hurts. To feel compassion, yet do nothing to help, is unfounded biblically. At times we may have to give up our own comfort in order to minister properly to others. We must totally believe in a cause before we will give our time or money to it with the right heart. When we allow God to minister through us, even unbelievers will know it is God's work.

#### XVII

# **ESTHER**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The book of Esther does not specifically name its author. The most popular traditions are Mordecai (a major character in Esther), Ezra, and Nehemiah (who would have been familiar with Persian customs).

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Esther was likely written between 460 and 350 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The purpose of Esther is to display the providence of God, especially in regard to His chosen people, Israel. The book of Esther records the institution of the Feast of Purim and the obligation of its perpetual observation. Esther was read at the Feast of Purim to commemorate the great deliverance of the Jewish nation brought about by God through Esther. Jews today still read Esther during Purim.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

When the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther was winning favor in the eyes of all who saw her.

#### ESTHER 2:15

For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

#### FSTHFR 4:14

If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not overcome him but will surely fall before him.

#### **ESTHER 6:13**

Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request.

#### ESTHER 7:3

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The book of Esther can be divided into three main sections.

- Esther 1:1-2:18 Esther replaces Vashti
- Esther 2:19-7:10 Mordecai overcomes Haman
- Esther 8:1-10:3 Israel survives Haman's attempt to destroy them

The noble Esther risked her own death as she realized what was at stake. She willingly did what could have been a deadly maneuver and took on the second-in-command of her husband's kingdom, Haman. She proved a wise and most worthy opponent, all the while remaining humble and respectful of the position of her husband-king.

Esther's story is much like the story of Joseph in Genesis 41. Both stories involve foreign monarchs who control the destiny of the Jews. Both accounts show the heroism of Israelite individuals who provide the means for the salvation of their people and nation. The hand of God is evident. What appears to be a bad situation is very much under the control of the Almighty God, who ultimately has the good of the people at heart. At the center of this story is the ongoing division between the Jews and the Amalakites, which was recorded to have begun in Exodus. Haman's goal is the final effort recorded in the Old Testament period of the complete eradication of

the Jews. His plans eventually end up with his own demise, and the elevation of his enemy Mordecai to his own position, as well as the salvation of the Jews.

Feasting is a major theme of this book: there are ten recorded banquets, and many of the events were planned, plotted, or exposed at these banquets. Although the name of God is never mentioned in this book, it is apparent that the Jews of Susa sought His intervention when they fasted and prayed for three days (Esther 4:16). In spite of the fact that the Law allowing their destruction was written according to the Laws of the Medes and Persians, rendering it unchangeable, the way was cleared for their prayers to be answered. Esther risked her life by going not once uninvited before the king but twice (Esther 4:I-2; 8:3). She was not content with the destruction of Haman; she was intent on saving her people. The institution of the Feast of Purim is written and preserved for all to see and is still observed today. God's chosen people, without any direct mention of His name, were granted a stay of execution through the wisdom and humility of Esther.

#### **FORESHADOWINGS**

In Esther, we are given a behind-the-scenes look at the ongoing struggle of Satan against the purposes of God and especially against His promised Messiah. The entrance of Christ into the human race was predicated upon the existence of the Jewish race. Just as Haman plotted against the Jews in order to destroy them, Satan has set himself against Christ and God's people. Just as Haman is defeated on the gallows he built for Mordecai, Christ use the very weapon that His enemy devised to destroy Him and His spiritual seed. For the cross, by which Satan planned to destroy the Messiah, was the very means through which Christ "by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him" (Colossians 2:14-15). Just as Haman was hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai, the devil was crushed by the cross he raised to destroy Christ.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Esther shows the choice we make between seeing the hand of God in our circumstances in life and seeing things as merely coincidence. God is the sovereign Ruler of the universe and we can be assured that His plans will not be moved by the actions

of mere evil men. Although His name is not mentioned in the book, His providential care for His people, both individuals and the nation, is evident throughout. For instance, we cannot fail to see the Almighty exerting influence over King Xerxes's timely insomnia.

Esther proved to have a godly and teachable spirit that also showed great strength and willing obedience. Esther's humility was markedly different from those around her, and this caused her to be elevated into the position of queen. She shows us that remaining respectful and humble, even in difficult—if not humanly impossible—circumstances, often sets us up to be the vessel of untold blessing for both ourselves and others. We would do well to emulate her godly attitudes in all areas of life, but especially in trials. Not once is there a complaint or bad attitude exposed in the writing. Many times we read she won the "favor" of those around her. Such favor is what ultimately saved her people. We can be granted such favor as we accept even unfair persecution and follow Esther's example of maintaining a positive attitude, coupled with humility and the determination to lean on God.



Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon



# HOW DOES THIS TYPE OF LITERATURE FIT INTO THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE?

Wisdom literature instructs in many ways. Job shows us that God is active in areas and realms beyond our understanding. The high-highs of praise and low-lows of lament found in the Psalms demonstrate that we can respond to God's character and actions just as we are, even if that may be emotional. The Proverbs offer rich insight into how the world is ordered and how the wise ought to operate in a fallen world. Ecclesiastes forces us to ponder the purpose of life and concludes that meaning can't ultimately be found apart from God in things that are "under the sun." In the Song of Solomon's portrait of love between a man and woman, we see that human love is a gift and important for understanding God's love people as well.

# HOW DO WE READ THE WISDOM WRITINGS NORMALLY?

When reading wisdom literature, it is helpful to ask questions of genre (style of writing), context, and the author's intent as you read. For instance, you could ask:

- Is the passage giving a command to obey or an observation of how things are? Is that command universal or for a specific person or group of people?
- Is the biblical author relaying principles to live by or concrete promises to encourage?
- What is the genre and what can be accomplished with it? For instance, how might the symbolism and imagery of the Psalms lend itself to our imagination and memory?

# HOW DOES THIS PART OF THE BIBLE POINT TO JESUS?

As a better Job, Jesus suffered as a truly innocent person, yet walked faithfully with God (I Peter 3:18). Jesus not only quoted many Psalms, He also embodied their spirit with His intimate and personal relationship with God the Father. Jesus was also wisdom personified, living a perfect life in order to redeem others and share His own resources of wisdom and ultimate flourishing (I Corinthians I:30). Since Christ offers opportunity to have relationship with our Creator (which is the only way we can live "above the sun," as it were), meaning, purpose, and direction in life can be found in Him. Jesus embodied the sort self-giving love that seeks to overcome and obstacle to pursue and maintain robust relationship.

# HOW DO THE WISDOM WRITINGS FIT INTO OUR LIVES TODAY?

The wisdom writings in the Old Testament help us answer this question, "How do I live wisely in God's good world?" These texts assume that God is constant-accessible by faith; and yet these texts also assume and recognize human evil. Each book offers unique insight into what it means to live wisely. Consider Job, a man who God personally recognizes as "upright" and "blameless." Nevertheless, Job undergoes tragic loss and unbearable heartache in one of the most complex and frustrating accounts in the Bible. But don't forget this obvious truth: Job is in the Bible! The Bible does not shy away from human suffering but helps us see that our problems actually matter to God. Wisdom invites us to hear God's words for all of His people in any and every season.

#### **XVIII**

# **JOB**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The book of Job doesn't specifically name its author. The most likely candidates are Job, Elihu, Moses, and Solomon.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The date of the authorship of Job would be determined by the author of the book of Job. If Moses was the author, the date would be around 1440 BC. If Solomon was the author, the date would be around 950 BC. Because we don't know the author, we can't know the date of writing.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Job helps us understand the following: Satan can't bring financial and physical destruction upon us unless it's by God's permission. God has power over what Satan can and can't do. It is beyond our human ability to understand the "why's" behind all the suffering in the world. The wicked will receive their just dues. We cannot always blame suffering and sin on our lifestyles. Suffering may sometimes be allowed in our lives to purify, test, teach, or strengthen the soul. God remains enough and He deserves and requests our love and praise in all circumstances of life.

#### **SOME KEY VERSES**

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

**JOB 1:1** 

And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

JOB 1:21

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"

JOB 38:1-2

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

JOB 42:5-6

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Job opens with a scene in heaven where Satan comes to accuse Job before God. He insists Job only serves God because God protects him and seeks God's permission to test Job's faith and loyalty. God grants his permission within certain boundaries. Why do the righteous suffer? This is the question raised after Job loses his family, his wealth, and his health. Job's three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, come to "comfort" him and to discuss his crushing series of tragedies. They insist his suffering is punishment for sin in his life. Job, however, remains devoted to God through all of this and contends that his life has not been one of sin. A fourth man, Elihu, tells Job he needs to humble himself and submit to God's use of trials to purify his life. Finally, Job questions God and learns valuable lessons about the sovereignty of God and his need to totally trust in the Lord. Job is then restored to health, happiness and prosperity beyond his earlier state.

#### **FORESHADOWINGS**

As Job was pondering the cause of his misery, three questions came to his mind, all of which are answered only in our Lord Jesus Christ. These questions occur in chapter 14. First Job asks "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one" (Job 14:4). Job's question comes from a heart that recognizes it can't possibly please God or become justified in His sight. God is holy; we are not. Therefore, a great gulf exists between man and God, caused by sin. But the answer to Job's anguished ques-

tion is found in Jesus Christ. He has paid the penalty for our sin and has exchanged it for His righteousness, thereby making us acceptable in God's sight (Hebrews 10:14; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Job's second question, "but a man dies and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he?" (Job 14:10), is another question about eternity and life and death that is answered only in Christ. With Christ, the answer to 'where is he?' is eternal life in heaven. Without Christ, the answer is an eternity in "outer darkness" where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).

Job's third question, is "if a man dies, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). Once again, the answer is found in Christ. We do indeed live again if we are in Him. "When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?'" (I Corinthians 15:54-55).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The book of Job reminds us that there is a "cosmic conflict" going on the behind the scenes that we usually know nothing about. We often wonder why God allows something to happen, and we question or doubt God's goodness, without seeing the full picture. Job teaches us to trust God in all circumstances. We must trust God, not only when we do not understand, but because we do not understand. The psalmist tells us, "this God—his way is perfect" (Psalm 18:30). If God's ways are "perfect," then we can trust that whatever He does—and whatever He allows—is also perfect. This may not seem possible to us, but our minds are not God's mind. It's true that we can't expect to understand His mind perfectly, as He reminds us, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). Nevertheless, our responsibility to God is to obey Him, to trust Him, and to submit to His will, whether we understand it or not.

#### XIX

# **PSALMS**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The brief descriptions that introduce the psalms have David listed as author 73 times. David's personality and identity are clearly stamped on many of these psalms. While it is clear that David wrote many of the individual psalms, he is definitely not the author of the entire collection. Two of the psalms–72 and 127–are attributed to Solomon, David's son and successor. Psalm 90 is a prayer assigned to Moses. Another group of 12 psalms–50 and 73 to 83–is ascribed to the family of Asaph. The sons of Korah wrote II psalms–42, 44–49, 84–85, and 87–88. Psalm 88 is attributed to Heman, while psalm 89 is assigned to Ethan the Ezrahite. With the exception of Solomon and Moses, all these additional authors were priests or Levites who were responsible for providing music for sanctuary worship during David's reign. Fifty of the psalms designate no specific person as author.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

A careful examination of the authorship question, as well as the subject matter covered by the psalms themselves, reveals that they span a period of many centuries. The oldest psalm in the collection is probably the prayer of Moses (psalm 90), a reflection on the frailty of man as compared to the eternity of God. The latest psalm is probably (psalm 137), a song of lament clearly written during the days when the Hebrews were being held captive by the Babylonians, from about 586 to 538 BC.

It is clear that the I50 individual psalms were written by many different people across a period of a thousand years in Israel's history. They must have been compiled and put together in their present form by some unknown editor shortly after the captivity ended about 537 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Psalms is the longest book in the Bible, with 150 individual psalms. It is also one of the most diverse, since the psalms deal with such subjects as God and His creation, war, worship, wisdom, sin and evil, judgment, justice, and the coming of the Messiah. These poems and songs are reflections of individuals as they wrestle through their emotions in relation to God's sovereign plan playing out. Much like seeing Job's pain and suffering, it's encouraging that the Bible records the truth and pain of human emotions rather than suppressing them.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

#### **PSALMS 19:1**

For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. But you, O Lord, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid!

#### **PSALMS 22:16-19**

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

#### PSALMS 23:1

Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.

#### **PSALMS 29:1-2**

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

#### **PSALMS 51:10**

Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the Law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart.

**PSALMS 119:1-2** 

## A QUICK SUMMARY

Psalms is a collection of prayers, poems, and hymns that focus the worshiper's thoughts on God in praise and adoration. Parts of this book were used as a hymnal in the worship services of ancient Israel. The musical heritage of the psalms is demonstrated by its title. It comes from a Greek word which means "a song sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument."

#### **FORESHADOWINGS**

God's provision of a savior for His people is a recurring theme in the Psalms. Prophetic pictures of the Messiah are seen in numerous psalms. Psalm 2:I-I2 portrays the Messiah's triumph and kingdom. Psalm I6:8-II foreshadows His death and resurrection. Psalm 22 shows us the suffering Savior on the cross and presents detailed prophecies of the crucifixion, all of which were fulfilled perfectly. The glories of the Messiah and His bride are on exhibit in Psalm 45:6-7, while Psalms 72:6-I7, 89:3-37, IIO:I-7 and I32:I2-I8 present the glory and universality of His reign.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

One of the results of being filled with the Spirit or the Word of Christ is singing. The psalms are the "songbook" of the early church that reflected the new truth in Christ.

God is the same Lord in all the psalms, but we respond to Him in different ways, according to the specific circumstances of our lives. What a marvelous God we worship, the psalmist declares, One who is high and lifted up beyond our human experiences but also one who is close enough to touch and who walks beside us along life's way.

We can bring all our feelings to God—no matter how negative or complaining they may be—and we can rest assured that He will hear and understand. The psalmist teaches us that the most profound prayer of all is a cry for help as we find ourselves overwhelmed by the problems of life.

# **PROVERBS**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

King Solomon is the principal writer of Proverbs. Solomon's name appears in verses I:I, IO:I, and 25:I. We may also presume Solomon collected and edited proverbs other than his own, for Ecclesiastes I2:9 says, "besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care." Indeed, the Hebrew title Mishle Shelomoh is translated "Proverbs of Solomon."

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Solomon's proverbs were penned around 900 BC. During his reign as king, the nation of Israel reached its pinnacle spiritually, politically, culturally, and economically. As Israel's reputation soared, so did King Solomon's. Foreign dignitaries from the far reaches of the known world traveled great distances to hear the wise monarch speak (I Kings 4:34).

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Knowledge is nothing more than an accumulation of raw facts, but wisdom is the ability to see people, events, and situations as God sees them. In the book of Proverbs, Solomon reveals the mind of God in matters high and lofty as well as common, ordinary, and everyday situations. It appears that no topic escaped King Solomon's attention. Matters pertaining to personal conduct, sexual relations, business, wealth, charity, ambition, discipline, debt, child-rearing, character, alcohol, politics, revenge, and godliness are among the many topics covered in this rich collection of wise sayings.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance.

#### PROVERBS 1:5

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

#### PROVERBS 1:7

Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

#### **PROVERBS 4:5**

The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. I have counsel and sound wisdom; I have insight; I have strength.

PROVERBS 8:13-14

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Summarizing the book of Proverbs is a bit difficult, for unlike many other books of Scripture, there is no particular plot or storyline found in its pages; likewise, there are no principal characters in the book. It is wisdom that takes center stage—a grand, divine wisdom that transcends the whole of history, peoples, and cultures. Even a quick reading of this collection of writings shows how these concise sayings of the wise King Solomon are as relevant today as they were some three thousand years ago.

#### **FORESHADOWINGS**

The theme of wisdom and its necessity in our lives finds its fulfillment in Christ. We are continually exhorted in Proverbs to seek wisdom, get wisdom, and understand wisdom. Proverbs also tells us—and repeats it— that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (1:7; 9:10). Our fear of the Lord's wrath and justice drives us to Christ, who is the embodiment of God's wisdom as expressed in His glorious plan of redemption for mankind. In Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3), we find the answer to our search for

wisdom, the remedy for our fear of God, and the "righteousness and sanctification and redemption" that we so desperately need (I Corinthians I:30). The wisdom that is found only in Christ is in contrast to the foolishness of the world which encourages us to be wise in our own eyes. But Proverbs also tells us that the world's way is not God's way (Proverbs 3:7) and leads only to death (Proverbs I4:12; I6:25).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

There is an undeniable practicality found in this book, for sound and sensible answers to all manner of complex difficulties are found within its thirty-one chapters. The recurring promise of the book of Proverbs is that those who choose wisdom and follow God will be blessed in numerous ways: with long life (9:II); prosperity (2:20-22); joy (3:I3-I8); and the goodness of God (I2:2I). Those who reject Him, on the other hand, suffer shame and death (3:35; I0:2I). To reject God is to choose folly over wisdom and is to separate ourselves from God, His Word, His wisdom, and His blessings.

#### XXI

# **ECCLESIASTES**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

Ecclesiastes doesn't directly identify its author, however there are quite a few verses that imply Solomon wrote this book. There are some clues in the context that may suggest a different person wrote the book after Solomon's death, possibly several hundred years later. Still, the conventional belief is that the author is indeed Solomon.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Solomon's reign as king of Israel lasted from around 970 BC to around 930 BC. The book of Ecclesiastes was likely written towards the end of his reign, approximately 935 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Ecclesiastes is a book of perspective. The narrative of "the Preacher" (KJV), or "the Teacher" (NIV) reveals the depression that inevitably results from seeking happiness in worldly things. This book gives Christians a chance to see the world through the eyes of a person who, though very wise, is trying to find meaning in temporary, human things. Most every form of worldly pleasure is explored by the Preacher, and none of it gives him a sense of meaning.

In the end, the Preacher comes to accept that faith in God is the only way to find personal meaning. He decides to accept the fact that life is brief and ultimately worthless without God. The Preacher advises the reader to focus on an eternal God instead of temporary pleasure.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

#### **ECCLESIASTES 1:2**

For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

#### **ECCLESIASTES 1:18**

Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

#### **ECCLESIASTES 2:11**

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them."

#### **ECCLESIASTES 12:1**

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

#### **ECCLESIASTES 12:13**

## A QUICK SUMMARY

Two phrases are repeated often in Ecclesiastes. The word translated as "vanity" in the ESV, and "meaningless" in the NIV appears often, and is used to emphasize the temporary nature of worldly things. In the end, even the most impressive human achievements will be left behind. The phrase "under the sun" occurs 28 times, and refers to the mortal world. When the Preacher refers to "all things under the sun," he is talking about earthly, temporary, human things.

The first seven chapters of the book of Ecclesiastes describe all of the worldly things "under the sun" in which the Preacher tries to find fulfillment. He tries scientific discovery (I:IO-II), wisdom and philosophy (I:I3-I8), mirth (2:I), alcohol (2:3),

architecture (2:4), property (2:7-8), and luxury (2:8). The Preacher turned his mind towards different philosophies to find meaning, such as materialism (2:19-20), and even moral codes (including chapters 8-9). He found that everything was meaningless, a temporary diversion that, without God, had no purpose or longevity.

Chapters 8-12 of Ecclesiastes describe the Preacher's suggestions and comments on how a life should be lived. He comes to the conclusion that without God, there is no truth or meaning to life. He has seen many evils and realized that even the best of man's achievements are worth nothing in the long run. So he advises the reader to acknowledge God from youth (12:1) and to follow His will (12:13-14).

#### **FORESHADOWINGS**

For all of the vanities described in the book of Ecclesiastes, the answer is Christ. According to Ecclesiastes 3:17, God judges the righteous and the wicked, and the righteous are only those who are in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). God has placed the desire for eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11) and has provided the way to eternal life through Christ (John 3:16). We are reminded that striving after the world's wealth is not only vanity because it does not satisfy (Ecclesiastes 5:10), but even if we could attain it, without Christ we would lose our souls and what profit is there in that (Mark 8:36)? Ultimately, every disappointment and vanity described in Ecclesiastes has its remedy in Christ, the wisdom of God and the only true meaning to be found in life.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Ecclesiastes offers the Christian an opportunity to understand the emptiness and despair that those who do not know God grapple with. Those who do not have a saving faith in Christ are faced with a life that will ultimately end and become irrelevant. If there is no salvation, and no God, then not only is there no point to life, but no purpose or direction to it, either. The world "under the sun," apart from God, is frustrating, cruel, unfair, brief, and "utterly meaningless." But with Christ, life is but a shadow of the glories to come in a heaven that is only accessible through Him.

#### XXII

# SONG OF SOLOMON

#### WHO WROTE IT?

Solomon wrote Song of Solomon, according to the first verse. This song is one of I,005 that Solomon wrote (I Kings 4:32). The title "Song of Solomon" is a superlative, meaning this is the best one.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Solomon most likely wrote this song during the early part of his reign. This would place the date of composition around 965 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The Song of Solomon is a lyric poem written to extol the virtues of love between a husband and his wife. The poem clearly presents marriage as God's design. A man and woman are to live together within the context of marriage, loving each other spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

This book combats two extremes: asceticism (the denial of all pleasure) and hedonism (the pursuit of only pleasure). The marriage profiled in Song of Solomon is a model of care, commitment, and delight.

### SOME KEY VERSES

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.

#### SONG OF SOLOMON 2:7

Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love!

#### SONG OF SOLOMON 5:1

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.

SONG OF SOLOMON 8:6-7

## A QUICK SUMMARY

The poetry takes the form of a dialogue between a husband (the king) and his wife (the Shulamite). We can divide the book into three sections:

- The Courtship (1:1 3:5)
- The Wedding (3:6 5:1)
- The Maturing Marriage (5:2 8:14)

The song begins before the wedding, as the bride-to-be longs to be with her betrothed, and she looks forward to his intimate caresses. However, she advises letting love develop naturally, in its own time. The king praises the Shulamite's beauty, overcoming her feelings of insecurity about her appearance. The Shulamite has a dream in which she loses Solomon and searches throughout the city for him. With the help of the city guards, she finds her beloved and clings to him, taking him to a safe place. Upon waking, she repeats her injunction not to force love.

On the wedding night, the husband again praises the beauty of his wife, and in highly symbolic language, the wife invites her spouse to partake of all she has to offer. They make love, and God blesses their union.

As the marriage matures, the husband and wife go through a difficult time, symbolized in another dream. In this second dream, the Shulamite rejects her husband, and he leaves. Overcome with guilt, she searches the city for him; but this time, instead of helping her, the guards beat her—symbolic of her pained conscience. Things end happily as the lovers reunite and are reconciled.

As the song ends, both the husband and wife are confident and secure in their love, they sing of the lasting nature of true love, and they yearn to be in each other's presence.

### **FORESHADOWINGS**

Some Bible interpreters see in Song of Solomon an exact symbolic representation of Christ and His church. Christ is seen as the king, while the church is represented by the Shulamite. While we believe the book should be understood literally as a depiction of marriage, there are some elements that foreshadow the Church and her relationship with her king, the Lord Jesus. Song of Solomon 2:4 describes the experience of every believer who is sought and bought by the Lord Jesus. We are in a place of great spiritual wealth and are covered by His love. Verse 16 of chapter 2 says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his. He feeds his flock among the lilies" (NKJV). Here is a picture of not only the security of the believer in Christ (John 10:28-29), but of the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep and lays down His life for us (John 10:11). Because of Him, we are no longer stained by sin, having had our "spots" removed by His blood (Song of Solomon 4:7; Ephesians 5:27).

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Our world is confused about marriage. The prevalence of divorce and modern attempts to redefine marriage stand in glaring contrast to Solomon's Song. Marriage, says the biblical poet, is to be celebrated, enjoyed, and revered. This book provides some practical guidelines for strengthening our marriages:

- Give your spouse the attention he or she needs. Take the time to truly know your spouse.
- Encouragement and praise, not criticism, are vital to a successful relationship.

- Enjoy each other. Plan some getaways. Be creative, even playful, with each other. Delight in God's gift of married love.
- Do whatever is necessary to reassure your commitment to your spouse. Renew your vows; work through problems and do not consider divorce as a solution. God intends for you both to live in a deeply peaceful, secure love.



Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel



# HOW DOES THIS TYPE OF LITERATURE FIT INTO THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE?

Written by or about Jewish prophets and their messages to the nation of Israel, the books that make up the Major Prophets are described as "major" because they are longer and filled with broad content and far-reaching global implications.

Historically speaking, God's people in Judah had just watched Israel, their northern neighbor, conquered and removed by the Assyrian empire in 722 BC. Opening with Isaiah, we see God pronouncing judgment against the rebellion of His people, warning of a similar fate if they didn't respond by doing God's will. Jeremiah recounts a worsened situation but also reveals a great hope, the new covenant which would be experienced beyond the Babylonian exile. Lamentations speaks to God's compassion and faithfulness in the midst of the tragic destruction of Jerusalem. Through Ezekiel, God chastened His exiled people to find life in Him alone. Later, in Babylonian captivity, Daniel's life and visions demonstrated that God's plans cannot be thwarted because of His ultimate authority over the nations.

# HOW DO WE READ THE MAJOR PROPHETS NORMALLY?

First off, it is worth noting that prophecy is sometimes unpopular because of its unusual language and seemingly constant warnings. Yet, prophecy should not be avoided because it is, like all scripture, "God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). That said, it is helpful to keep in mind that prophecy is complex; comprised of literal historical and future elements, profound visions, and symbolic language. The genre addresses real events and utilizes graphic imagery, picturesque language, and symbolic acts to make powerful statements about divine judgment and deliverance. As you read prophecy, ask questions like:

- How might the events described in text match up with actual historical events in world history?
- How do symbolism, warnings, and promises work with other biblical themes and point to future judgement, events, and salvation?

# HOW DOES THIS PART OF THE BIBLE POINT TO JESUS?

Biblical prophecy points explicitly to the person and work of Jesus, often being fulfilled by Him directly. Isaiah, for instance, refers to a boy called Immanuel ("God with us") who would remind God's people that they lived before a holy God and cause them to experience great blessing (7:14). Though God had always been present with His people, Isaiah predicted that He would eventually become one of them (fulfilled in Matthew I:23), as Jesus literally came and dwelt among them to instruct, care, and become the promised servant who would take on the wrath reserved for sinners, effectively delivering them (Isaiah 52:I3-53:I2). The good news promised in the Old Testament reveals that Jesus brought about the new covenant, promised in Jeremiah 3I:33 and spoken of by Jesus in Luke 22:20. Ezekiel spoke of a future expression of God's presence, described as a new temple where life-giving water would flow (47:I-I2). In John 4, Jesus, who spoke of Himself as the temple, presented Himself to a Samaritan woman with the life-giving water Ezekiel described about 600 years earlier.

Throughout the Old Testament, time and again God demonstrated His dominion over kingdoms, such as Babylon and Assyria. Continuing this theme, Jesus declared His divine authority over all things in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), a reign that continues and will continue for evermore (Ephesians I:20-21). Finally, prophecy such as Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah also speaks of Christ's second coming that is echoed in several New Testament books.

# HOW DO THE MAJOR PROPHETS FIT INTO OUR LIVES TODAY?

These prophetic accounts often hard to read and even harder to receive. But, consider Ezekiel; here is a priest turned prophet using language, images, and context of his day (exile to Babylonian 586 BCish) to bring warning and hope to Israel. The paradox for us as modern readers is that the warnings themselves are hopeful. These accounts leave us with a peculiar tension wherein a good God will not allow injustice to stand, all the while loving the very people who continue to live and act unjustly. How will God act? How will justice come? Today, as followers of Jesus, we look at the

Major Prophets and still feel this tension. We can wrestle with the tension of hope in these warnings, but unlike the exile communities, we know that hope has a name-His name is Jesus.

## XXIII

# **ISAIAH**

### WHO WROTE IT?

Isaiah I:I identifies the author of the book of Isaiah as the Prophet Isaiah.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Isaiah was written between 701 and 681 BC.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The Prophet Isaiah was primarily called to prophesy to the Kingdom of Judah. Judah was going through times of revival and times of rebellion. Judah was threatened with destruction by Assyria and Egypt, but was spared because of God's mercy. Isaiah proclaimed a message of repentance from sin and hopeful expectation of God's deliverance in the future.

### SOME KEY VERSES

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

#### ISAIAH 6:8

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

#### **ISAIAH 7:14**

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

#### ISAIAH 9:6

How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north.

#### ISAIAH 14:12-13

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

#### **ISAIAH 53:5-6**

The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the Lord.

#### **ISAIAH 65:25**

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The book of Isaiah reveals God's judgment and salvation. God is "holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6:3), and therefore He cannot allow sin to go unpunished (Isaiah 1:2; 2:II-20; 5:30; 34:I-2; 42:25). Isaiah portrays God's oncoming judgment as a "consuming fire" (Isaiah I:3I; 30:33).

At the same time, Isaiah understands that God is a God of mercy, grace, and compassion (Isaiah 5:25; II:16; I4:I-2; 32:2; 40:3; 4I:I4-I6). The nation of Israel (both Judah and Israel) is blind and deaf to God's commands (Isaiah 6:9-I0; 42:7). Judah is compared to a vineyard that should be, and will be, trampled on (Isaiah 5:I-7).

Only because of His mercy and His promises to Israel, will God not allow Israel or Judah to be completely destroyed. He will bring restoration, forgiveness, and healing (43:2; 43:16-19; 52:10-12).

More than any other book in the Old Testament, Isaiah focuses on the salvation that will come through the Messiah. The Messiah will one day rule in justice and righteousness (Isaiah 9:7; 32:1). The reign of the Messiah will bring peace and safety to Israel (Isaiah II:6-9). Through the Messiah, Israel will be a light to all the nations (Isaiah 42:6; 55:4-5). The Messiah's kingdom on earth (Isaiah chapter 65-66) is the goal towards which all of the book of Isaiah points. It is during the reign of the Messiah that God's righteousness will be fully revealed to the world.

In a seeming paradox, the book of Isaiah also presents the Messiah as one who will suffer. Isaiah chapter 53 vividly describes the Messiah suffering for sin. It is through His wounds that healing is achieved. It is through His suffering that our iniquities are taken away. This apparent contradiction is solved in the person of Jesus Christ. In His first coming, Jesus was the suffering servant of Isaiah chapter 53. In His second coming, Jesus will be the conquering and ruling King, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

As stated above, chapter 53 of Isaiah describes the coming Messiah and the suffering He would endure in order to pay for our sins. In His sovereignty, God orchestrated every detail of the crucifixion to fulfill every prophecy of this chapter, as well as all other messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. The imagery of chapter 53 is poignant and prophetic and contains a complete picture of the Gospel. Jesus was despised and rejected (v. 3; Luke 13:34; John 1:10-11), stricken by God (v.4; Matthew 27:46), and pierced for our transgressions (v. 5; John 19:34; I Peter 2:24). By His suffering, He paid the punishment we deserved and became for us the ultimate and perfect sacrifice (v. 5; Hebrews 10:10). Although He was sinless, God laid on Him our sin, and we became God's righteousness in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The book of Isaiah presents our Savior to us in undeniable detail. He is the only way to heaven, the only means of obtaining the grace of God, the only Way, the only

Truth, and the only Life (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Knowing the price Christ paid for us, how can we neglect or reject "such a great salvation"? (Hebrews 2:3). We have only a few, short years on earth to come to Christ and embrace the salvation only He offers. There is no second chance after death, and eternity in hell is a very long time.

Do you know people who claim to be believers in Christ who are two-faced, who are hypocrites? That is perhaps the best summary of how Isaiah viewed the nation of Israel. Israel had an appearance of righteousness, but it was a facade. In the book of Isaiah, the Prophet Isaiah challenges Israel to obey God with all of their heart, not just on the outside. Isaiah's desire was that those who heard and read his words would be convicted to turn from wickedness and turn to God for forgiveness and healing.

### XXIV

# **JEREMIAH**

### WHO WROTE IT?

Jeremiah chapter I, verse I identifies the Prophet Jeremiah as the author of the book of Jeremiah.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Jeremiah was written between 630 and 580 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Jeremiah records the final prophecies to Judah, warning of oncoming destruction if the nation does not repent. Jeremiah calls out for the nation to turn back to God. At the same time, Jeremiah recognizes the inevitability of Judah's destruction due to its unrepentant idolatry and immorality.

### SOME KEY VERSES

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.

#### **JEREMIAH 1:5**

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

#### JEREMIAH 17:9

For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

#### JEREMIAH 29:10-11

In the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard, who served the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem. And he burned the house of the Lord, and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down.

JEREMIAH 52:12-13

## A QUICK SUMMARY

The book of Jeremiah is primarily a message of judgment on Judah for rampant idolatry (Jeremiah 7:30-34; 16:10-13; 22:9; 32:29; 44:2-3). After the death of King Josiah, the last righteous king, the nation of Judah had almost completely abandoned God and His commandments. Jeremiah compares Judah to a prostitute (Jeremiah 2:20; 3:1-3). God had promised that He would judge idolatry most severely (Leviticus 26:31-33; Deuteronomy 28:49-68), and Jeremiah was warning Judah that God's judgment was at hand. God had delivered Judah from destruction on countless occasions, but His mercy was at its end. Jeremiah records King Nebuchadnezzar conquering Judah and making it subject to him (Jeremiah 24:1). After further rebellion, God brought Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian armies back to destroy and desolate Judah and Jerusalem (Jeremiah chapter 52). Even in this most severe judgment, God promises the restoration of Judah back into the land God has given them (Jeremiah 29:10).

### **FORESHADOWINGS**

Jeremiah 23:5-6 presents a prophecy of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. The prophet describes Him as a Branch from the house of David (Jeremiah 23:5;

Matthew I), the King who would reign in wisdom and righteousness (Jeremiah 23:5, Revelation II:15). It is Christ who will finally be recognized by Israel as her true Messiah as He provides salvation for His chosen ones (Jeremiah 23: 6; Romans II:26).

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The Prophet Jeremiah had an incredibly difficult message to deliver. Jeremiah loved Judah, but he loved God much more. As painful as it was for Jeremiah to deliver a consistent message of judgment to his own people, Jeremiah was obedient to what God told him to do and say. Jeremiah hoped and prayed for mercy from God for Judah, but also trusted that God was good, just, and righteous. We too must obey God, even when it is difficult, recognize God's will as more important than our own desires, and trust that God, in His infinite wisdom and perfect plan, will bring about the best for His children (Romans 8:28).

## XXV

# **LAMENTATIONS**

### WHO WROTE IT?

The book of Lamentations does not explicitly identify its author. The tradition is that the Prophet Jeremiah wrote Lamentations. This view is highly likely considering the author was a witness of the Babylonians destroying Jerusalem. Jeremiah fits this qualification (2 Chronicles 35:25; 36:21-22).

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Lamentations was likely written between 586 and 575 BC, during or soon after Jerusalem's fall.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

As a result of Judah's continued and unrepentant idolatry, God allowed the Babylonians to besiege, plunder, burn, and destroy the city of Jerusalem. Solomon's Temple, which had stood for approximately 400 years, was burned to the ground. The Prophet Jeremiah, an eyewitness to these events, wrote the book of Lamentations as a lament for what occurred to Judah and Jerusalem.

## SOME KEY VERSES

The Lord has done what he purposed; he has carried out his word, which he commanded long ago; he has thrown down without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you and exalted the might of your foes.

**LAMENTATIONS 2:17** 

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

#### LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23

But you, O Lord, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations. Why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days? Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old—unless you have utterly rejected us, and you remain exceedingly angry with us.

**LAMENTATIONS 5:19-22** 

## A QUICK SUMMARY

The book of Lamentations is divided into five chapters. Each chapter represents a separate poem. In the original Hebrew, the verses are acrostic, each verse starting with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the book of Lamentations, the Prophet Jeremiah understands that the Babylonians were God's tool for bringing judgment on Jerusalem (Lamentations 1:12-15; 2:1-8; 4:11). Lamentations makes it clear that sin and rebellion were the causes of God's wrath being poured out (1:8-9; 4:13; 5:16). Lamenting is appropriate in a time of distress, but it should quickly give way to remorse and repentance (Lamentations 3:40-42; 5:21-22).

### **FORESHADOWINGS**

Jeremiah was known as the "weeping prophet" for his deep and abiding passion for his people and their city (Lamentations 3:48-49). This same sorrow over the sins of the people and their rejection of God was expressed by Jesus as He approached Jerusalem and looked ahead to her destruction at the hands of the Romans (Luke 19:41-44). Because of the Jews' rejection of their Messiah, God used the Roman siege to punish His people. But God takes no joy in having to punish His children and His offer of Jesus Christ as a provision for sin shows His great compassion on His people. One day, because of Christ, God will wipe away all tears (Revelation 7:17).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Even in terrible judgment, God is a God of hope (Lamentations 3:24-25). No matter how far we have gone from Him, we have the hope that we can return to Him and find Him compassionate and forgiving (I John I:9). Our God is a loving God (Lamentations 3:22), and because of His great love and compassion, He sent His Son so that we would not perish in our sins, but can live eternally with Him (John 3:16). God's faithfulness (Lamentations 3:23) and deliverance (Lamentations 3:26) are attributes that give us great hope and comfort. He isn't a disinterested, capricious god, but a God who will deliver all those who turn to Him, admit they can do nothing to earn His favor, and call upon the Lord's mercy so that we will not be consumed (Lamentations 3:22).

## XXVI

# **EZEKIEL**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The Prophet Ezekiel is the author of the Book (Ezekiel 1:3). He was a contemporary of both Jeremiah and Daniel.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Ezekiel was likely written between 593 and 565 BC during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Ezekiel ministered to his generation who were both exceedingly sinful and thoroughly hopeless. By means of his prophetic ministry he attempted to bring them to immediate repentance and to confidence in the distant future. He taught that:

- God works through human messengers
- Even in defeat and despair God's people need to affirm God's sovereignty
- God's Word never fails
- · God is present and can be worshiped anywhere
- God's Kingdom will come

### **SOME KEY VERSES**

And he said to me, "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. The descendants also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.'

And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions. Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house."

#### EZEKIEL 2:3-6

Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.

#### **EZEKIEL 18:4**

Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord God: You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.

#### **EZEKIEL 28:12-14**

Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

#### EZEKIEL 33:11

And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The Lord Is There.

#### **EZEKIEL 48:35**

## A QUICK SUMMARY

How can you cope with a world gone astray? Ezekiel, destined to begin his life's ministry as a priest at age thirty, was uprooted from his homeland and marched off to Babylon at age of twenty-five. For five years he languished in despair. At age thirty a majestic vision of Yahweh's glory captivated his being in Babylon. Ezekiel discovered that God was not confined to the narrow strictures of his native land. Instead, God is a universal God who commands and controls persons and nations. In Babylon, God imparted to Ezekiel His Word for the people. This call and experience transformed Ezekiel. He became completely devoted to God's Word. He realized he had nothing on his own to assist the captives in their bitter situation, but was convinced that God's Word spoke to their condition and could give them victory in it. Ezekiel used various methods to convey God's Word to His people. He used art in drawing a depiction of Jerusalem, symbolic actions, and unusual conduct to secure attention. He cut his hair and beard to demonstrate what God would do to Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

Ezekiel's book can be divided into four sections:

- Chapters I-24: prophecies on the ruin of Jerusalem
- Chapters 25-32: prophecies of God's judgment on nearby nations
- Chapter 33: a last call for repentance to Israel
- Chapters 34-48: prophecies concerning the future restoration of Israel

### **FORESHADOWINGS**

Ezekiel 34 is the chapter wherein God denounces the leaders of Israel as false shepherds for their poor care of His people. Instead of caring for the sheep of Israel, they cared for themselves. They ate well, were well-clothed and well-cared for by the very people they had been placed over (Ezekiel 34:I-3). By contrast, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep and who protects them from the wolves who would destroy the flock (John 10:II-I2). Verse 4 of chapter 34 describes people whom the shepherds failed to minister to as weak, sick, injured, and lost. Jesus is the Great Physician who heals our spiritual wounds (Isaiah 53:5) by His death on the cross. He is the one who seeks and saves the lost (Luke 19:10).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The book of Ezekiel calls us to join in a fresh and living encounter with the God of Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. We must be overcomers or we will be overcome. Ezekiel challenged us to experience a life changing vision of God's power, knowledge, eternal presence, and holiness; to let God direct us; to comprehend the depth of and commitment to evil that lodges in each human heart; to recognize that God holds His servants responsible for warning wicked men of their peril; to experience a living relationship with Jesus Christ, who said that the new covenant is to be found in His blood.

## XXVII

# **DANIEL**

### WHO WROTE IT?

The book identifies the Prophet Daniel as its author (Daniel 9:2; 10:2). Jesus mentions Daniel as the author as well (Matthew 24:15).

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Daniel was likely written between 540 and 530 BC.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

In 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon had conquered Judah and deported many of its inhabitants to Babylon–Daniel included. Daniel served in the royal court of Nebuchadnezzar and several rulers who followed Nebuchadnezzar. This book records the actions, prophecies, and visions of the Prophet Daniel.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.

**DANIEL 1:19-20** 

You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening.

#### DANIEL 2:31

If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.

#### **DANIEL 3:17-18**

His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

#### **DANIEL 4:34-35**

Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.

#### DANIFI 9:25-27

## A QUICK SUMMARY

Chapter I describes the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Along with many others, Daniel and his three friends were deported to Babylon and because of their courage and the obvious blessings of God upon them, they were "promoted" in the king's service (Daniel I:17-20).

Chapters 2-4 record Nebuchadnezzar having a dream that only Daniel could correctly interpret. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great statue represented the kingdoms that would arise in the future. Nebuchadnezzar made a great statue of himself and forced everyone to worship it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused and were miraculously spared by God despite being thrown into a fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar is judged by God for his pride, but later restored once he recognized and admitted God's sovereignty.

Daniel chapter 5 records Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar misusing the items taken from the Temple in Jerusalem and receiving a message from God, written into the wall, in response. Only Daniel could interpret the writing, a message of coming judgment from God. Daniel is thrown into the lions' den for refusing to pray to the emperor, but was miraculously spared. In chapter 7, God gave Daniel a vision of four beasts. The four beasts represented the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Chapters 8-12 contain a vision involving a ram, a goat, and several horns—also referring to future kingdoms and their rulers. Daniel chapter 9 records Daniel's "seventy weeks" prophecy. God gave Daniel the precise timeline of when the Messiah would come and be cut off. The prophecy also mentions a future ruler who will make a seven—year covenant with Israel and break it after three and a half years, followed shortly thereafter by the great judgment and consummation of all things. Daniel is visited and strengthened by an angel after this great vision, and the angel explains the vision to Daniel in great detail.

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

We see in the stories of the fiery furnace and Daniel in the lions' den a foreshadowing of the salvation provided by Christ. The three men declare that God is a saving God who can provide a way of escape from the fire (Daniel 3:17). In the same way, by

sending Jesus to die for our sins, God has provided an escape from the fires of hell (I Peter 3:18). In Daniel's case, God provided an angel to shut the lions' mouths and saved Daniel from death. Jesus Christ is our provision from the dangers of the sin that threatens to consume us.

Daniel's vision of the end times depicts Israel's Messiah by whom many will be made pure and holy (Daniel 12:10). He is our righteousness (I Peter 5:21) by whom our sins, though blood-red, will be washed away and we will be as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we should always stand for what we know is right. God is greater than any punishment that could come upon us. Whether God chooses to deliver us or not, He is always worthy of our trust. God knows what is best, and He honors those who trust and obey Him.

God has a plan, and His plan is down to the intricate detail. God knows and is in control of the future. Everything that God has predicted has come true exactly as He predicted. Therefore, we should believe and trust that the things He has predicted for the future will one day occur exactly as God has declared.



Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi



# HOW DOES THIS TYPE OF LITERATURE FIT INTO THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE?

The books that makes up the Minor Prophets are called "minor" simply because they tend to be shorter and comprised of more specific content. For instance, some prophets explicitly interacted with the southern kingdom of Judah while others prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel. Moreover, some prophets (e.g. Hosea, Jonah, and Amos) fulfilled their office before exile while others (e.g. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) came afterward.

All prophecy warns of judgment, calls out sin, calls for repentance, and promises future deliverance for God's people. Hosea, for instance, was directed to marry a promiscuous woman in order to demonstrate God's faithful love for His continually unfaithful people. Joel speaks of judgement and restoration. In Amos, we find God calling out the social injustices of Israel and later in Zephaniah pronouncing a day of judgment. Despite these negative messages, Malachi brings good news that God will fulfill His promises and spare those who honor Him through a coming prophet (4:5). Accordingly, it should be understood that the Old Testament prophets represent the era leading up to Jesus and foretell His coming.

# HOW DO WE READ THE MINOR PROPHETS NORMALLY?

First off, it is worth noting that prophecy is sometimes unpopular because of its unusual language and seemingly constant warnings. Yet, prophecy should not be avoided because it is, like all scripture, "God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). That said, it is helpful to keep in mind that prophecy is complex; comprised of literal historical and future elements, profound visions, and symbolic language. The genre addresses real events and utilizes graphic imagery, picturesque language, and symbolic acts to make powerful statements about divine judgement and deliverance.

#### AS YOU READ PROPHECY, ASK QUESTIONS LIKE:

- How might the events described in text match up with actual historical events in world history?
- How does symbolism, warnings, and promises work with other biblical themes and point to future judgement, events, and salvation?

# HOW DOES THIS PART OF THE BIBLE POINT TO JESUS?

As noted previously, prophecy points explicitly to Jesus and the case of Hosea illustrates this point beautifully. Each of the prophet's three children were given shameful names respectively meaning "unloved," "God-scatters," and "not my people" in Hebrew. Jesus' faithfulness to the Father, dealt with the wrath caused by unfaithful people who, because of Christ, would later be loved, gathered from every nation and tribe (Revelation 7:9), and would truly become God's people (I Peter 2:10). In sharp contrast to the people of Amos' day, Jesus lived with compassion and justice and cast a vision for what His new community should look like in His famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). In Zephaniah, we see that Jesus will be the one coming to judge the world. As the future King to whom all nations would bow and a High Priest who sacrificed Himself to secure eternal relationship between God and His people, Jesus fulfilled what Zechariah foretold.

# HOW DO THE MINOR PROPHETS FIT INTO OUR LIVES TODAY?

It's not everyday that we open up a book and encounter an author boldly announcing judgment, let alone multiple books by multiple authors announcing judgment. Well, welcome to the Minor Prophet blitz. These accounts aren't charts or predictions. Rather they serve their readers, and us, by reminding us that God's desire isn't for evil. God's desire is to see His people live lives of integrity - lives that reflect the God they claim to profess back to the world around them. Moreso, God's desire for justice is such that the prophets consider these accounts to be matters of life and death. Although these accounts are certainly not written to us, they are no doubt wisdom for us. They simply do not allow us to turn a blind eye to evil in the world because, as with Israel, we are not merely complicit in evil, we partake and contribute to the very evil God is intent on judging.

This is intense and you may be thinking, "So, if the Minor Prophets - along with the whole Old Testament - make it clear that God will not let evil stand, and you're telling me I am a part of that evil, doesn't that mean that God's judgment will fall on me as well!?" Yes and no. You see, the story does not end here. In the New Testament, the hope described in the Minor Prophets - the hope for ultimate restoration - is born into human history. That hope is Jesus of Nazareth. God, in His grace, makes a way to cover over all our sin through Jesus on the cross. Jesus is the judged and the judge, and in Him evil does not stand. Instead we are invited to stand with Him by grace and in faith.

## XXVIII

# HOSEA

#### WHO WROTE IT

Hosea I:I identifies the author of the book as the Prophet Hosea. It is Hosea's personal account of his prophetic messages to the children of God and to the world. Hosea is the only prophet of Israel who left any written prophecies which were recorded during the later years of his life.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Hosea, the son of Beeri, prophesied for quite some time, from 785 to 725 BC. The book of Hosea was likely written between 755 and 725 BC.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Hosea wrote this book to remind the Israelites—and us—that ours is a loving God whose loyalty to His covenant people is unwavering. In spite of Israel's continual turning to false gods, God's steadfast love is portrayed in the long-suffering husband of the unfaithful wife. Hosea's message is also one of warning to those who would turn their backs on God's love. Through the symbolic presentation of the marriage of Hosea and Gomer, God's love for the idolatrous nation of Israel is displayed in a rich metaphor in the themes of sin, judgment, and forgiving love.

## SOME KEY VERSES

When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord."

HOSFA 1:2

And I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God.'

#### **HOSEA 2:23**

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

#### HOSEA 6:6

Take with you words and return to the Lord; say to him, "Take away all iniquity; accept what is good, and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips. Assyria shall not save us; we will not ride on horses; and we will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands. In you the orphan finds mercy." I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.

#### HOSEA 14:2-4

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The book of Hosea can be divided into two parts:

- Hosea I:I-3:5 is a description of an adulterous wife and a faithful husband, symbolic of the unfaithfulness of Israel to God through idolatry.
- Hosea 4:I-I4:9 contains the condemnation of Israel, especially Samaria, for the worship of idols and her eventual restoration.

The first section of the book contains three distinctive poems illustrating how God's children returned time after time to idolatry. God commands Hosea to marry Gomer, but after bearing him three children, she walks away from Hosea to her lovers. The symbolic emphasis can be seen clearly in the first chapter as Hosea compares Israel's actions to turning from a marriage to life as a prostitute. The second section contains Hosea's denunciation of the Israelites but followed by the promises and the mercies of God.

The book of Hosea is a prophetic accounting of God's relentless love for His children. Since the beginning of time God's ungrateful and undeserving creation has

been accepting God's love, grace, and mercy while still unable to refrain from its wickedness.

The last part of Hosea shows how God's love once again restores His children as He forgets their misdeeds when they turn back to Him with a repentant heart. The prophetic message of Hosea foretells the coming of Israel's Messiah 700 years in the future. Hosea is quoted often in the New Testament.

## FORESHADOWINGS

Hosea 2:23 is the wonderful prophetic message from God to include the Gentiles [non-Jews] as His children as recorded also in Romans 9:25 and I Peter 2:IO. Gentiles are not originally "God's people," but through His mercy and grace, He has provided Jesus Christ, and by faith in Him we are grafted into the tree of His people (Romans II:II-I8). This is an amazing truth about the Church, one that is called a "mystery" because before Christ, God's people were considered to be the Jews alone. When Christ came, the Jews were temporarily blinded "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Romans II:25).

# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The book of Hosea assures us of God's unconditional love for His people. But it is also a picture of how God is dishonored and angered by the actions of His children. How can a child who is given an abundance of love, mercy, and grace treat a Father with so much disrespect? Yet, we have done just that for centuries. As we consider how the Israelites turned their backs on God, we need to look no further than the mirror in front of us to see a reflection of those same Israelites.

Only by remembering how much God has done for each of us will we be able to avoid rejecting the One who can give us eternal life in glory instead of the hell we deserve. It is essential that we learn to respect our Creator. Hosea has shown us God's heart of loving commitment. When we do sin, since we are positionally in Christ, God will bring us back to Himself and show His never-ending love (see I John I:9) as we approach Him with a sorrowful heart filled with repentance.

## XXIX

# **JOEL**

## WHO WROTE IT?

The book of Joel states that its author was the Prophet Joel (Joel 1:1).

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Joel was likely written between 835 and 800 BC.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Judah, the setting for the book, is devastated by a vast horde of locusts. This invasion of locusts destroys everything—the fields of grain, the vineyards, the gardens, and the trees. Joel symbolically describes the locusts as a marching human army and views all of this as divine judgment coming against the nation for her sins. The book is highlighted by two major events. One is the invasion of locusts and the other the outpouring of the Spirit. The initial fulfillment of this is quoted by Peter in Acts 2 as having taken place at Pentecost.

## SOME KEY VERSES

What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten.

**IOFI 1:4** 

I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten.

JOEL 2:25

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.

JOEL 2:28

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

A terrible plague of locusts is followed by a severe famine throughout the land. Joel uses these happenings as the catalyst to send words of warning to Judah. Unless the people repent quickly and completely, enemy armies will devour the land as did the natural elements. Joel appeals to all the people and the priests of the land to fast and humble themselves as they seek God's forgiveness. If they will respond, there will be renewed material and spiritual blessings for the nation. But the Day of the Lord is coming. At this time the dreaded locusts will seem as gnats in comparison, as all nations receive His judgment.

The overriding theme of the book of Joel is the Day of the Lord, a day of God's wrath and judgment. This is the Day in which God reveals His attributes of wrath, power, and holiness, and it is a terrifying day to His enemies. In the first chapter, the Day of the Lord is experienced historically by the plague of locusts upon the land. Chapter 2:I-I7 is a transitional chapter in which Joel uses the metaphor of the locust plague and drought to renew a call to repentance. Chapters 2:I8-3:2I describes the Day of the Lord in end-times terms and answers the call to repentance with prophecies of physical restoration (2:2I-27), spiritual restoration (2:28-32), and national restoration (3:I-2I).

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

Whenever the Old Testament speaks of judgment for sin, whether individual or national sin, the coming of Jesus Christ is foreshadowed. The prophets of the Old Testament continually warned Israel to repent, but even when they did, their repentance was limited to law-keeping and works. Their temple sacrifices were but a shadow of the ultimate sacrifice, offered once for all time, which would come at the cross (Hebrews IO:IO). Joel tells us that God's ultimate judgment, which falls on the Day of the Lord, will be "great and very awesome; who can endure it?" (Joel 2:II).

The answer is that we, on our own, can never endure such a moment. But if we have placed our faith in Christ for atonement of our sins, we have nothing to fear from the Day of Judgment.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Without repentance, judgment will be harsh, thorough, and certain. Our trust should not be in our possessions but in the Lord our God. God at times may use nature, sorrow, or other common occurrences to draw us closer to Him. But in His mercy and grace, He has provided the definitive plan for our salvation—Jesus Christ, crucified for our sins and exchanging our sin for His perfect righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). There is no time to lose. God's judgment will come swiftly, as a thief in the night (I Thessalonians 5:2), and we must be ready. Today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7). Only by appropriating God's salvation can we escape His wrath on the Day of the Lord.

## XXX

# **AMOS**

## WHO WROTE IT?

Amos I:I identifies the author as the Prophet Amos.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Amos was likely written between 760 and 753 BC.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Amos is a shepherd and a fruit picker from the Judean village of Tekoa when God calls him, even though he lacks an education or a priestly background. Amos' mission is directed to his neighbor to the north, Israel. His messages of impending doom and captivity for the nation because of her sins are largely unpopular and unheeded, however, because not since the days of Solomon have times been so good in Israel. Amos' ministry takes place while Jeroboam II reigns over Israel, and Uzziah reigns over Judah.

## SOME KEY VERSES

Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have rejected the Law of the Lord, and have not kept his statutes, but their lies have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked."

**AMOS 2:4** 

For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.

**AMOS 3:7** 

I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.

**AMOS 9:14** 

# **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Amos can see that beneath Israel's external prosperity and power, internally the nation is corrupt to the core. The sins for which Amos chastens the people are extensive: neglect of God's Word, idolatry, pagan worship, greed, corrupted leadership, and oppression of the poor. Amos begins by pronouncing a judgment upon all the surrounding nations, then upon his own nation of Judah, and finally the harshest judgment is given to Israel. His visions from God reveal the same emphatic message: judgment is near. The book ends with God's promise to Amos of future restoration of the remnant.

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

The book of Amos ends with a glorious promise for the future. "'I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them,' says the Lord your God" (Amos 9:15). The ultimate fulfillment of God's land promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:7; 15:7; 17:8) will occur during Christ's millennial reign on earth (see Joel 2:26,27). Revelation 20 describes the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth, a time of peace and joy under the perfect government of the Savior Himself. At that time, believing Israel and the Gentile Christians will be combined in the Church and will live and reign with Christ.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Sometimes we think we are a "just-a." We are just-a student, employee, boss, professor, parent, or child. Amos would be considered a "just-a." He wasn't a prophet or

priest or the son of either. He was just a shepherd, a small businessman in Judah. Who would listen to him? Instead of making excuses, Amos obeyed and became God's powerful voice for change.

God has used "just-a's" such as shepherds, carpenters, and fishermen all through the Bible. Whatever you are in this life, God can use you. Amos wasn't much. He was a "just-a." "Just-a" servant for God. It is good to be God's "just-a."

## XXXI

# **OBADIAH**

## WHO WROTE IT?

Obadiah verse I identifies the author as the Prophet Obadiah.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Obadiah was likely written between 848 and 840 BC.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Obadiah, the shortest book in the Old Testament, is only 2I verses long. Obadiah is a prophet of God who uses this opportunity to condemn Edom for sins against both God and Israel. The Edomites are descendants of Esau and the Israelites are descendants of his twin brother, Jacob. A quarrel between the brothers has affected their descendants for over I,000 years. This division caused the Edomites to forbid Israel to cross their land during the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt. Edom's sins of pride now require a strong word of judgment from the Lord.

## SOME KEY VERSES

Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the Lord.

**OBADIAH 4** 

But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin; do not boast in the day of distress.

#### **OBADIAH 12**

For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.

**OBADIAH 15** 

## A QUICK SUMMARY

Obadiah's message is final and it is sure: the kingdom of Edom will be destroyed completely. Edom has been arrogant, gloating over Israel's misfortunes, and when enemy armies attack Israel and the Israelites ask for help, the Edomites refuse and choose to fight against them, not for them. These sins of pride can be overlooked no longer. The book ends with the promise of the fulfillment and deliverance of Zion in the Last Days when the land will be restored to God's people as He rules over them.

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

Verse 2I of Obadiah contains a foreshadowing of Christ and His Church, "saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." These "saviors" (also called "deliverers" in several versions) are the apostles of Christ, ministers of the word, and especially the preachers of the Gospel in these latter days. They are called "saviors," not because they obtain our salvation, but because they preach salvation through the Gospel of Christ and show us the way to obtain that salvation. They, and the Word preached by them, are the means by which the good news of salvation is delivered to all men. While Christ is the only Savior who alone came to purchase salvation, and is the author of it, saviors and deliverers of the Gospel will be more and more in evidence as the end of the age draws near.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

God will overcome on our behalf if we will stay true to Him. Unlike Edom, we must reflect Christ and be willing to help others in times of need. We have nothing to be proud of except Jesus Christ and what He has done for us.

## XXXII

# **JONAH**

## WHO WROTE IT?

Jonah I:I specifically identifies the Prophet Jonah as the author of the book of Jonah.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Jonah was likely written between 793 and 758 BC.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Disobedience and revival are the key themes in this book. Jonah's experience in the belly of the fish provides him with a unique opportunity to seek a unique deliverance, as he repents during this equally unique retreat. His initial disobedience leads not only to his personal revival, but to that of the Ninevites as well. Many classify the revival which Jonah brings to Nineveh as one of the greatest evangelistic efforts of all time.

## SOME KEY VERSES

But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish.

**JONAH 1:3** 

And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

**JONAH 1:17** 

I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.

#### JONAH 2:2

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

**JONAH 3:10** 

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Jonah's fear and pride cause him to run from God. He does not wish to go to Nineveh to preach repentance to the people, as God has commanded, because he feels they are his enemies, and he is convinced that God will not carry out his threat to destroy the city. Instead he boards a ship for Tarshish, which is in the opposite direction. Soon a raging storm causes the crew to cast lots and determine that Jonah is the problem. They throw him overboard, and he is swallowed by a great fish. In its belly for 3 days and 3 nights, Jonah repents of his sin to God, and the fish vomits him up on dry land. Jonah then makes the 500-mile trip to Nineveh and leads the city in a great revival. But the prophet is displeased (actually whines) instead of being thankful when Nineveh repents. Jonah learns his lesson, however, when God uses the wind, a gourd, and a worm to teach him that He is merciful.

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

That Jonah is a type of Christ is clear from Jesus' own words. In Matthew 12:40-41, Jesus declares that He will be in the grave the same amount of time Jonah was in the fish's belly. He goes on to say that while the Ninevites repented in the face of Jonah's preaching, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law who rejected Jesus were rejecting One who is far greater than Jonah. Just as Jonah brought the truth of God regarding repentance and salvation to the Ninevites, so too does Jesus bring the same message (Jonah 2:9; John 14:6) of salvation of and through God alone (Romans II:36).

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

We cannot hide from God. What He wishes to accomplish through us will come to pass, despite all our objections and foot-dragging. Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that He has plans for us and will see to it that we conform to those plans.

God's love manifests itself in His accessibility to all, regardless of our reputation, nationality, or race. The free offer of the Gospel is for all people in all times. Our task as followers of Christ is to be used by God to tell the world of the Gospel and to rejoice in the salvation of others. This is an experience God wants us to share with Him.

## XXXIII

# **MICAH**

## WHO WROTE IT?

The author of the book of Micah was the Prophet Micah (Micah I:I).

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Micah was likely written between 735 and 700 BC.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The message of Micah is a complex mixture of judgment and hope. On the one hand, the prophecies announce judgment upon Israel for social evils, corrupt leadership, and idolatry. This judgment was expected to culminate in the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem. On the other hand, the book proclaims not merely the restoration of the nation, but the transformation and exaltation of Israel and Jerusalem. The messages of hope and doom are not necessarily contradictory, however, since restoration and transformation take place only after judgment.

## SOME KEY VERSES

Hear, you peoples, all of you; pay attention, O earth, and all that is in it, and let the Lord God be a witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

MICAH 1:2

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

#### **MICAH 5:2**

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

#### MICAH 6:8

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

#### MICAH 7:18-19

## A QUICK SUMMARY

The prophet condemns the rulers, priests, and prophets of Israel who exploit and mislead the people. It is because of their deeds that Jerusalem will be destroyed. The prophet Micah proclaims the deliverance of the people who will go from Jerusalem to Babylon and concludes with an exhortation for Jerusalem to destroy the nations who have gathered against her. The ideal ruler would come from Bethlehem to defend the nation, and the prophet proclaims the triumph of the remnant of Jacob and foresees a day when Yahweh will purge the nation of idolatry and reliance on military might. The prophet sets forth a powerful and concise summary of Yahweh's requirement for justice and loyalty and announces judgment upon those who have followed the ways of Omri and Ahab. The book closes with a prophetic liturgy comprising elements of a lament. Israel confesses its sin and is assured of deliverance through Yahweh's mighty acts.

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

Micah 5:2 is a messianic prophecy quoted when the magi were searching for the king born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:6). These kings from the East were told that from the tiny village of Bethlehem would come forth the Prince of Peace, the Light of the world. Micah's message of sin, repentance, and restoration finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ who is the propitiation (or payment) for our sins (Romans 3:24-25) and the only way to God (John 14:6).

# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

God gives warnings so we will not have to suffer His wrath. Judgment is certain if God's warnings are not heeded and His provision for sin in the sacrifice of His Son is rejected. For the believer in Christ, God will discipline us—not from hate—but because He loves us. He knows that sin destroys and He wants us to be whole. This wholeness—which is the promise of restoration—awaits those who choose Him.

## XXXIV

# **NAHUM**

## WHO WROTE IT?

The author of the book of Nahum identifies himself as Nahum (in the Hebrew "consoler" or "comforter") the Elkoshite (I:I). There are many theories as to where that city was though there is no conclusive evidence. One such theory is that it refers to the city later called Capernaum (which literally means "the village of Nahum") at the Sea of Galilee.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Given the limited amount of information that we know about Nahum, the best we can do is narrow the timeframe in which the book of Nahum was written to between 663 and 612 BC. Two events are mentioned that help us to determine these dates. First, Nahum mentions Thebes (No Amon) in Egypt falling to the Assyrians (663 BC) in the past tense, so it had already happened. Second, the remainder of Nahum's prophecies came true in 612 BC.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Nahum did not write this book as a warning or "call to repentance" for the people of Nineveh. God had already sent them the prophet Jonah 150 years earlier with His promise of what would happen if they continued in their evil ways. The people at that time had repented but now lived just as bad if not worse than they did before. The Assyrians had become absolutely brutal in their conquests (hanging the bodies of their victims on poles and putting their skin on the walls of their tents among other atrocities). Now Nahum was telling the people of Judah to not despair because God had pronounced judgment and the Assyrians would soon be getting just what they deserved.

## SOME KEY VERSES

The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.

#### **NAHUM 1:7**

The Lord has given commandment about you: "No more shall your name be perpetuated."

#### **NAHUM 1:14**

Behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace!

#### **NAHUM 1:15**

Behold, I am against you, declares the Lord of hosts.

#### **NAHUM 2:13**

There is no easing your hurt; your wound is grievous. All who hear the news about you clap their hands over you. For upon whom has not come your unceasing evil?

**NAHUM 3:19** 

# **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Nineveh once had responded to the preaching of Jonah and turned from their evil ways to serve the Lord God. But 150 years later, Nineveh returned to idolatry, violence, and arrogance (Nahum 3:I-4). Once again God sends one of His prophets to Nineveh warning of judgment in the form of the destruction of their city and exhorting them to repentance. Sadly, the Ninevites did not heed's Nahum's warning, and the city was brought under the dominion of Babylon.

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

Paul repeats Nahum I:15 in Romans IO:15 in regard to the Messiah and His ministry, as well as the apostles of Christ in His time. It may also be understood of any minister of the Gospel whose business it is to "preach the good news." God has made peace with sinners by the blood of Christ, and has given to His people the peace

that "surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). The preacher's work is also to "preach the good news" (Romans 10:15) of reconciliation, righteousness, pardon, life, and eternal salvation by a crucified Christ. "How beautiful are the feet" of those who preach the Gospel, and bring such news (Romans 10:15). The imagery here is of one who runs to others, eager and joyful to proclaim the Good News.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

God is patient and slow to anger. He gives every country time to proclaim Him as their Lord. But He is not mocked. Any time a country turns away from Him to serve its own motives, He steps in with judgment. As Christians it is our duty to stand up for biblical principles and scriptural truth, for the Truth is our only hope.

## XXXV

# HABAKKUK

## WHO WROTE IT?

Habakkuk I:I identifies the book of Habakkuk as an oracle from the Prophet Habakkuk.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Habakkuk was likely written between 610 and 605 BC.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Habakkuk was wondering why God was allowing His chosen people to go through the current suffering at the hands of their enemies. God answers and Habakkuk's faith is restored.

### SOME KEY VERSES

O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save?

#### HABAKKUK 1:2

Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.

#### HABAKKUK 1:5

Are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die.

#### HABAKKUK 1:12

And the Lord answered me: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

#### HABAKKUK 2:2-4

But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.

#### HABAKKUK 2:20

O Lord, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

#### HABAKKUK 3:2

God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.

HABAKKUK 3:19

# **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The book begins with Habakkuk crying out to God for an answer to why God's chosen people are allowed to suffer in their captivity (Habakkuk I:I-4). The Lord gives His answer to Habakkuk, essentially stating, "You wouldn't believe it if I told you" (Habakkuk I: 5-II). Habakkuk then follows up by expressing, "Ok, you are God, but still tell me more about why this is happening" (Habakkuk I:I7-2:I). God then answers him again and gives him more information, then tells the earth to be silent before Him (Habakkuk 2:2-20). Then Habakkuk writes a prayer expressing his strong faith in God, even through these trials (Habakkuk 3:I-I9).

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

The Apostle Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 on two different occasions (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:II) to reiterate the doctrine of justification by faith. The faith that is the gift of God and available through Christ is at once a faith that saves (Ephesians 2:8-9) and a faith that sustains throughout life. We attain eternal life by faith and we live the Christian life by the same faith. Unlike the "proud" in the beginning of the verse, whose soul is not right within him and whose desires are not upright, but we who are made righteous by faith in Christ are made completely righteous because He has exchanged His perfect righteousness for our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21) and has enabled us to live by faith.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The application to the reader of Habakkuk is that it is permissible to question what God is doing, although with respect and reverence. Sometimes it is not evident to us what is going on, especially if we are thrown into suffering for a period of time or if it seems our enemies are prospering while we are just barely getting by. The book of Habakkuk affirms that God is a sovereign, omnipotent God who has all things under control. We just need to be still and know He is at work. He is who He says He is and does keep His promises. He will punish the wicked. Even when we cannot see it, He is still on the throne of the universe. We need to stay focused on this: "God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places" (Habakkuk 3:19). Enabling us to go on the heights is taking us to the higher places with Him where we are set apart from the world. Sometimes the way we have to go to get us there is through suffering and sorrow, but if we rest in Him and trust Him, we come out where He wants us.

## XXXVI

# ZEPHANIAH

## WHO WROTE IT?

Zephaniah I:I identifies the author as the Prophet Zephaniah. The name Zephaniah means "defended by God."

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Zephaniah was written during the reign of King Josiah, likely in the early part of his reign, between 635 and 625 BC.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Zephaniah's message of judgment and encouragement contains three major doctrines:

- God is sovereign over all nations.
- The wicked will be punished and the righteous will be vindicated on the day of judgment.
- God blesses those who repent and trust in Him.

## SOME KEY VERSES

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the Lord. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

**ZEPHANIAH 1:18** 

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord.

#### ZEPHANIAH 2:3

The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

ZEPHANIAH 3:17

# A QUICK SUMMARY

Zephaniah pronounces the Lord's judgment on the whole earth, on Judah, on the surrounding nations, on Jerusalem and on all nations. This is followed by proclamations of the Lord's blessing on all nations and especially on the faithful remnant of His people in Judah.

Zephaniah had the courage to speak bluntly because he knew he was proclaiming the Word of the Lord. His book begins with "the word of the Lord" and ends with "says the Lord." He knew that neither the many gods the people worshiped nor even the might of the Assyrian army could save them. God is gracious and compassionate, but when all His warnings are ignored, judgment is to be expected. God's day of judgment is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. The prophets called it the "Day of the Lord." They referred to various events such as the fall of Jerusalem as manifestations of God's Day, each of which pointed toward the ultimate Day of the Lord.

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

The final blessings on Zion pronounced in Zephaniah 3:14-20 are largely unful-filled, leading us to conclude that these are messianic prophecies that await the Second Coming of Christ to be completed. The Lord has taken away our punishment only through Christ who came to die for the sins of His people (Zephaniah 3:15; John 3:16). But Israel has not yet recognized her true Savior. This is yet to happen (Romans II:25-27).

The promise of peace and safety for Israel, a time when their King is in their midst, will be fulfilled when Christ returns to judge the world and redeem it for Himself. Just as He ascended to heaven after His resurrection, so will He return and set up a new Jerusalem on earth (Revelation 21). At that time, all God's promises to Israel will be fulfilled.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

With a few adjustments in names and situations, this prophet of the 7th century BC could stand in our churches today and deliver the same message of judgment of the wicked and hope for the faithful. Zephaniah reminds us that God is offended by the moral and religious sins of His people. God's people will not escape punishment when they sin willfully. Punishment may be painful, but its purpose may be redemptive rather than punitive. The inevitability of the punishment of wickedness gives comfort in a time when it seems that evil is unbridled and victorious. We have the freedom to disobey God but not the freedom to escape the consequences of that disobedience. Those who are faithful to God may be relatively few, but He does not forget them.

## XXXVII

# HAGGAI

## WHO WROTE IT?

Haggai I:I identifies the author of the book of Haggai as the Prophet Haggai.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Haggai was written in approximately 520 BC.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Haggai sought to challenge the people of God concerning their priorities. He called them to reverence and to glorify God by building the Temple in spite of local and official opposition. Haggai called them not to be discouraged because this Temple would not be quite as richly decorated as Solomon's. He exhorted them to turn from the uncleanness of their ways and to trust in God's sovereign power. The book of Haggai is a reminder of the problems the people of God faced at this time, how the people courageously trusted in God, and how God provided for their needs.

## SOME KEY VERSES

Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?

#### HAGGAI 1:4

Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill.

You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

#### HAGGAI 1:5-6

The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts.

HAGGAI 2:9

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Will the people of God reconsider their priorities, take courage, and act on the basis of God's promises? God warned the people to heed His words. Not only did God warn them, but He also offered promises through His servant Haggai to motivate them to follow Him. Because the people of God reversed their priorities and failed to put God in first place in their lives, Judah was sent into Babylonian exile. In response to Daniel's prayer and in fulfillment of God's promises, God directed Cyrus the Persian king to allow the Jews in exile to go back to Jerusalem. A group of Jews returned to their land with great joy, put God first in their lives, worshiped Him and began to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem without the aid of the local people who lived in Israel. Their courageous faith was met with opposition from the local people as well as the Persian government for about 15 years.

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

As with most of the books of the minor prophets, Haggai ends with promises of restoration and blessing. In the last verse, Haggai 2:23, God uses a distinctly messianic title in reference to Zerubbabel, "My Servant" (Compare 2 Samuel 3:18; I Kings II:34; Isaiah 42:I-9; Ezekiel 37:24,25). Through Haggai, God promises to make him like a signet ring, which was a symbol of honor, authority, and power, somewhat like a king's scepter used to seal letters and decrees. Zerubbabel, as God's signet ring, represents the house of David and the resumption of the messianic line interrupted by the Exile. Zerubbabel reestablished the Davidic line of kings which would culminate in the millennial reign of Christ. Zerubbabel appears in the line of Christ on both Joseph's side (Matthew I:12) and Mary's side (Luke 3:27).

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The book of Haggai draws attention to common problems most people face even today. Haggai asks us:

- To examine our priorities to see if we are more interested in our own pleasures than doing the work of God
- To reject a defeatist attitude when we run into opposition or discouraging circumstances
- To confess our failures and seek to live pure lives before God
- To act courageously for God because we have the assurance that He is with us always and is in full control of our circumstances
- To rest secure in God's hands knowing that He blesses us and we're called to faithfully serve Him.

## XXXVIII

# ZECHARIAH

## WHO WROTE IT?

Zechariah I:I identifies the author of the book as the Prophet Zechariah.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Zechariah was likely written in two primary segments, between 520 and 470 BC.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Zechariah emphasized that God has used His prophets to teach, warn, and correct His people. Unfortunately they refused to listen—their sin brought God's punishment. This book also bears evidence that even prophecy could be corrupted. History shows that in this period, prophecy fell into disfavor among the Jews, leading to the period between the Testaments when no lasting prophetic voice spoke to God's people.

## SOME KEY VERSES

Therefore say to them, Thus declares the Lord of hosts: Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.

#### **ZECHARIAH 1:3**

"As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear," says the Lord of hosts.

#### **ZECHARIAH 7:13**

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

#### **7FCHARIAH 9:9**

And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The Lord is my God.'

**ZECHARIAH 13:9** 

## A QUICK SUMMARY

Zechariah teaches that salvation may be obtained by all. The last chapter depicts peoples from all over the world coming to worship God, who desires that all people follow Him. This is not the doctrine of universalism (that all people would be saved because it is God's nature to save). Rather, the book teaches that God desires that all people worship Him and accepts those who do, regardless of their national or political expressions, as in the freeing of Judah and Jerusalem from their political enemies.

Zechariah preached that God is sovereign over this world. His visions of the future indicate that God sees all that will happen. The depictions of God's intervention in the world teach that ultimately He will bring human events to the end He chooses. He does not eliminate the individual's freedom to follow God or rebel, but holds people responsible for the choices they make. In the last chapter, even the forces of nature respond to God's control.

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

Prophecies about Jesus Christ and the messianic era abound in Zechariah. From the promise that the Messiah would come and dwell in our midst (Zechariah 2:IO-I2; Matthew I:23) to the symbolism of the Branch and the Stone (Zechariah 3:8-9, 6:I2-I3; Isaiah II:I; Luke 20:I7-I8) to the promise of His Second Coming where they who pierced Him will look upon Him and mourn (Zechariah I2:I0; John

19:33-37), Christ is the theme of the book of Zechariah. Jesus is the Savior of Israel, a fountain whose blood covers the sins of all who come to Him for salvation (Zechariah 13:1; I John 1:7).

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

God expects sincere worship and moral living of us today. Zechariah's example of breaking through national prejudice reminds us to reach out into all areas of our society. We must extend God's invitation of salvation to people of all national origins, languages, races, and cultures. That salvation is only available through the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross, who died in our place to atone for sin. But if we reject that sacrifice, there is no other sacrifice through which we can be reconciled to God. "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

## XXXIX

# **MALACHI**

## WHO WROTE IT?

Malachi I:I identifies the author of the book as the Prophet Malachi.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Malachi was written between 440 and 400 BC.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of Malachi is an oracle: "The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi" (Malachi I:I). This was God's warning through Malachi to tell the people to turn back to God. As the final book of the Old Testament closes, the pronouncement of God's justice and the promise of His restoration through the coming Messiah is ringing in the ears of the Israelites. Four hundred years of silence ensues, ending with a similar message from God's next prophet, John the Baptist, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2).

## SOME KEY VERSES

A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'

MALACHI 1:6

For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?'

MALACHI 3:6-7

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Malachi wrote the words of the Lord to God's chosen people who had gone astray, especially the priests who had turned from the Lord. Priests were not treating the sacrifices they were to make to God seriously. Animals with blemishes were being sacrificed even though the Law demanded animals without defect (Deuteronomy 15:21). The men of Judah were dealing with the wives of their youth treacherously and wondering why God would not accept their sacrifices. Also, people were not tithing as they should have been (Leviticus 27:30, 32). But in spite of the people's sin and turning away from God, Malachi reiterates God's love for His people (Malachi I:I-5) and His promises of a coming Messenger (Malachi 2:I7-3:5).

## **FORESHADOWINGS**

Malachi 3:I-6 is a prophecy concerning John the Baptist. He was the Messenger of the Lord sent to prepare the way (Matthew II:IO) for the Messiah, Jesus Christ. John preached repentance and baptized in the name of the Lord, thus preparing the way for Jesus' first advent. But the Messenger who comes "suddenly to the Temple" is Christ Himself in His second coming when He comes in power and might (Matthew 24). At that time, He will "purify the sons of Levi" (Malachi 3:3), meaning that those who exemplified the Mosaic Law would themselves need purification from sin through the blood of the Savior. Only then will they be able to offer "an offering in righteousness" because it will be the righteousness of Christ imputed to them through faith (2 Corinthians 5:21).

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

God isn't pleased when we don't obey His commands. He will repay those who disregard Him. As for God hating divorce (Malachi 2:16), God takes the covenant of marriage seriously and He does not want it broken. We are to stay true to the spouse of our youth for a lifetime. God sees our hearts, so He knows what our intentions are—nothing can be hidden from Him. He will return and He will be the judge. But if we return to Him, He will return to us (Malachi 3:6).



Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts



# HOW DOES THIS TYPE OF LITERATURE FIT INTO THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE?

It has been said that the narratives about Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension are not only the centerpiece of history, but perhaps also the crux of the entire Bible. After all, the Old Testament looks forward to Jesus and the remainder of the New Testament look back to Him.

# HOW DO WE READ THE NARRATIVE WRITINGS NORMALLY?

Generally speaking, the Gospels and Acts are selective theological accounts written to introduce various audiences to Jesus in ways that would bring them to saving faith. It is important to understand that the authors of narrative positioned themselves as recording actual history, giving accurate accounts of the life and ministries of Jesus and the apostles. However, the Gospels also record a number of Jesus' parables, hypothetical stories that convey concrete truths about the human condition and God's gracious love for sinners. Thus, while parables may be non-literal, it is clear that the miracles (such as Jesus' resurrection) are to be understood as events that literally took place. Taken as a whole, narratives collectively emphasize different facets of Jesus' life, teaching, and saving work.

# HOW DOES THIS PART OF THE BIBLE POINT TO JESUS?

By extensively quoting the Old Testament, Matthew's Jewish audience saw Jesus as the one to whom The Law pointed and as the One who fulfilled it. Mark wrote to suffering roman Christians about Jesus as the suffering Servant. John's eyewitness account of Jesus positions Him as the eternal Word, as God Himself (10:30) and uses symbolic language (e.g. 'bread, light, and the good shepherd') to convey the significance of Jesus' identity. Luke wrote to provide an orderly account of how Jesus came to seek and save the lost, but yet didn't spare Himself. As the great physician, Jesus was presented as one who could remedy the daunting problem of sin that universally plagues everyone. As Luke's sequel to his gospel, Acts spans the time from Jesus' ascension to the formation of early church, where His apostles carried out His great commission to make disciples of the nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

# HOW DO THE NARRATIVE WRITINGS FIT INTO OUR LIVES TODAY?

At Riv we exist to proclaim the liberating power of the gospel as we grow, serve, and go. You may have heard this once or twice before, but in these biographical accounts of Jesus' life and ministry you find not only who we proclaim, but the implications of that proclamation. Note that 'Christ' is not Jesus's last name; rather, 'Christ' is the Greek way to talk about the Hebrew messiah. When Jesus asks His followers who they say He is, they answer, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). In Jesus we not only see Israel's messianic hope, we see hope for all of humanity. So, in concert with the gospel accounts, we proclaim that Jesus is the Christ and live into the implication of that proclamation. In other words, we embrace Jesus as our present hope, the one who offers us life with God by faith—not just afterlife, but life here and now. Life that tells our dying world and misdirected desires that freedom is real and His name is Jesus.

## XL

# **MATTHEW**

## WHO WROTE IT?

This book is known as the gospel of Matthew because it was written by the apostle of the same name. The style of the book is exactly what would be expected of a man who was once a tax collector. Matthew has a keen interest in accounting (Matthew 18:23-24; 25:14-15). Matthew is very orderly and concise. Rather than write in chronological order, Matthew arranges this book through six discussions.

As a tax collector, Matthew possessed a skill that makes his writing all the more exciting for Christians. Tax collectors were expected to be able to write in a form of shorthand, which essentially meant that Matthew could record a person's words as they spoke, word for word. For example, the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in chapters 5-7, is almost certainly a perfect recording of that great message.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

As an apostle, Matthew wrote the gospel of Matthew in the early period of the church, probably in AD 55-65. This was a time when most Christians were Jewish converts, so Matthew's focus on Jewish perspective in this gospel is understandable.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Matthew intends to prove to the Jews that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah. More than any other, the gospel of Matthew quotes the Old Testament to show how Jesus fulfilled the words of the Jewish prophets. Matthew describes in detail the lineage of Jesus from David, and uses many forms of speech that Jews would have been comfortable with. Matthew's love and concern for his people is apparent through his meticulous approach to telling the Gospel story.

## SOME KEY VERSES

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

#### MATTHEW 5:17

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

#### **MATTHEW 5:43-44**

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

#### **MATTHEW 6:9-13**

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

#### **MATTHEW 16:26**

And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

#### MATTHEW 22:37-40

And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

#### **MATTHEW 27:31**

But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay."

#### **MATTHEW 28:5-6**

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

MATTHEW 28:19-20

## A QUICK SUMMARY

Matthew discusses the lineage, birth, and early life of Christ in the first two chapters. From there, the book discusses the ministry of Jesus. The descriptions of Christ's teachings are arranged around "discourses" such as the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5 through 7. Chapter 10 involves the mission and purpose of the disciples; chapter 13 is a collection of parables; chapter 18 discusses the church; chapter 23 begins a discourse about hypocrisy and the future. Chapters 21 through 27 discuss the arrest, torture, and execution of Jesus. The final chapter describes the Resurrection and the Great Commission.

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Because Matthew's purpose is to present Jesus Christ as the King and Messiah of Israel, he quotes from the Old Testament more than any of the other three gospel writers. Matthew quotes more than 60 times from prophetic passages of the Old Testament, demonstrating how Jesus fulfilled them. He begins his gospel with the genealogy of Jesus, tracing Him back to Abraham, the forefather of the Jews. From there, Matthew quotes extensively from the prophets, frequently using the phrase "as was spoken through the prophet(s)" (Matthew I:22-23, 2:5-6, 2:15, 4:13-16, 8:16-17, 13:35, 21:4-5). These verses refer to the Old Testament prophecies of His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14) in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), His return from Egypt after the death of Herod (Hosea II:I), His ministry to the Gentiles (Isaiah 9:1-2; 60:1-3), His miraculous healings of both body and soul (Isaiah 53:4), His speaking in parables (Psalm 78:2), and His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9).

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Matthew is an excellent introduction to the core teachings of Christianity. The logical outline style makes it easy to locate discussions of various topics. Matthew is especially useful for understanding how the life of Christ was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Matthew's intended audience was his fellow Jews, many of whom—especially the Pharisees and Sadducees—stubbornly refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah. In spite of centuries of reading and studying the Old Testament, their eyes were blinded to the truth of who Jesus was. Jesus rebuked them for their hard hearts and their refusal to recognize the One they had supposedly been waiting for (John 5:38-40). They wanted a Messiah on their own terms, one who would fulfill their own desires and do what they wanted Him to do. How often do we seek God on our own terms? Don't we reject Him by ascribing to Him only those attributes we find acceptable, the ones that make us feel good—His love, mercy, grace—while rejecting those we find objectionable—His wrath, justice, and holy anger? We dare not make the mistake of the Pharisees, creating God in our own image and then expecting Him to live up to our standards. Such a god is nothing more than an idol. The Bible gives us more than enough information about the true nature and identity of God and Jesus Christ to warrant our worship and our obedience.

## XLI

# **MARK**

## WHO WROTE IT?

Although the gospel of Mark does not name its author, it is the unanimous testimony of early church fathers that Mark was the author. He was an associate of the Apostle Peter, and evidently his spiritual son (I Peter 5:13). From Peter he received first-hand information of the events and teachings of the Lord, and preserved the information in written form.

It is generally agreed that Mark is the John Mark of the New Testament (Acts 12:12). His mother was a wealthy and prominent Christian in the Jerusalem church, and probably the church met in her home. Mark joined Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but not on the second because of a strong disagreement between the two men (Acts 15:37-38). However, near the end of Paul's life he called for Mark to be with him (2 Timothy 4:11).

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Mark was likely one of the first books written in the New Testament, probably in AD 55-59.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Whereas Matthew is written primarily to his fellow Jews, Mark's gospel appears to be targeted to the Roman believers, particularly Gentiles. Mark wrote as a pastor to Christians who previously had heard and believed the Gospel (Romans I:8). He desired that they have a biographical story of Jesus Christ as Servant of the Lord and Savior of the world in order to strengthen their faith in the face of severe persecution and to teach them what it meant to be His disciples.

## SOME KEY VERSES

And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

#### **MARK 1:17**

But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

#### MARK 10:14-15

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

#### **MARK 10:45**

And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him."

#### **MARK 16:6**

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

This gospel is unique because it emphasizes Jesus' actions more than His teaching. It is simply written, moving quickly from one episode in the life of Christ to another. It does not begin with a genealogy as in Matthew, because Gentiles would not be interested in His lineage. After the introduction of Jesus at His baptism, Jesus began His public ministry in Galilee and called the first four of His twelve disciples. What follows is the record of Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection.

Mark's account is not just a collection of stories, but a narrative written to reveal that Jesus is the Messiah, not only for the Jews, but for the Gentiles as well. In a dynamic profession, the disciples, led by Peter, acknowledged their faith in Him (Mark 8:29-30), even though they failed to understand fully His Messiahship until after His resurrection.

As we follow His journeys through Galilee, the surrounding areas, and then to Judea, we realize what a rapid pace He set. He touched the lives of many people, but He left an indelible mark on His disciples. At the transfiguration (Mark 9:1-9), He gave three of them a preview of His future return in power and glory, and again it was revealed to them who He was.

In the days leading to His final trip to Jerusalem, we see the disciples bewildered, fearful, and doubting. At Jesus' arrest, He stood alone after they fled. In the following hours of the mock trials, Jesus boldly proclaimed that He is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One, and that He would be triumphant at His return (Mark 14:61-62). The climactic events surrounding the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection were not witnessed by most of His disciples. But several faithful women did witness it. After the Sabbath, early in the morning of the first day of the week, they went to the tomb with burial spices. When they saw the stone had been rolled away, they entered the tomb. It was not the body of Jesus they saw, but an angel robed in white. The joyful message they received was, "He is risen!" Women were the first evangelists, as they spread the good news of His resurrection. This same message has been broadcast throughout the world in the following centuries down to us today.

#### **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Because Mark's intended audience was the Gentiles, he does not quote as frequently from the Old Testament as Matthew, who was writing primarily to the Jews. He does not begin with a genealogy to link Jesus with the Jewish patriarchs, but begins instead with His baptism, the beginning of His earthly ministry. But even there, Mark quotes from an Old Testament prophecy regarding the messenger—John the Baptist—who would exhort the people to "prepare the way of the Lord" (Mark I:3; Isaiah 40:3) as they awaited the coming of their Messiah.

Jesus does refer to the Old Testament in several passages in Mark. In Mark 7:6, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their superficial worship of God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him and refers to their own prophet, Isaiah, to convict them of their hardheartedness (Isaiah 29:13). Jesus referred to another Old Testament prophecy which was to be fulfilled that very night as the disciples would be scattered like sheep without a shepherd when Jesus was arrested and put to death (Mark 14:27; Zechariah 13:7). He referred again to Isaiah when He cleansed the Temple of the

money-changers (Mark II:15-17; Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:II), and to the Psalms when He explained that He was the chief Cornerstone of our faith and of the Church (Mark I2:IO-II; Psalm II8:22-23).

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Mark presents Jesus as the suffering Servant of God (Mark IO:45) and as the One who came to serve and sacrifice for us, in part to inspire us to do the same. We are to minister as He did, with the same greatness of humility and devotion to the service of others. Jesus exhorted us to remember that to be great in God's kingdom, we must be the servant of all (Mark IO:44). Self-sacrifice should transcend our need for recognition or reward, just as Jesus was willing to be abased as He lay down His life for the sheep.

## **XLII**

# **LUKE**

## WHO WROTE IT?

The gospel of Luke does not clearly identify its author. From Luke I:I-4 and Acts I:I-3, it is clear that the same author wrote both Luke and Acts, addressing both to "most excellent Theophilus," possibly a Roman dignitary. The tradition from the earliest days of the church has been that Luke, a physician and a close companion of the Apostle Paul, wrote both Luke and Acts (Colossians 4:I4; 2 Timothy 4:II). This would make Luke the only Gentile to pen any books of Scripture.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Luke was likely written between AD 58 and 65.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

As with the other two synoptic gospels—Matthew and Mark—this book's purpose is to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and "all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up" (Acts I:I-2). Luke is unique in that it is a meticulous history—an "orderly account" (Luke I:3) consistent with the Luke's medical mind—often giving details the other accounts omit. Luke's history of the life of the Great Physician emphasizes His ministry to—and compassion for—Gentiles, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinners, and others regarded as outcasts in Israel.

# **SOME KEY VERSES**

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while

they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

#### **LUKE 2:4-7**

John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

#### **LUKE 3:16**

And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.

#### LUKE 18:31-32

And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

#### LUKE 23:33-34

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

#### **LUKE 24:1-3**

# **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Luke begins by telling us about Jesus' parents; the birth of His cousin, John the Baptist; Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, where Jesus is born in a manger; and the genealogy of Christ through Mary. Jesus' public ministry reveals His perfect compassion and forgiveness through the stories of the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, and the Good Samaritan. While many believe in this unprejudiced love that surpasses all human limits, many others—especially the religious leaders—challenge and oppose the claims of Jesus. Christ's followers are encouraged to count the cost of discipleship, while His enemies seek His death on the cross. Finally, Jesus is betrayed, tried, sentenced, and crucified. But the grave cannot hold Him. His Resurrection assures the continuation of His ministry of seeking and saving the lost.

#### **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Since Luke was a Gentile, his references to the Old Testament are relatively few compared to those in Matthew's gospel, and most of the Old Testament references are in the words spoken by Jesus rather than in Luke's narration. Jesus used the Old Testament to defend against Satan's attacks, answering him with "it is written" (Luke 4:I-I3); to identify Himself as the promised Messiah (Luke 4:I7-2I); to remind the Pharisees of their inability to keep the Law and their need of a Savior (Luke IO:25-28, I8:I8-27); and to confound their learning when they tried to trap and trick Him (Luke 20).

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The gospel of Luke gives us a beautiful portrait of our compassionate Savior. Jesus was not turned off by the poor and the needy; in fact, they were a primary focus of His ministry. Israel at the time of Jesus was a very class-conscious society. The weak and downtrodden were literally powerless to improve their lot in life and were especially open to the message that "the kingdom of God has come near to you" (Luke 10:9). This is a message we must carry to those around us who desperately need to hear it. Even in comparatively wealthy countries—perhaps especially so—the spiritual need is dire. Christians must follow the example of Jesus and bring the good news of salvation to the spiritually poor and needy. The kingdom of God is near and the time grows shorter every day.

## **XLIII**

# **JOHN**

## WHO WROTE IT?

John 21:20–24 describes the author of the gospel of John as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and for both historical and internal reasons this is understood to be John the Apostle, one of the sons of Zebedee (Luke 5:10).

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Discovery of certain papyrus fragments dated around AD 135 require the gospel of John to have been written, copied, and circulated before then. And, while some think it was written before Jerusalem was destroyed (AD 70), AD 85—90 is a more accepted time for the writing of the gospel of John.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The author cites the purpose of the gospel of John as follows: "But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Unlike the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), John's purpose is not to present a chronological narrative of the life of Christ but to display His deity. John sought to strengthen the faith of second-generation believers and bring about faith in others, but he also sought to correct a false teaching that was spreading in the first century. John emphasized Jesus Christ as "the Son of God," fully God and fully man, contrary to a false doctrine that taught the "Christ-spirit" came upon the human Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the crucifixion.

## SOME KEY VERSES

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

#### JOHN 1:1, 14

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

INHN 1:29

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

#### JOHN 3:16

Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

#### JOHN 6:29

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

#### JOHN 10:10

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

#### JOHN 10:28

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

#### JOHN 11:25-26

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

#### JOHN 13:35

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

#### JOHN 14:6

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?

#### JOHN 14:9

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

#### JOHN 17:17

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

#### JOHN 19:30

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

#### JOHN 20:29

## A QUICK SUMMARY

John includes only seven miracles—John calls them "signs"—to demonstrate the deity of Christ and illustrate His ministry. Some of these miracles and stories, such as the raising of Lazarus, are found only in John. His is the most theological of the four Gospels, and he often gives the reason behind events mentioned in the other gospels. The gospel of John shares much about the approaching ministry of the Holy Spirit after Jesus' ascension. There are certain words or phrases that create a recurring theme in the gospel of John: believe, witness, comforter, life – death, light – darkness, I Am, and love.

John introduces Jesus Christ, not from His birth, but from "the beginning," before creation. John calls Jesus "the Word" (Logos) who, as God Himself, was involved in every aspect of creation (John I:I-3) and who later became flesh (verse I4) in order that He might take away our sins as the spotless Lamb of God (verse 29). The gospel of John includes several spiritual conversations, such as Jesus' talk with the Samaritan woman that shows Him as the Messiah (John 4:26), and Jesus' meeting with Nicodemus that explains salvation through by His vicarious death on the cross (John 3:I4-I6). In the gospel of John, Jesus repeatedly angers the Jewish leaders by correcting them (John 2:I3-I6), healing on the Sabbath, and claiming traits belonging only to God (John 5:18; 8:56-59; 9:6, I6; I0:33).

The last nine chapters of John deal with the final week of Jesus' life. Jesus prepares His disciples for His coming death and for their ministry after His resurrection and ascension (John 14–17). He then willingly dies on the cross in our place (John 10:15–18), paying our sin debt in full (John 19:30) so that whoever trusts in Him will be saved (John 3:14–16). Jesus then rises from the dead, convincing even the most doubting of His disciples that He is God and Master (John 20:24–29).

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

John's portrayal of Jesus as the God of the Old Testament is seen most emphatically in the seven "I Am" statements of Jesus. He is the "Bread of life" (John 6:35), provided by God to feed the souls of His people, just as He provided manna from heaven to feed the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 16:11–36). Jesus is the "Light of the world" (John 8:12), the same Light that God promised to His people in the Old Testament (Isaiah 30:26; 60:19–22), and which will find its culmination in the New Jerusalem when Christ the Lamb will be its Light (Revelation 21:23). Two of the "I Am" statements refer to Jesus as both the "Good Shepherd" and the "Door of the sheep." Here are clear references to Jesus as the God of the Old Testament, the Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 23:1; 80:1; Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 34:23) and, as the only Door into the sheepfold, the only way of salvation.

The Jews believed in the resurrection and, in fact, used the doctrine to try to trick Jesus into making statements they could use against Him. But His statement at the tomb of Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John II:25), must have astounded them. He was claiming to be the cause of resurrection, and in possession of the power of life and death. None other than God Himself could claim such a

thing. Similarly, Jesus' claim to be "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) linked Him unmistakably to the Old Testament. His is the "Way of Holiness" prophesied in Isaiah 35:8; He established the City of Truth of Zechariah 8:3 when He was in Jerusalem, and preached the truths of the Gospel. As "the Life," Jesus affirms His deity, the Creator of life, God incarnate (John 1:1–3; Genesis 2:7). Finally, as the "true Vine" (John 15:1, 5), Jesus identifies Himself with the nation of Israel, who are called the vineyard of the Lord in many Old Testament passages. As the true Vine of the vineyard of Israel, He portrays Himself as the Lord of the "true Israel"—all those who would come to Him in faith (cf. Romans 9:6).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

John continues to fulfill its purpose of evangelizing the lost (John 3:16 is likely the best-known Bible verse), and is often used in evangelistic Bible studies. In the recorded encounters between Jesus and Nicodemus and the woman at the well (chapters 3—4), we learn much from Jesus' model of personal evangelism. His comforting words to His disciples before His death (John 14:1–6, 16; 16:33) are still of great comfort in sorrowful times. Jesus' "high priestly prayer" for believers in chapter 17 is also a wonderful source of encouragement for believers. John's teachings concerning the deity of Christ (John 1:1–3, 14; 5:22–23; 8:58; 14:8–9; 20:28) are helpful in apologetics and provide a clear revelation of who Jesus is: fully God and fully man.

## **XLIV**

# **ACTS**

## WHO WROTE IT?

Acts does not specifically identify its author. From Luke I:I-4 and Acts I:I-3, it is clear that the same author wrote both Luke and Acts. The tradition from the earliest days of the church has been that Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul, wrote both Luke and Acts (Colossians 4:I4; 2 Timothy 4:II).

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Acts was likely written between AD 61-64.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Acts was written to provide a history of the early church. The emphasis of the book is the arrival of the Holy Spirit and being empowered to be effective witnesses for Jesus Christ. Acts records the apostles being Christ's witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the rest of the surrounding world. The book sheds light on the gift of the Holy Spirit, who empowers, guides, teaches, and serves as our Counselor. Reading through Acts, we are enlightened and encouraged by the many miracles that were being performed during this time by the disciples Peter, John, and Paul. Acts emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's Word, and the transformation that occurs as a result of knowing Christ. There are also many references to those that rejected the truth that the disciples preached about the Lord Jesus Christ. The lust for power, greed, and many other vices of the devil are evidenced in the book of Acts.

## SOME KEY VERSES

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

#### **ACTS 1:8**

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

#### **ACTS 2:4**

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

#### **ACTS 4:12**

But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard."

#### **ACTS 4:19-20**

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

#### **ACTS 9:3-6**

And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

#### **ACTS 16:31**

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Acts gives the history of the Christian church and the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as well as the mounting opposition to it. Although many faithful servants were used to preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Saul, whose name was changed to Paul, was the most influential. Before he was converted, Paul took great pleasure in persecuting and killing Christians. Paul's dramatic conversion on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1-31) is a highlight of Acts. After his conversion, he went to the opposite extreme of loving God and preaching His Word with power, fervency, and the Holy Spirit. The disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses in Jerusalem (chapters 1-8:3), Judea and Samaria (chapters 8:4-12:25), and to the ends of the earth (chapters 13:1-28). Included in the last section are Paul's three missionary journeys (13:1-21:16), his trials in Jerusalem and Caesarea (21:17-26:32), and his final journey to Rome (27:1-28:31).

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Acts serves as a transition from the Old Covenant of law-keeping to the New Covenant of grace and faith. This transition is seen in several key events in Acts. First, there was a change in the ministry of the Holy Spirit, whose primary function in the Old Testament was the external "anointing" of God's people, among them Moses (Numbers II:I7), Othniel (Judges 3:8-I0), Gideon (Judges 6:34), and Saul (I Samuel IO:6-IO). After the resurrection of Jesus, the Spirit came to live in the very hearts of believers (Romans 8:9-II; I Corinthians 3:I6), guiding and empowering them from within.

Paul's conversion was a dramatic example of the transition from the Old Covenant to the New. Paul admitted that, prior to meeting the risen Savior, he was the most zealous of Israelites and was blameless "as to righteousness under the law" (Philippians 3:6), going so far as to persecute those who taught salvation by grace through faith in Christ. But after his conversion, he realized that all his legalistic efforts were worthless, saying he considered them "rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Philippians 3:8-9). Now we, too, live by faith, not by the works of the Law, so there is no boasting (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Peter's vision of the sheet in Acts 10:9-15 is another sign of the transition from the Old Covenant—in this case the dietary laws particular to the Jews—to the New Covenant's unity of Jew and Gentile in one universal Church. The "clean" animals symbolizing the Jews and the "unclean" animals symbolizing the Gentiles were both declared "cleansed" by God through the sacrificial death of Christ. No longer under the Old Covenant of law, both are now united in the New Covenant of grace through faith in the shed blood of Christ on the cross.

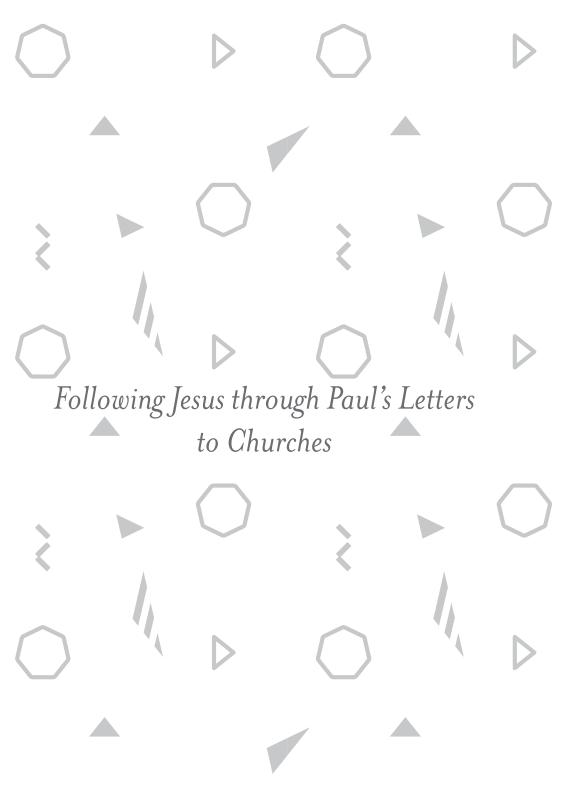
## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

God can do amazing things through ordinary people when He empowers them through His Spirit. God essentially took a group of fisherman and used them to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). God took a Christian-hating murderer and changed him into the greatest Christian evangelist, the author of almost half the books of the New Testament. God used persecution to cause the quickest expansion of a "new faith" in the history of the world. God can, and does, do the same through us—changing our hearts, empowering us by the Holy Spirit, and giving us a passion to spread the good news of salvation through Christ. If we try to accomplish these things in our own power, we will fail. Like the disciples in Acts 1:8, we are to wait for the empowering of the Spirit, then go in His power to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).



# PAUL'S LETTERS TO CHURCHES

Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians



# HOW DOES THIS TYPE OF LITERATURE FIT INTO THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE?

Immediately before Jesus' ascension, He told His disciples to be witnesses throughout the world (Acts I:8, echoing Matthew 28:18-20) and the disciples accomplished this by planting churches in cities across the greater Mediterranean region and the rest of the known world (Acts I-28). Paul, the apostle and church planter, then wrote letters to the churches to nurture, encourage, instruct, and correct their errors in theology and lifestyle. These letters help churches not only make sense of "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), but also apply robust theology to their lives in practical ways.

# HOW DO WE READ PAUL'S LETTERS TO CHURCHES NORMALLY?

These letters, often called "epistles," were written by Paul to actual first century churches or groups of churches. Paul's writing follows a logical progression with carefully crafted arguments, typically with three common parts, I) a greeting, 2) the body and 3) the closing. Epistles are not merely abstract essays on religious philosophy. Rather, the letters addressed specific circumstances churches faced such as immoral living in Corinth, division in Phillipi, or false teachers infiltrating congregations like Galatia or Colossae. Understanding the specific situations Paul's was responding to and reading letters in their entirety, (instead of just isolated statements) helps readers trace the flow of Paul's thoughts, empowering better interpretation and application.

# HOW DOES THIS PART OF THE BIBLE POINT TO JESUS?

Paul is abundantly clear that Jesus is the head of the church, which is His body (Colossians I:18), thus Christian life begins and centers around who Jesus was, what He has done, and what He taught. Life in Christ's body finds Christians crucifying sin and living for God (Romans 6:6-IO), understanding the magnitude and implications of His grace, and being built up toward mature faith and knowledge for the purpose of knowing Jesus and making Him known (Ephesians 4:II-I3).

# HOW DO PAUL'S LETTERS TO CHURCHES FIT INTO OUR LIVES TODAY?

If you've placed your trust and allegiance in Jesus Christ—the one who lived the life we perpetually fail to live and died the death we deserve—then pay attention here. These letters call each of us, they call the Church, to be unified in Christ. When you think about sex, Paul's letters calls to you. When you think about worship, Paul's letters call to you. When you think about family, Paul's letters call to you.

It could be said that Paul's letters to these new "Jesus communities," although written to first century churches, are for us. So, consider the context of the first century ancient middle east. Consider that the women and men in these churches are the Church, just as much as we—if we consider ourselves to be followers of Jesus—are the Church.

## **XLV**

# ROMANS

## WHO WROTE IT?

Romans I:I identifies the author as the apostle Paul. Romans I6:22 indicates that Paul used a man name Tertius to transcribe his words.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Romans was likely written between AD 56-58.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

As with all of Paul's epistles to the churches, his purpose in writing was to proclaim the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ by teaching doctrine, and to edify and encourage the believers who would receive his letter. Of particular concern to Paul were those to whom this letter was written—those in Rome who were "loved by God and called to be saints" (Romans I:7). Because he himself was a Roman citizen, he had a unique passion for those in the assembly of believers in Rome. Since he had not, at this point, visited the church in Rome, this letter also served as his introduction to them.

## **SOME KEY VERSES**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

**ROMANS 1:16** 

What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God."

#### **ROMANS 3:9-11**

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it.

#### ROMANS 3:21

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

#### ROMANS 3:23

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

#### **ROMANS 5:8**

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

#### ROMANS 6:23

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

#### **ROMANS 8:9**

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

#### **ROMANS 8:28**

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

#### **ROMANS 8:37-39**

Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

#### **ROMANS 10:9-10**

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

#### **ROMANS 12:1**

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

#### **ROMANS 12:19**

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

#### **ROMANS 16:17**

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Paul was excited about being able to minister at last in this church, and everyone was well aware of that fact (Romans I:8-I5). The letter to the Romans was written from Corinth just prior to Paul's trip to Jerusalem to deliver the alms that had been given for the poor there. He had intended to go to Rome, and then on to Spain (Romans I5:24), but his plans were interrupted when he was arrested in Jerusalem. He would eventually go to Rome as a prisoner. Phoebe, who was a member of the church at Cenchrea near Corinth (Romans I6:I), most likely carried the letter to Rome.

Romans is primarily a work of doctrine and can be divided into four sections:

- Righteousness Needed, 1:18-3:20
- Righteousness Provided, 3:21-8:39
- Righteousness Vindicated, 9:1-11:36
- Righteousness Practiced, 12:1-15:13

The main theme of this letter is righteousness. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Paul first condemns all men of their sinfulness. He expresses his desire to preach the truth of God's Word to those in Rome. It was his hope to have assurance they were staying on the right path. He strongly points out that he is not ashamed of the Gospel (Romans I:16), because it is the power by which everyone is saved.

Romans tells us about God, who He is, and what He has done. It tells us of Jesus Christ, what His death accomplished. It tells us about ourselves, what we were like without Christ and who we are after trusting in Christ. Paul points out that God did not demand men have their lives straightened out before coming to Christ. While we were still sinners, Christ died on a cross for our sins (Romans 5:8).

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Paul uses several Old Testament people and events as illustrations of the glorious truths in Romans. Abraham believed and righteousness was imputed to him by his faith, not by his works (Romans 4:1-5). In Romans 4:6-9, Paul refers to David who reiterated the same truth: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin." Paul uses Adam to explain to the Romans the doctrine of inherited sin, and he uses the story of Sarah and Isaac, the child of promise, to illustrate the principle of Christians being the children of the promise of the divine grace of God through Christ. In chapters 9–II, Paul recounts the history of the nation of Israel and declares that God has not completely and finally rejected Israel (Romans II:II-I2), but has allowed them to "stumble" only until the full number of the Gentiles will be brought to salvation.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Romans makes it clear that there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. Every "good" deed we have ever done is as a filthy rag before God. So dead in our trespasses and sins are we that only the grace and mercy of God can save us. God expressed that grace and mercy by sending His Son to die on the cross in our place. When we turn our lives over to Christ, we are no longer controlled by our sin nature, but we are controlled by the Spirit. If we accept that Jesus is Lord, and believe that He is raised from the dead, we are saved, born again. We need to live our lives offered to God as a living sacrifice to Him. Worship of the God who saved us should be our highest desire. Perhaps the best application of Romans would be to apply Romans 1:16 and not be ashamed of the Gospel. Instead, let us all be faithful in proclaiming it with our lives.

## **XLVI**

# 1 CORINTHIANS

## WHO WROTE IT?

I Corinthians I:I identifies the author as the apostle Paul.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

I Corinthians was written in approximately A. D. 55.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The apostle Paul founded the church in Corinth. A few years after leaving the church, the apostle Paul heard some disturbing reports about the Corinthian church. They were full of pride and were excusing sexual immorality. Spiritual gifts were being used improperly, and there was rampant misunderstanding of key Christian doctrines. The apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians in an attempt to restore the Corinthian church to its foundation—Jesus Christ.

## SOME KEY VERSES

For you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 3:3

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 12:7

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The Corinthian church was plagued by divisions. The believers in Corinth were dividing into groups loyal to certain spiritual leaders (I Corinthians I:I2; 3:I-6). Paul exhorted the Corinthian believers to be united because of devotion to Christ (I Corinthians 3:2I-23). Many in the church were essentially approving of an immoral relationship (I Corinthians 5:I-2). Paul commanded them to expel the wicked man from the church (I Corinthians 5:I3). The Corinthian believers were taking each other to court (I Corinthians 6:I-2). Paul taught the Corinthians that it would be better to be taken advantage of than to damage their Christian testimony (I Corinthians 6:3-8).

Paul gave the Corinthian church instructions on marriage and celibacy (chapter 7), food sacrificed to idols (chapters 8 and 10), Christian freedom (chapter 9), the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians II:17-34), spiritual gifts (chapters I2-14), and the resurrection (chapter 15). Paul organized the book of I Corinthians by answering questions the Corinthian believers had asked him, and by responding to improper conduct and erroneous beliefs they had accepted.

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

In I Corinthians 10, Paul uses the story of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness to illustrate to the Corinthian believers the folly of the misuse of freedom and the danger of overconfidence. Paul has just warned the Corinthians about their lack of self-discipline (I Corinthians 9:24-27). He goes on to describe the Israelites who, despite seeing God's miracles and care for them—the parting of the Red Sea, the miraculous provision of manna from heaven, and water from a rock—they misused their freedom, rebelled against God, and fell into immorality and idolatry. Paul exhorts the Corinthian church to note the example of the Israelites and avoid lusts and sexual immorality (I Corinthians IO:6-8) and putting Christ to the test and complaining (I Corinthians IO:9-IO).

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Many of the problems and questions the Corinthian church was dealing with are still present in the church today. Churches today still struggle with divisions, with immorality, and over the topic of spiritual gifts. I Corinthians very well could have been written to the church today, and we would do well to hear Paul's warnings and apply them to ourselves. Despite all the rebukes and corrections, I Corinthians brings our focus back to where it should be—on Christ. Genuine Christian love is the answer to many problems (chapter 13). A proper understanding of the resurrection of Christ, as revealed in chapter 15, and thereby a proper understanding of our own resurrection, is the cure for what divides and defeats us.

## **XLVII**

# 2 CORINTHIANS

## WHO WROTE IT?

The book of 2 Corinthians I:I identifies the author as the apostle Paul, possibly along with Timothy.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

This book was very likely written approximately AD 55-57.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The church in Corinth began in AD 52 when Paul visited on his second missionary journey. It was then that he stayed one and a half years, the first time he was allowed to stay in one place as long as he wished. A record of this visit and the establishment of the church is found in Acts 18:1-18.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul expresses his relief and joy that the Corinthians had received his "severe" letter (now lost) in a positive manner. That letter addressed issues that were tearing the church apart, primarily the arrival of self-styled (false) apostles (2 Corinthians II:13) who were assaulting Paul's character, sowing discord among the believers, and teaching false doctrine. They appear to have questioned his truthfulness (2 Corinthians I:15-17), his speaking ability (2 Corinthians IO:10; II:6), and his unwillingness to accept support from the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians II:7-9; I2:13). There were also some people who had not repented of their licentious behavior (2 Corinthians I2:20-21).

Positively, Paul found the Corinthians had well received his "severe" letter. Paul was overjoyed to learn from Titus that the majority of Corinthians repented of their rebellion against Paul (2 Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:5-9). The apostle encourages them

for this in an expression of his genuine love (2 Corinthians 7:3-16). Paul also sought to vindicate his apostleship, as some in the church had likely questioned his authority (2 Corinthians 13:3).

### SOME KEY VERSES

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 3:5

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 10:5

For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS 13:4

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

After greeting the believers in the church at Corinth and explaining why he had not visited them as originally planned (2 Corinthians 1:3–2:2), Paul explains the nature of his ministry. Triumph through Christ and sincerity in the sight of God were the hallmarks of his ministry to the churches (2 Corinthians 2:14-17). He compares the glorious ministry of the righteousness of Christ to the "ministry of condemnation" which is the Law (2 Corinthians 3:9) and declares his faith in the validity of his ministry in spite of intense persecution (2 Corinthians 4:8-18). Chapter 5 outlines the basis of the Christian faith—the new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17) and the exchange of our sin for the righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Chapters 6 and 7 find Paul defending himself and his ministry, assuring the Corinthians yet again of his sincere love for them, and exhorting them to repentance and holy living. In chapters 8 and 9, Paul exhorts the believers at Corinth to follow the examples of the brothers in Macedonia and extend generosity to the saints in need. He teaches them the principles and rewards of gracious giving.

Paul ends his letter by reiterating his authority among them (chapter IO) and concern for their faithfulness to him in the face of fierce opposition from false apostles. He calls himself a "fool" for having to reluctantly boast of his qualifications and his suffering for Christ (chapter II). He ends his epistle by describing the vision of heaven he was allowed to experience and the "thorn in the flesh" he was given by God to ensure his humility (chapter I2). The last chapter contains his exhortation to the Corinthians to examine themselves to see whether what they profess is reality, and ends with a benediction of love and peace.

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Throughout his epistles, Paul frequently refers to the Mosaic Law, comparing it with the surpassing greatness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation by grace. In 2 Corinthians 3:4-II, Paul contrasts the Old Testament law with the new covenant of grace, referring to the Law as that which "kills" while the Spirit gives life. The Law is "carved in letters on stone" (2 Corinthians 3:7; Exodus 24:I2) and it brings the knowledge of sin and its condemnation. The glory of the Law is that it reflects the glory of God, but the ministry of the Spirit is much more glorious than the ministry of the Law, because it reflects His mercy, grace, and love in providing Christ as the fulfillment of the Law.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

This letter is the most biographical and least doctrinal of Paul's epistles. It tells us more about Paul as a person and as a minister than any of the others. That being said, there are a few things we can take from this letter and apply to our lives today. One thing is stewardship, not only of money, but of time as well. The Macedonians not only gave generously, but "they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us" (2 Corinthians 8:5). In the same way, we should dedicate not only all we have to the Lord, but all that we are. He really doesn't need our money. He wants the heart, one that longs to serve, please, and love. Stewardship and giving to God is more than just money. God wants us to give Him our all–everything we are. We should spend our lives living to serve our Father. Our very lives should be a reflection of Him.

## **XLVIII**

# **GALATIANS**

## WHO WROTE IT?

Galatians I:I clearly identifies the apostle Paul as the writer.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Galatians is likely the first New Testament book to be written, composed sometime soon after AD 49.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The churches in Galatia were comprised of both Jewish and Gentile converts. Paul's purpose in writing to these churches was to confirm them in the faith, especially concerning justification by faith alone, apart from the works of the Law of Moses.

Galatians was written because the churches of that region were facing a theological crisis. The essential truth of justification by faith rather than by human works was being denied by the Judaizers—legalistic Jews who insisted that Christians must keep the Mosaic Law. In particular, the Judaizers insisted on circumcision as a requirement for Gentiles who wished to be saved. In other words, convert to Judaism first, and then you are eligible to become a Christian. When Paul learned that this heresy was being taught to the Galatian churches, he composed this letter to emphasize our liberty in Christ and to counter the perversion of the Gospel that the Judaizers promoted.

## SOME KEY VERSES

Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law, because by works of the Law no one will be justified.

#### **GALATIANS 2:16**

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

#### **GALATIANS 2:20**

Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the Law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."

#### **GALATIANS 3:11**

To redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

#### **GALATIANS 4:5-6**

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

#### **GALATIANS 5:1**

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

#### GALATIANS 5:22-23

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

#### **GALATIANS 6:7**

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

The fact that we are justified by grace through faith means we have spiritual freedom. We are not under bondage to the dictates of the Old Testament Law. Paul soundly condemns anyone who would belittle the grace of God and attempt to change the Gospel (Galatians I:8–IO). He gives his apostolic credentials (Galatians I:II–2:I4), and emphasizes that righteousness comes through Christ not the works of the Law (Galatians 2:21). The Galatians must stand fast in their freedom and "not submit again to a yoke of slavery (that is, the Mosaic law)" (Galatians 5:I). Christian freedom is not an excuse to gratify one's sin nature; rather, our freedom is an opportunity to love one another (Galatians 5:I3; 6:7–IO). The Christian life is to be lived in the power of the Spirit, not the flesh (Galatians 5:I6–I8). The flesh has been crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:2O); as a consequence, the Spirit will bear His fruit in the life of the believer (Galatians 5:22–23).

In the end, the issue is not whether a person is circumcised but whether he or she is a "new creation" (Galatians 6:15). Salvation is the work of the Spirit, and we must be born again (see John 3:3). External religious rites such as circumcision are of no value in the realm of the Spirit.

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Throughout Paul's letter to the Galatians, saving grace—the gift of God—is juxta-posed against the Law of Moses, which cannot save. The Judaizers urged a return to the Mosaic Law as the source of justification, and they were prominent in the early church. Even Peter was temporarily drawn into their web of deceit (Galatians 2:II–I3). The themes connecting Galatians to the Old Testament center on Law vs. grace: the inability of the Law to justify (Galatians 2:I6); the believer's deadness to the Law (2:I9); Abraham's justification by faith (Galatians 3:6); the Law bringing not God's salvation but His wrath (Galatians 3:I0); and love as the fulfillment of the Law (Galatians 5:I4). Believers can be seen as the spiritual children of Sarah, not Hagar—that is, we are children of the freedom, not children of slavery (Galatians 4:2I–3I).

The books of Galatians and James deal with two complementary aspects of Christianity. Galatians highlights the Gospel of grace that produces righteous living (Galatians 3:13–14). James highlights the righteous living that proves faith. There is no conflict;

James, too, emphasizes the new birth through the Gospel (James I:18), and the book of Galatians spends its final two chapters applying the doctrine of "grace alone" to practical Christian living.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

One of the main themes of the book of Galatians is found in verse 3:II: "The righteous shall live by faith." We must stand firm in this truth. Any compromise with legalism or the mixture of human effort and the grace of God for salvation leads to heresy. If we could be saved through the keeping of the Law, then Jesus did not need to die (Galatians 2:21). Trying to save ourselves nullifies grace.

Not only are we saved by faith (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8–9), but the life of the believer in Christ—day by day, moment by moment—is lived by and through that faith (Galatians 2:20). Not that faith is something we conjure up on our own—it is the gift of God, not of works (see Ephesians 2:8–9)—but it is our responsibility and joy to exhibit our faith so that others will see the work of Christ in us and to grow in our faith by seeking to become more like Christ.

Jesus said we would be known by the fruit of our lives (Matthew 7:16), which should give evidence of the faith within us. All followers of Christ should strive to live out their faith in word and deed.

## **XLIX**

# **EPHESIANS**

## WHO WROTE IT?

Ephesians I:I identifies the author of the book as the apostle Paul.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Ephesians was very likely written between AD 60-63.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Paul intended that all who long for Christ-like maturity would receive this writing. Enclosed within the book of Ephesians is the discipline needed to develop into true children of God. Furthermore, a study in Ephesians will help to fortify and to establish the believer so they can fulfill the purpose and calling God has given. The aim of this epistle is to confirm and to equip a maturing church. It presents a balanced view of the body of Christ and its importance in God's economy.

## SOME KEY VERSES

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

**EPHESIANS 1:3** 

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

#### **EPHESIANS 2:8-10**

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

#### **EPHESIANS 4:4-6**

Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

#### **EPHESIANS 5:21**

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

EPHESIANS 6:10-11

## **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Doctrine occupies the greatest portion of Ephesians. Half of the teaching in this book relates to our standing in Christ, and the remainder of it affects our condition. All too often those who teach from this book bypass all the foundational instruction and go directly to the closing chapter. It is this chapter that emphasizes the warfare or the struggle of the saints. However, to benefit fully from the contents of this letter, one must begin at the beginning of Paul's instruction.

First, as followers of Christ, we must fully understand who God declares us to be. We must also become grounded in the knowledge of God's accomplishment for all humanity. Next, our present existence and walk must become exercised and strengthened. This must continue until we no longer stagger back and forth with every spirit of teaching and subtlety of men.

Paul's writing breaks down into three main segments:

- Chapters I-3 introduce principles with respect to God's accomplishment.
- Chapters 4-5 put forth principles regarding our present existence.
- Chapter 6 presents principles concerning our daily struggle.

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

The primary link to the Old Testament in Ephesians is in the startling (to the Jews) concept of the Church as the body of Christ (Ephesians 5:32). This amazing mystery (a truth not previously revealed) of the Church, is that "Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6). This was a mystery completely hidden from the Old Testament saints (Ephesians 3:5, 9). The Israelites who were true followers of God always believed they alone were God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6). Accepting Gentiles on an equal status in this new paradigm was extremely difficult and caused many disputes among Jewish believers and Gentile converts. Paul also speaks of the mystery of the church as the "bride of Christ," a previously unheard-of concept in the Old Testament.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Perhaps more than any other book of the Bible, Ephesians emphasizes the connection between sound doctrine and right practice in the Christian life. Far too many people ignore "theology" and instead want to only discuss things that are "practical." In Ephesians, Paul argues that theology is practical. In order to live out God's will for us in our lives practically, we must first understand who we are in Christ doctrinally.

L

# **PHILIPPIANS**

### WHO WROTE IT?

Philippians I:I identifies the author of Philippians as the apostle Paul, likely along with the help of Timothy.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Philippians was written in approximately AD 61.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Philippians, one of Paul's prison letters, was written in Rome. It was at Philippi, which Paul visited on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:12), that Lydia and the Philippian jailer and his family were converted to Christ. Now, a few years later, the church was well established, as may be inferred from its address which includes "overseers and deacons" (Philippians I:I).

The occasion of the letter was to acknowledge a gift of money from the church at Philippi, brought to Paul by Epaphroditus, one of its members (Philippians 4:IO-I8). This is a tender letter to a group of Christians who were especially close to the heart of Paul (2 Corinthians 8:I-6), and comparatively little is said about doctrinal error.

## SOME KEY VERSES

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

**PHILIPPIANS 1:21** 

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

#### **PHILIPPIANS 3:7**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

#### **PHILIPPIANS 4:4**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

#### PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

**PHILIPPIANS 4:13** 

## A QUICK SUMMARY

Philippians may be divided as follows:

- Introduction, I:I-7
- Christ the Christian's Life: Rejoicing in Spite of Suffering, 1:8-30
- Christ the Christian's Pattern: Rejoicing in Lowly Service, 2:1-30
- Christ the Object of the Christian's Faith, Desire, and Expectation, 3:1-21
- Christ the Christian's Strength: Rejoicing Through Anxiety, 4:1-9
- Conclusion, 4:10-23

Philippians could also be called "Resources Through Suffering." The book is about Christ in our life, Christ in our mind, Christ as our goal, Christ as our strength, and joy through suffering. It was written during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, about thirty years after Christ's ascension and about ten years after Paul first preached at Philippi.

Paul was Nero's prisoner, yet the letter shouts with triumph as the words "joy" and "rejoice" appear frequently (Philippians 1:4, 18, 25, 26; 2:2, 28; Philippians 3:1, 4:1, 4, 10). Right Christian experience is the outworking, whatever our circumstances may be, of the life, nature, and mind of Christ living in us (Philippians 1:6, 11; 2:5,

13). Philippians reaches its pinnacle at 2:5-II with the glorious and profound declaration regarding the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

As with many of his letters, Paul warned the new believers in the church of Philippi to beware of the tendency toward legalism, which continually cropped up in the early churches. So tied to the Old Testament law were the Jews that there was a constant effort on the part of the Judaizers to return to the teaching of salvation by works. But Paul reiterated that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone and branded the Judaizers as "dogs" and "evildoers" (Philippians 3:2). In particular, the legalists were insisting that the new believers in Christ should continue to be circumcised according to the requirements of the Old Covenant (Genesis 17:10-12; Leviticus 12:3). In this way, they attempted to please God by their own efforts and elevate themselves above the gentile Christians who did not participate in the ritual. Paul explained that those who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb were no longer to perform the ritual that symbolized the need for a clean heart.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Philippians is one of Paul's most personal letters, and as such it has several personal applications to believers. Written during his imprisonment in Rome, Paul exhorts the Philippians to follow his example and be "confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear" (Philippians I:I4) during times of persecution. All Christians have experienced, at one time or another, the animosity of unbelievers against the Gospel of Christ. This is to be expected. Jesus said that the world hated Him and it will hate His followers as well (John 5:I8). Paul exhorts us to persevere in the face of persecution, to be "firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians I:27).

Another application of Philippians is the need for Christians to be united in humility. We are united with Christ, and we need to strive to be united to one another in the same way. Paul reminds us to be "of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" and to put away conceit and selfishness, "in humility count others more significant than yourselves" looking out for the interest of others and caring for one another (Philippians 2:2-4). There would be far less conflict in churches today if we all took to heart Paul's advice.

Another application of Philippians is that of the joy and rejoicing which are found throughout his letter. He rejoices that Christ is being proclaimed (Philippians 1:8); he rejoices in his persecution (Philippians 2:18); he exhorts others to rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 3:1); and he refers to the Philippian brothers as his "joy and crown" (Philippians 4:1). He sums up with this exhortation to believers: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4-7). As believers, we can rejoice and experience the peace of God by casting all our cares on Him, if "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let [our] requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6). Paul's joy, in spite of persecution and imprisonment, comes shining through this letter, and the same joy he experienced can be found in us when we center our thoughts on the Lord (Philippians 4:8).

LI

# COLOSSIANS

### WHO WROTE IT?

The apostle Paul was the primary writer of Colossians (Colossians I:13). Timothy is also given some credit (Colossians I:1).

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Colossians was likely written between AD 58-62.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The first half of Colossians is a theological treatise that includes one of the most profound presentations of Christology anywhere in the New Testament. The second half is a mini-ethics course, addressing every area of Christian life. Paul progresses from the individual life to the home and family, from work to the way we should treat others. The theme of this book is the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His sufficiency in meeting our needs in every area.

## SOME KEY VERSES

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-16

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

#### **COLOSSIANS 2:8**

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

#### COLOSSIANS 3:12-13

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

COLOSSIANS 4:5-6

# **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Colossians was written explicitly to defeat the heresy that had arisen in Colossae, which endangered the existence of the church. While we do not know what was told to Paul, this letter is his response.

We can surmise based on Paul's response that the church was dealing with a defective view of Christ (denying His real and true humanity and not accepting His full deity). Paul appears also to dispute the "Jewish" emphasis on circumcision and traditions (Colossians 2:8-II; 3:II). The heresy addressed appears to be either a Jewish-Gnosticism or a mix between Jewish asceticism and Greek philosophy. He does a remarkable job in pointing us to the sufficiency of Christ.

The book of Colossians contains doctrinal instruction about the deity of Christ and false philosophies (Colossians 1:15-2:23), as well as practical exhortations regarding Christian conduct, including friends and speech (Colossians 3:1-4:18).

### **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

As with all the early churches, the issue of Jewish legalism in Colossae was of great concern to Paul. So radical was the concept of salvation by grace apart from works that those steeped in Old Testament Law found it very difficult to grasp. Consequently, there was a continual movement among the legalists to add certain requirements from the Law to this new faith. Primary among them was the requirement of circumcision, which was still practiced among some of the Jewish converts. Paul countered this error in Colossians 2:II-I5 in which he declares that circumcision of the flesh was no longer necessary because Christ had come. His was a circumcision of the heart, not the flesh, making the ceremonial rites of the Old Testament law no longer necessary (Deuteronomy IO:I6, 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4, 9:26; Acts 7:5I; Romans 2:29).

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Although Paul addresses many areas, the basic application for us today is the total and complete sufficiency of Christ in our lives, both for our salvation and our sanctification. We must know and understand the Gospel so as not to be led astray by subtle forms of legalism and heresy. We must be on guard for any deviation that would diminish the centrality of Christ as Lord and Savior. Any "religion" that tries to equate itself with the truth using books that claim the same authority as the Bible, or which combines human effort with divine accomplishment in salvation must be avoided. Other religions cannot be combined with or added to Christianity. Christ gives us absolute standards of moral conduct. Christianity is a family, a way of life, and a relationship—not a religion. His will is revealed in His word, His love letter to us; we must get to know it.

# 1 THESSALONIANS

### WHO WROTE IT?

I Thessalonians I:I indicates that the book was written by the apostle Paul, probably along with Silas and Timothy.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

I Thessalonians was written in approximately AD 50.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

In the church of Thessalonica there were some misunderstandings about the return of Christ. Paul desired to clear them up in his letter. He also writes it as an instruction in holy living.

### SOME KEY VERSES

For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

#### 1 THESSALONIANS 3:5

For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith.

#### 1 THESSALONIANS 3:7

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

#### 1 THESSALONIANS 4:14-17

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18

### A QUICK SUMMARY

The first three chapters are about Paul longing to visit the church in Thessalonica, but not being able to because Satan stopped them (I Thessalonians 2:18), and how Paul cared for them and was encouraged to hear how they had been. Paul then prays for them (I Thessalonians 3:II-I3). In chapter 4, Paul is instructing the believers in Thessalonica on how to live, in Christ Jesus, a holy life (I Thessalonians 4:I-I2). Paul goes on to instruct them of a misconception they had. He tells them that the people who have died in Christ Jesus will also go to heaven when He comes back (I Thessalonians 4:I3-I8, 5:I-II). The book ends with final instructions of living the Christian life.

#### **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that the persecution they were receiving from their "own countrymen" (I Thessalonians 2:15), the Jews who rejected their Messiah, is the same that the Old Testament prophets suffered (Jeremiah 2:30; Matthew 23:31). Jesus warned that true prophets of God would always be opposed by the unrighteous (Luke II:49). In Colossians, Paul reminds them of that truth.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

This book can be applied to many life situations. It gives us the confidence as Christians that, dead or alive, when Christ comes back we will be together with Him (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). It assures us as Christians that we won't receive God's wrath (I Thessalonians 5:8-9). It instructs us how to walk the daily Christian life (I Thessalonians 4-5).

## 2 THESSALONIANS

#### WHO WROTE IT?

2 Thessalonians I:I indicates that it was written by the apostle Paul, probably along with Silas and Timothy.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

2 Thessalonians was likely written in AD 51-52.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The church in Thessalonica still had some misconceptions about the Day of the Lord. They thought it had come already so they stopped with their work. They were being persecuted badly. Paul wrote to clear up misconceptions and to comfort them.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

Since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.

#### 2 THESSALONIANS 1:6-7

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

#### 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13

But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.

#### 2 THESSALONIANS 3:3

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:10

### **A QUICK SUMMARY**

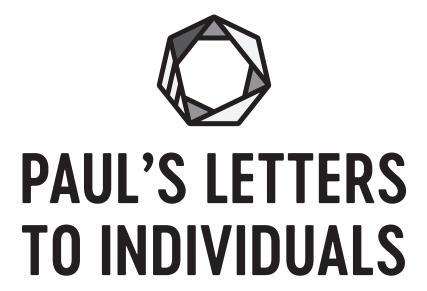
Paul greets the church at Thessalonica, and encourages and exhorts them. He commends them for what he hears they are doing in the Lord, and he prays for them (2 Thessalonians I:II-I2). In chapter 2, Paul explains what will happen in the Day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:I-I2). Paul then encourages them to stand firm and instructs them to keep away from idle men who don't live by the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

#### **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

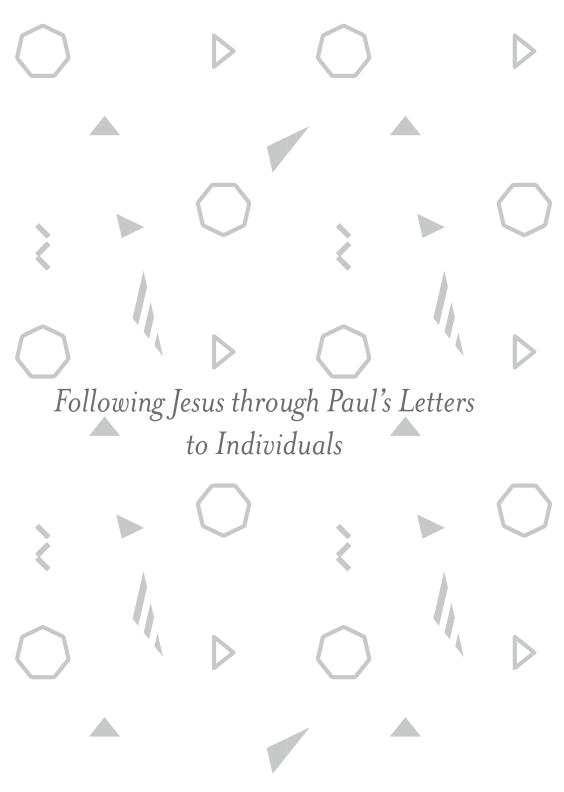
Paul refers to several Old Testament passages in his discourse on the end times, thereby confirming and reconciling the Old Testament prophets. Much of his teaching on the end times in this letter is based on the prophet Daniel and his visions. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9, he refers to Daniel's prophecy regarding the "man of lawlessness" (Daniel 7–8).

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

2 Thessalonians is filled with information that explains the end times. It also exhorts us not to be idle and to work for what we have. There are also some great prayers in 2 Thessalonians that can be an example for us on how to pray for other believers today.



1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon



## HOW DOES THIS TYPE OF LITERATURE FIT INTO THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE?

Since starting the church of Ephesus on his second missionary journey, much had taken place in Paul's life and in the lives of established churches. Paul was imprisoned, then released and resumed his ministry of planting new churches and cultivating existing ones. Since Paul often brought along several different companions, some of them ended up staying behind as his understudies when he journeyed onward.

When Paul went on to Macedonia, he urged Timothy to remain in Ephesus to address the challenges being presented by significant false teaching. Similarly, on his third missionary journey, Paul took Titus with him to plant churches on the island of Crete, eventually leaving Titus to complete the unfinished work "and appoint elders in every town" (Titus I:5). This task was difficult because the young churches had to contend with false teachers in a notoriously immoral setting.

I Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus –known as "pastoral epistles" – find Paul writing to individuals with leadership responsibilities in order to give them guidance in handling issues that needed attention within their churches. Philemon, on the other hand, was a wealthy Christian leader living in Colossae who served the church by hosting others believers in his home. When Philemon's servant, named Onesimus, fled to Rome (possibly with stolen property), he somehow came into contact with Paul, became a Christian, and ended up greatly assisting Paul during his imprisonment. From house arrest in Rome, Paul wrote a short and persuasive letter seeking the repair of a fractured relationship between the two men who were now equally brothers in Christ.

## HOW DO WE READ PAUL'S LETTERS TO INDIVIDUALS NORMALLY?

Paul's letters to individuals have much in common with those written to churches. Yet, these epistles are comparatively less theological in order to focus more practically on encouraging leaders to oversee both themselves and their church responsibilities. Taking on a personal and fatherly tone, Paul coached and encouraged these leaders to fight for the church in terms of unity, doctrine, and a lifestyle that aligns with the Gospel.

Keeping in mind the leadership demands in the first century church, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon collectively faced a backdrop of combative false teachers, discouraging circumstances like cultural corruption, and interpersonal strife. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul directly encouraged these men to lead and teach well, to live and require a lifestyle in sync with the Gospel, and to stand up to false teaching. Thus, a modern audience can easily apply these encouragements, commands, and qualifications for leadership to their lives and churches.

## HOW DOES THIS PART OF THE BIBLE POINT TO JESUS?

The pastoral epistles are well aware of Jesus as the perfect leader and ultimate source of truth; how He lived, led, and taught never wandered into error or compromise. Moreover, Jesus taught and equipped His followers not to waver, even in the face of persecution or heresy. Coming from the Father with grace and truth (John I:I4), Jesus makes transformed character and reproductive leadership possible. In light of the Gospel and being empowered by the Spirit, the elders and leaders of God's church are to hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught in order to encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (Titus I:9). In Philemon, Paul is adamant that estranged men of different status be reconciled because God spanned a cosmic divide to overcome our great offense of sin. Since Jesus became a servant (Philippians 2:7) and in a sense is our brother (Hebrews 2:II-I2), this reality should correct our vision to the point that we regard our spiritual siblings in the same way He does.

# HOW DO PAUL'S LETTERS TO INDIVIDUALS FIT INTO OUR LIVES TODAY?

In Luke's account of the acts of the apostles we see that Saul, a devout Jew, dramatically encounters the risen Jesus. Saul, now Paul, devotes his allegiance to Jesus and the mission to bring healing to a broken and rebellious world. Time and time again the scriptures bear out that Paul's mission was never self-focused. Rather, Paul's mission always centered around the person and work of Jesus Christ. Anyone who received Paul's teaching did not receive Paul, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This is crucial when we look at individual letters written by Paul in the New Testa-

ment. Yes, the letters are written with specific instruction, instances, and correction in mind, but the trajectory in each letter draws all attention to Jesus as the true model of integrity, love, and devotion. These letters make it crystal clear that following Jesus is not about elevating ourselves or our interests in the name of Jesus. On the contrary, these letters give us hope that the good news of Jesus and the power of the Spirit can transform us, our cultures, and, by God's grace, the world.

#### LIV

## 1 TIMOTHY

#### WHO WROTE IT?

I Timothy was written by the apostle Paul (I Timothy I:I).

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

I Timothy was written in AD 62-66.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Paul wrote to Timothy to encourage him in his responsibility for overseeing the work of the Ephesian church, and possibly the other churches in the province of Asia (I Timothy I:3). This letter lays the foundation for ordaining elders (I Timothy 3:I-7), and provides guidance for ordaining people into offices of the church (I Timothy 3:8-I3). In essence, I Timothy is a leadership manual for church organization and administration.

#### SOME KEY VERSES

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

#### 1 TIMOTHY 2:5

I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

#### 1 TIMOTHY 2:12

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

#### 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-3

The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

#### 1 TIMOTHY 4:9-10

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

#### 1 TIMOTHY 6:12

### **A QUICK SUMMARY**

This is the first letter Paul wrote to Timothy, a young pastor who had been a help to Paul in his work. Though Timothy was a Greek, his mother was Jewish and his father was Greek. Paul was more than just a mentor and leader to Timothy, he was like a father to him, and Timothy was like a son to Paul (I Timothy I:2). Paul begins the letter by urging Timothy to be on guard for false teachers and false doctrine. However, much of the letter deals with pastoral conduct. Paul instructs Timothy in worship (chapter 2) and developing mature leaders for the church (chapter 3). Most of the letter deals with pastoral conduct, warnings about false teachers, and the church's responsibility toward single members, widows, elders, and slaves. All throughout the letter, Paul encourages Timothy to stand firm, to persevere, and to remain true to his calling.

#### **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

An interesting link to the Old Testament in the book of I Timothy is Paul's citation of the basis for considering church elders to be worthy of "double honor," and deserving of respect when it comes to being accused of wrongdoing (I Timothy 5:I7-I9). Deuteronomy 24:I5; 25:4; and Leviticus I9:I3 all speak of the necessity to pay a worker what he has earned and to do it in a timely manner. Part of the Mosaic Law demanded that two or three witnesses were necessary to bring an accusation against a man (Deuteronomy I9:I5). The Jewish Christians in the churches Timothy pastored would have been well aware of these Old Testament connections.

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Jesus Christ is presented by Paul as the mediator between God and man (I Timothy 2:5), the Savior to all who believe in Him. He is Lord of the church, and Timothy serves Him by pastoring His church. Thus, we find the main application of Paul's first letter to his "son in the faith." Paul instructs Timothy on matters of church doctrine, church leadership, and church administration. We can use those same instructions in governing our local assembly today. Likewise, the work and ministry of a pastor, the qualifications for an elder, and the qualifications of a deacon are just as important and pertinent today as they were in Timothy's day. Paul's first letter to Timothy amounts to an instruction book on leading, administrating, and pastoring the local church. The instructions in this letter apply to any leader or prospective leader of Christ's church and are equally relevant today as they were in Paul's day. For those not called into leadership roles in their church, the book is still practical. Every follower must contend for the faith and avoid false teaching. Every follower must stand firm and persevere.

#### LV

## 2 TIMOTHY

#### WHO WROTE IT?

2 Timothy I:I identifies the author as the apostle Paul.

### WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

2 Timothy was written in approximately AD 67, shortly before the apostle Paul was put to death.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Imprisoned in Rome yet again, the apostle Paul felt lonely and abandoned. Paul recognized that his earthly life was likely coming to an end soon. 2 Timothy is essentially Paul's last words. Paul looked past his own circumstances to express concern for the churches and specifically for Timothy. Paul wanted to use his last words to encourage Timothy, and all other believers, to persevere in faith (2 Timothy 3:14) and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 4:2).

#### SOME KEY VERSES

For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

#### **2 TIMOTHY 1:7**

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

#### 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

#### **2 TIMOTHY 4:2**

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

2 TIMOTHY 4:7-8

### **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Paul encourages Timothy to remain passionate for Christ and to remain firm in sound doctrine (2 Timothy I:I-2, I3-I4). Paul reminds Timothy to avoid ungodly beliefs and practices, and to flee from anything immoral (2 Timothy 2:I4-26). In the end times there will be both intense persecution and abandonment from the Christian faith (2 Timothy 3:I-I7). Paul closes with an intense plea for believers to stand firm in the faith and to finish the race strong (2 Timothy 4:I-8).

#### **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

So concerned was Paul to warn Timothy and those he pastored of the dangers of false teachers that he invoked the story of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses (Exodus 7:II, 22; 8:7, I8, I9; 9:II). Although their names are not mentioned in the Old Testament, tradition has it that these men instigated the building of the golden calf and were killed with the rest of the idolaters (Exodus 32). Paul predicts the same fate for those who resist the truth of Christ, their folly eventually being made "plain to all" (2 Timothy 3:9).

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

It is easy to get side-tracked in the Christian life. We have to keep our eyes on the prize—being rewarded in heaven by Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 4:8). We must strive to avoid both false doctrine and ungodly practices. This can only be accomplished by being grounded in our knowledge of God's Word and firm in our refusal to accept anything that is unbiblical.

#### LVI

## **TITUS**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

Titus I:I identifies the apostle Paul as the author of the book.

### WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Titus was written in approximately AD 66. Paul's many journeys are well documented and show that he wrote to Titus from Nicopolis in Epirus. In some Bibles, an end note to the letter may show that Paul wrote from Nicopolis in Macedonia. However, there is no such place known and end notes have no authority as they are not authentic.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Titus is known as one of the Pastoral Epistles, as are the two letters to Timothy. This epistle was written by the apostle Paul to encourage his brother in the faith, Titus, whom he had left in Crete to lead the church which Paul had established on one of his missionary journeys (Titus I:5). This letter advises Titus regarding what qualifications to look for in leaders for the church. He also warns Titus of the reputations of those living on the island of Crete (Titus I:12).

In addition to instructing Titus in what to look for in a leader of the church, Paul also encouraged Titus to return to Nicopolis for a visit. In other words, Paul continued to disciple Titus and others as they grew in the grace of the Lord (Titus 3:13).

#### SOME KEY VERSES

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.

#### **TITUS 1:5**

They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

#### **TITUS 1:16**

Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

#### **TITUS 2:15**

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

#### **TITUS 3:3-6**

### **A QUICK SUMMARY**

How wonderful it must have been when Titus received a letter from his mentor, the apostle Paul. Paul was a much-honored man, and rightly so, after establishing several churches throughout the eastern world. This famous introduction from the apostle would have been read by Titus: "To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior" (Titus 1:4).

The island of Crete, where Titus was left by Paul to lead the church, was inhabited by natives of the island and Jews who did not know the truth of Jesus Christ (Titus 1:12-14). Paul felt it to be his responsibility to follow through with Titus to instruct and encourage him in developing leaders within the church at Crete. As the apostle

Paul directed Titus in his search for leaders, Paul also suggested how Titus would instruct the leaders so that they could grow in their faith in Christ. His instructions included those for both men and women of all ages (Titus 2:I-8).

To help Titus continue in his faith in Christ, Paul suggested Titus come to Nicopolis and bring with him two other members of the church (Titus 3:12-13).

#### **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Once again, Paul finds it necessary to instruct the leaders of the church to be on guard against the Judaizers, those who sought to add works to the gift of grace which produces salvation. He warns against those who are rebellious deceivers, especially those who continued to claim circumcision and adherence to the rituals and ceremonies of the Mosaic Law were still necessary (Titus I:IO-II). This is a recurring theme throughout the epistles of Paul, and in Titus, he goes so far as to say their mouths must be stopped.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The apostle Paul deserves our attention as we look to the Bible for instruction on how to live a life pleasing to our Lord. We can learn what we should avoid as well as that which we are to strive to imitate. Paul suggests we seek to be pure as we avoid the things which will defile our minds and consciences. And then Paul makes a statement which should never be forgotten: "They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work" (Titus I:16). As Christians, we must examine ourselves to be sure our lives line up with our profession of faith in Christ (2 Corinthians I3:5).

Along with this warning, Paul also tells us how to avoid denying God: "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:5-6). By seeking a daily renewal of our minds by the Holy Spirit, we can develop into Christians that honor God by the way we live.

#### LVII

## **PHILEMON**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

The author of the book of Philemon was the apostle Paul (Philemon I:I).

### WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Philemon was written in approximately AD 60.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Philemon is the shortest of all Paul's writings and deals with the practice of slavery. The letter suggests that Paul was in prison at the time of the writing. Philemon was a slave owner who also hosted a church in his home. During the time of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, Philemon had likely journeyed to the city, heard Paul's preaching, and became a Christian. The slave Onesimus robbed his master, Philemon, and ran away, making his way to Rome and to Paul. Onesimus was still the property of Philemon, and Paul wrote to smooth the way for his return to his master. Through Paul's witnessing to him, Onesimus had become a Christian (Philemon 10) and Paul wanted Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ and not merely as a slave.

#### **SOME KEY VERSES**

And I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.

#### PHILEMON 6

No longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

#### PHILEMON 16

If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.

PHILEMON 18

### **A QUICK SUMMARY**

Paul had warned slave owners that they had a responsibility towards their slaves and showed slaves as responsible moral beings who were to fear God. In Philemon, Paul did not condemn slavery, but he presented Onesimus as a Christian brother instead of a slave. When an owner can refer to a slave as a brother, the slave has reached a position in which the legal title of slave is meaningless. The early church did not attack slavery directly, but it laid the foundation for a new relationship between owner and slave. Paul attempted to unite both Philemon and Onesimus with Christian love so that emancipation would become necessary. Only after exposure to the light of the Gospel could the institution of slavery die.

#### **OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS**

Perhaps nowhere in the New Testament is the distinction between law and grace so beautifully portrayed. Both Roman law and the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament gave Philemon the right to punish a runaway slave who was considered property. But the covenant of grace through Jesus allowed both master and slave to fellowship in love on an equal basis in the body of Christ.

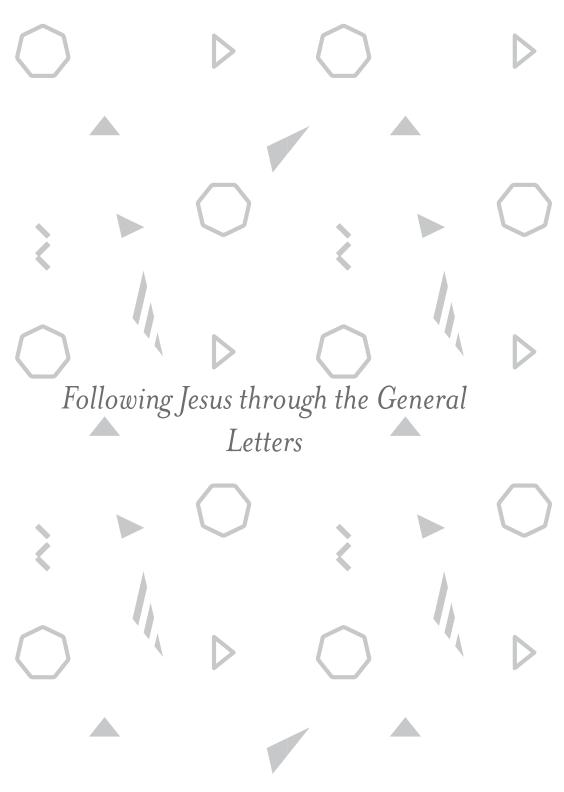
#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Employers, political leaders, corporation executives, and parents can follow the spirit of Paul's teaching by treating Christian employees, co-workers, and family members as members of Christ's Body. Christians in modern society must not view helpers as stepping stones to help them achieve their ambitions, but as Christian brothers and sisters who must receive gracious treatment. In addition, all Christian

leaders must recognize that God holds them accountable for the treatment of those who work for them, whether the helpers are Christians or not. They must eventually answer to God for their actions (Colossians 4:1).



Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude



## HOW DOES THIS TYPE OF LITERATURE FIT INTO THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE?

Decades into the Church's existence, it had spread out into Asia Minor and the greater Mediterranean region and was now facing internal problems like false teaching and external pressures like persecution. Even though a few letters may have been addressed to individuals, the authors of the general letters collectively sought to shepherd God's scattered flock by circulating letters to be read by the church at large. Written to both Jews and Gentiles, these book of the New Testament tell Christians to resist false teaching, live holy lives of endurance, and set their hope fully on Jesus (I Peter I:I3).

Hebrews was written broadly to Jewish converts feeling drawn back to traditions not aligned with the Gospel. James, the half brother of Jesus, wrote to Jewish Christians "scattered across the nations" (I:I). James was likely addressing misunderstandings of Paul's teaching, harmonizing how genuine faith works itself out in a life of wisdom and good works. Peter wrote across Asia Minor to stand firm underneath the weight of threatening circumstances such as discrimination in the Greco-Roman world. The recipients of John's letters were endearingly referred to as 'dear children' to give assurance of eternal life and that Jesus is greater than the opposition they faced. The aging and fatherly apostle called his audience to hold faithfully to true doctrine, live obediently, and be completely devoted to Jesus. Jude, the brother of James and Jesus, wrote Christians believers under attack for their faith telling them to contend for the true faith, knowing they were kept secure by Jesus.

## HOW DO WE READ THE GENERAL LETTERS NORMALLY?

Learning about and being mindful of a letter's wider purposes and themes always helps us with interpretation:

- Hebrews is a robust theology with well-crafted arguments that also uses strong
  imagery, metaphor, comparisons and contrasts, and allusions to historical
  events and people in the Old Testament.
- Set against the backdrop of factions in the church such as conflict between the rich and poor, James was concerned with Christian's living out their faith.

Thus, James gave practical rebukes for worldliness and challenged his audience to be wise and sincere people who were doers, not just hearers, of the Word (James I:22).

- Peter encouraged endurance among the suffering by looking back on Jesus'
  suffering and looking forward to His second coming and rich inheritance.
  Writing with a pattern that moves back and forth between theological truths
  and practical applications, the apostle incorporated vivid figurative language to
  express urgency and intensity.
- John wrote in response to the rise of a heresy called Gnosticism; a mystical religious movement that distorted Christian theology and emphasized salvation through special knowledge.
- Jude's letter, sometimes known as a "judgment oracle" (i.e. message from God), has a fierce and urgent tone to describe and condemn false teachers who enticed people to see God's grace as a license to sin.

## HOW DOES THIS PART OF THE BIBLE POINT TO JESUS?

The general letters are unified in their instruction to not be deceived into thinking that anything is superior to Jesus and His Gospel.

- Hebrews explains how the Old Testament pointed to and was fulfilled by Jesus superior to everything else; greater than any angel, person, priest, or old covenant institution. And that He therefore gives perfect salvation and helps His people find rest and perseverance. This theological history unpacks the good news that Jesus sacrificed Himself "once for all" (Hebrews 9:12, 26; 10:10) to offer true rest and a secure anchor for the soul (Hebrews 6:19).
- James reminds us that Jesus communicated good news through words and action, things inseparable for genuine faith.
- Peter pointed to the redemptive suffering of Jesus, that He responded to evil
  by doing good, bringing life to those who believed in Him. Though the enemy
  attacks and tempts us, we know that Jesus overcame him by the Word of God
  and ultimately defeated evil by His perfect goodness.
- John understood that Jesus is the focus of every believer's transformation by the power of His Spirit. Since God is love (I John 4:16) and has demonstrated that by sending His Son as the sacrifice (I John 4:10), Jesus is the clearest expression of God's love.

When Jude called out false teachers bothering God's sheep, he was describing the sort of counterfeit leaders Jesus described (in John 10) as hired hands, thieves, and robbers who steal and destroy. In stark contrast, Jesus is the good Shepherd who laid His life down for His sheep, protecting them as they listen to His true voice.

## **HOW DO THE GENERAL LETTERS FIT** INTO OUR LIVES TODAY?

Each of the general letters was written by a specific person to people in a specific context. By peering into their worlds, we can see that the truth of the Gospel is universal and has application in wildly different settings. Take, for instance, Jesus' half brother Jude. His letter was written to a community familiar with Old Testament literature (including all the promises, prophecies, and warnings) and yet many of us read it today without considering their frame of mind. This early church was in its infancy and was wrestling with where their story intersected with thousands of years of ancestors who trusted in God and believed in His promises. Jude calls this community to recognize God's decisive work in Jesus as the fulfillment of their hope and to live in kind, to pray and love and obey as Jesus really is who He says He is (the Jewish Messiah they were waiting for).

This is where we can sink our teeth into the story because if we believe that Jesus really is who He says He is, the way we live will be the most valuable indicator of our belief. We labor not for what we ourselves can earn but because God's mercy and grace fully epitomized in the person and work of Jesus is worthy of our love, honor, and obedience.

#### LVIII

## **HEBREWS**

#### WHO WROTE IT?

Although some include the book of Hebrews among the apostle Paul's writings, the certain identity of the author remains a mystery. Missing is Paul's customary salutation common to his other works. In addition, the suggestion that the writer of this epistle relied upon knowledge and information provided by others who were actual eye-witnesses of Christ Jesus (Hebrews 2:3) makes Paul's authorship doubtful. Some attribute Luke as its writer; others suggest Hebrews may have been written by Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Philip, or Aquila and Priscilla. Regardless of the human hand that held the pen, the Holy Spirit of God is the divine author of all Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16); therefore, Hebrews speaks with the same canonical authority as the other sixty-five books of the Bible.

## WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

The early church father Clement quoted from the book of Hebrews in AD 95. However, internal evidence such as the fact that Timothy was alive at the time the epistle was written, and the absence of any evidence showing the end of the Old Testament sacrificial system that occurred with Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70, indicates the book was written around AD 65.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The late Dr. Walter Martin, founder of the Christian Research Institute and writer of the best-selling book Kingdom of the Cults, quipped in his usual tongue-in-cheek manner that the book of Hebrews was written by a Hebrew to other Hebrews telling the Hebrews to stop acting like Hebrews. In truth, many of the early Jewish believers were slipping back into the rites and rituals of Judaism in order to escape the mount-

ing persecution. This letter, then, is an exhortation for those persecuted believers to continue in the grace of Jesus Christ.

# **SOME KEY VERSES**

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

#### **HEBREWS 1:1-2**

How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

#### **HEBREWS 2:3**

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

#### **HEBREWS 4:14-16**

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

#### **HEBREWS 11:1**

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

#### **HEBREWS 12:1-2**

# A QUICK SUMMARY

Hebrews addresses three separate groups: believers in Christ, unbelievers who had knowledge of-and an intellectual acceptance of-the facts of Christ, and unbelievers who were attracted to Christ but who ultimately rejected Him. It's important to understand which group is being addressed in which passage. To fail to do so can cause us to draw conclusions inconsistent with the rest of Scripture.

The writer of Hebrews continually makes mention of the superiority of Christ in both His personage and in His ministry work. In the writings of the Old Testament, we understand the rituals and ceremonies of Judaism symbolically pointed to the coming of Messiah. In other words, the rites of Judaism were but shadows of things to come. Hebrews tells us that Jesus is better than anything mere religion has to offer. All the pomp and circumstance of religion pales in comparison to the person, work, and ministry of Jesus. It is the superiority of our Lord Jesus, then, that remains the theme of this eloquently written letter.

# **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Perhaps nowhere in the New Testament does the Old Testament come into focus more than in Hebrews, which has as its foundation the Levitical priesthood. The writer to the Hebrews constantly compares the inadequacies of the Old Testament sacrificial system to the perfection and completion in Christ. Where the Old Covenant required continual sacrifices and a once-a-year atonement for sin offered by a human priest, the New Covenant provides a once-for-all sacrifice through Christ (Hebrews IO:IO) and direct access to the throne of God for all who are in Him.

# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Rich in foundational Christian doctrine, Hebrews also gives us encouraging examples of God's faith heroes who persevered in spite of great difficulties and adverse circumstances (Hebrews II). These members of God's "Hall of Faith" provide overwhelming evidence to the unconditional surety and absolute reliability of God. Likewise, we can maintain perfect confidence in God's rich promises, regardless of our circumstances, by meditating upon the rock-solid faithfulness of God's workings in the lives of His Old Testament saints.

The writer of Hebrews gives ample encouragement to believers, but there are five solemn warnings we must heed. There is the danger of neglect (Hebrews 2:1-4), the danger of unbelief (Hebrews 3:7-4:13), the danger of spiritual immaturity (Hebrews 5:11-6:20), the danger of failing to endure (Hebrews 10:26-39), and the inherent danger of refusing God (Hebrews 12:25-29). And so we find in this crowning masterpiece a great wealth of doctrine, a refreshing spring of encouragement, and a source of sound, practical warnings against slothfulness in our Christian walk. But there is still more, for in Hebrews we find a magnificently rendered portrait of our Lord Jesus Christ—the Author and Finisher of our great salvation (Hebrews 12:2).

# LIX

# **JAMES**

## WHO WROTE IT?

The author of this letter is James, also called James the Just, who is thought to be the brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). James was not a believer (John 7:3-5) until after the resurrection (Acts 1:14; I Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19). He became the head of the Jerusalem church, and is mentioned first as a pillar of the church (Galatians 2:9).

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

James is probably the oldest book of the New Testament, written perhaps as early as AD 45, before the first council of Jerusalem in AD 50. James was martyred in approximately AD 62, according to the historian Josephus.

# WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Some think that this letter was written in response to an overzealous interpretation of Paul's teaching regarding faith. This extreme view, called antinomianism, held that through faith in Christ one is completely free from all Old Testament law, all legalism, all secular law, and all the morality of a society. James is directed to Jewish Christians scattered among all the nations (James I:I). Martin Luther, who detested this letter and called it "the epistle of straw," failed to recognize that James' teaching on works complemented—not contradicted—Paul's teaching on faith. While Paul's teachings concentrate on our justification with God, James' teachings concentrate on the works that exemplify that justification. James was writing to Jews to encourage them to continue growing in this new Christian faith. James emphasizes that good actions will naturally flow from those who are filled with the Spirit, and questions whether someone may or may not have a saving faith if the fruits of the Spirit cannot be seen, much as Paul describes in Galatians 5:22-23.

# SOME KEY VERSES

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

#### **JAMES 1:2-3**

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

#### **JAMES 1:19**

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

#### **JAMES 2:17-18**

So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire!

#### JAMES 3:5

The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

**JAMFS 5:16** 

# **A QUICK SUMMARY**

James outlines the faith walk through genuine religion (James 1:1-27), genuine faith (James 2:1-3:12) and genuine wisdom (James 3:13-5:20). This book contains a remarkable parallel to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. James begins in the first chapter by describing the overall traits of the faith walk. In chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3, he discusses social justice and a discourse on faith in action. He then compares and contrasts the difference between worldly and godly wisdom and asks us to turn away from evil and draw close to God. James gives a particularly severe rebuke to the rich who hoard and those who are self-reliant. Finally, he ends with encouragement to believers to be patient in suffering, praying and caring for one another, and bolstering our faith through fellowship.

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

James is the ultimate description of the relationship between faith and works. The Jewish Christians to whom James wrote were so ingrained in the Mosaic Law that he spent considerable time explaining the difficult truth that no one is justified by the works of the Law (Galatians 2:16). He declares to them that even if they try their very best to keep all the various laws and rituals, doing so is impossible, and transgressing the tiniest part of the Law made them guilty of all of it (James 2:10), because the Law is one entity and breaking one part of it is breaking all of it.

# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

We see in James a challenge to faithful followers of Jesus Christ to not just "talk the talk," but to "walk the walk." While our faith walk, to be certain, requires a growth of knowledge about the Word, James exhorts us to not stop there. Many Christians will find this letter challenging as James presents 60 obligations in only 108 verses. He focuses on the truths of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount and motivates us to act upon what He taught.

The letter also puts to rest the idea that one can become a Christian and yet continue living in sin, exhibiting no fruit of righteousness. Such a "faith," James declares, is shared by the demons who "believe—and shudder" (James 2:19). Yet such a "faith" cannot save because it is not verified by the works that always accompany true saving faith (Ephesians 2:10). Good works are not the cause of salvation, but they are the result of it.

LX

# 1 PETER

## WHO WROTE IT?

I Peter I:I identifies the author of the book as the apostle Peter.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

I Peter was likely written between AD 60 and 65.

# WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The book of I Peter is a letter from Peter to the believers who had been dispersed throughout the ancient world and were under intense persecution. If anyone understood persecution, it was Peter. He was beaten, threatened, punished, and jailed for preaching the Word of God. He knew what it took to endure without bitterness, without losing hope and in great faith living an obedient, victorious life. This knowledge of living hope in Jesus was the message and Christ's example was the one to follow.

## SOME KEY VERSES

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 PFTFR 1:3

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

#### 1 PETER 2:9

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

#### 1 PETER 2:24

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

1 PETER 5:8-9

# A QUICK SUMMARY

Though this time of persecution was desperate, Peter reveals that it was actually a time to rejoice. He says to count it a privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ, as their Savior suffered for them. This letter makes reference to Peter's personal experiences with Jesus, and his sermons from the book of Acts. Peter confirms Satan as the great enemy of every Christian, but the assurance of Christ's future return gives the incentive of hope.

# **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Peter's familiarity with the Old Testament law and prophets enabled him to explain various Old Testament passages in light of the life and work of Jesus. In I Peter I:I6, he quotes Leviticus II:44: "Be holy, for I am holy." But he prefaces it by explaining that holiness is not achieved by keeping the Law, but by the grace bestowed upon all who believe in Christ (I Peter I:I3). Further, Peter explains the reference to the

"cornerstone" in Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22 as Christ, who was rejected by the Jews through their disobedience and unbelief. Additional Old Testament references include the sinless Christ (I Peter 2:22/Isaiah 53:9) and admonitions to holy living through the power of God which yields blessings (I Peter 3:10:12; Psalm 34:12-16; I Peter 5:5; Proverbs 3:34).

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The assurance of eternal life is given to all Christians. One way to identify with Christ is to share in His suffering. We have been saved by the imperishable grace of Christ into a new life in Him. Sometimes life seems unbearably hard, yet we have an unfading hope in Christ that strengthens us in the midst of it all. This letter to the exiled early church encourages us to remember what Christ has done for us, and that no matter what our circumstances, we are positionally in Him.

# LXI

# 2 PETER

## WHO WROTE IT?

2 Peter I:I specifically states that the apostle Peter was the author. Peter's authorship of 2 Peter has been challenged more than that of any other book in the New Testament. However, we find no good reason to reject Peter's authorship of 2 Peter.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

2 Peter was written toward the end of Peter's life. Since Peter was martyred in Rome during the reign of Nero, his death must have occurred prior to AD 68. He very likely wrote 2 Peter between AD 65-68.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Peter was alarmed that false teachers were beginning to infiltrate the churches. He called on Christians to grow and become strong in their faith so that they could detect and combat the spreading abandonment of faith. He strongly stressed the authenticity of the Word of God and the sure return of the Lord Jesus.

### SOME KEY VERSES

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

2 PETER 1:3-4

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

#### 2 PETER 3:9

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

2 PETER 3:18

# A QUICK SUMMARY

Knowing that his time was short (2 Peter 1:13-15) and these churches faced immediate danger (2 Peter 2:1-3), Peter called upon the readers to refresh their memories (2 Peter 1:13) and stimulate their thinking (2 Peter 3:1-2) so that they would remember his teaching (2 Peter 1:15). He challenged the believers to become more mature in their faith by adding to it specific Christians virtues, thereby becoming effective and productive in their knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5-9). The Old and New Testament writers were set forth as their authority for their faith (2 Peter 1:12-21, 3:2, 3:15-16). Peter desired they become strong in their faith to withstand the false teachers that had crept in and adversely affected the churches. In his denunciation of them, he described their conduct, their condemnation, and their characteristics (2 Peter chapter 2), and also that they ridiculed the Lord's Second Coming (2 Peter 3:3-7). For the Christians, Peter taught that the Second Coming is the incentive for holy living (2 Peter 3:14). After a final warning, Peter again encouraged them to grow in the grace and knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He concluded with a word of praise to his Lord and Savior (2 Peter 3:18).

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

In his denunciation of false prophets, Peter repeats a prevalent Old Testament theme that must have been very familiar to his readers. Many of the early Christians were converted Jews who had been well taught in the Law and the prophets. When Peter referred to the "the prophetic word" of the Old Testament in 2 Peter I:I9-2I, he at one time denounced false prophets and affirmed that true prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit who spoke through them (2 Samuel 23:2). Jeremiah was equally forceful in his criticism of false prophets, asking, "How long shall there be lies in

the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart?" (Jeremiah 23:26). Clearly, the same deluded false teachers who plagued God's people in both the Old and New Testaments are still with us, making Peter's second letter as relevant today as it was 2000 years ago.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Certainly, as Christians in the 21st century, we are nearer our Lord's return than the first-century Christians to whom this epistle was written. Through television and other means of mass communications, mature Christians are aware that many false teachers are out there parading as true Christian leaders, and that immature Christians have been "taken in" by their rhetoric and false interpretation of Scriptures. It behooves all born-again Christians to be so grounded in the Word that we will be able to discern truth from error.

The same prescription for growth in faith that Peter gave (2 Peter I:5-II), when applied to our lives, will assure us "an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter I:IO-II). The foundation for our faith is and always will be the same Word of God that Peter preached.

# LXII

# **1 JOHN**

## WHO WROTE IT?

I, 2, and 3 John have from earliest times been attributed to the apostle John, who also wrote the Gospel of John. The content, style, and vocabulary seem to warrant the conclusion that these three letters were addressed to the same readers as the Gospel of John.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

I John was likely written between AD 85-95.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

I John seems to be a summary that assumes the readers' knowledge of the Gospel as written by John, and offers certainty for their faith in Christ. The first letter indicates that the readers were confronted with the error of gnosticism, which became a more serious problem in the second century. As a philosophy of religion, it held that physical matter is evil and spirit is good. The solution to the tension between these two was knowledge, or gnosis, through which man rose from the mundane to the spiritual. In the Gospel message, this led to two false theories concerning the person of Christ: Docetism—regarding the human Jesus as a ghost—and Cerinthian-ism—making Jesus a dual personality, at times human and at times divine. The key purpose of I John is to set boundaries on the content of faith, and to give believers assurance of their salvation.

## SOME KEY VERSES

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

#### 1 JOHN 1:9

No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

#### 1 JOHN 3:6

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

#### 1 JOHN 4:4

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.

1 JOHN 5:13

# A QUICK SUMMARY

False spiritual teachers were a big problem in the early church. Because there was not a complete New Testament that believers could refer to, many churches fell prey to pretenders who taught their own ideas and advanced themselves as leaders. John wrote this letter to set the record straight on some important issues, particularly concerning the identity of Jesus Christ.

Because John's letter was about the basics of faith in Christ, it helped his readers reflect honestly on their faith. It helped them answer the question, "Are we true believers?" John told them that they could tell by looking at their actions. If they loved one another, that was evidence of God's presence in their lives. But if they bickered and fought all the time, or were selfish and did not look out for one another, they were betraying that they, in fact, did not know God.

That did not mean they had to be perfect. In fact, John also recognized that believing involved admitting our sins and seeking God's forgiveness. Depending on God for cleansing from guilt, along with admitting our wrongs against others and making amends, was another important part of getting to know God.

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

One of the most often-quoted passages regarding sin is found in I John 2:16. In this passage, John describes the three aspects of sin that recall the first and most earth-shattering temptations in all of Scripture. The first sin—the disobedience of Eve—was the result of her yielding to the same three temptations as we find in Genesis 3:6: the lust of the flesh ("good for food"); the lust of the eyes ("a delight to the eyes"); and the pride of life ("desired to make one wise").

# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

I John is a book of love and joy. It explains the fellowship we have with others and with Jesus Christ. It differentiates between happiness, which is temporary and fleeting, and true joy, which I John tells us how to achieve. If we take the words written by John and we apply them to our daily lives, the true love, commitment, fellowship, and joy we long for will be ours.

The apostle John knew Christ well. He is telling us that we can all have that close, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. We have the witness of men who had direct and personal contact with Him. The gospel writers present their solidly based testimony on a historical reality. Now, how does that apply to our lives? It explains to us that Jesus came here as the Son of God to create a union with us based on His grace, mercy, love, and acceptance. So many times people think Jesus is off in some faraway place and that He doesn't really concern Himself with our daily struggles, issues, and concerns. But John is telling us that Jesus is right here with us in both the simple, mundane parts of our lives and in the complex, soul-wrenching parts.

John testifies as a witness of his personal experiences that God became flesh and lived among men. That means Christ came here to live with us and He still lives with us. As He walked the earth alongside John, He also walks through each and every day with us. We need to apply this truth to our lives and live as if Jesus were standing right next to us every second of the day. If we put this truth into practice, Christ will add holiness to our lives, making us more and more like Him.

# **LXIII**

# **2 JOHN**

## WHO WROTE IT?

2 John does not directly name its author. The tradition from the earliest days of the church states that the author was the apostle John. There have been various conjectures over the years that another disciple of Christ named John may have been responsible for this letter. However, all the evidence points to the author as John the beloved disciple who also wrote the Gospel of John.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

2 John would most likely have been written at about the same time as John's other letters, I and 3 John, between AD 85-95.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

2 John is an urgent plea that the readers of John's letter should show their love for God and His son Jesus by obeying the commandment to love each other and live their lives in obedience to the Scriptures. The book of 2 John is also a strong warning to be on the lookout for deceivers who were going about saying that Christ had not actually risen in the flesh.

# **SOME KEY VERSES**

And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.

**2 JOHN 6** 

Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

2 JOHN 8-9

# **A QUICK SUMMARY**

2 John is addressed to "to the elect lady and her children" (2 John I:I). This could either have been a lady of important standing in the church, or a code which refers to the local church and its congregation. In those days when Christians were being persecuted such coded salutations were often used.

The book of 2 John is largely concerned with an urgent warning concerning deceivers who were not teaching the exact doctrine of Christ, and who maintained that Jesus did not actually rise in the flesh but only spiritually. John is very anxious that true believers should be aware of these false teachers and have nothing to do with them.

### **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

John describes love not as an emotion or feeling, but as obedience to the commandments of God. Jesus reiterated the importance of the commandments, especially the "great and first commandment," love for God (Deuteronomy 6:5), and the second, love for one another (Matthew 22:37-40; Leviticus 19:18). Far from abolishing the Old Testament law of God, Jesus came to fulfill it by providing the means of its fulfillment in Himself.

# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

It is extremely important that we check everything we see, hear, and read that claims to be "Christian" with the Scriptures. This cannot be too strongly emphasized because one of Satan's greatest weapons is deceit. It is very easy to be taken in by a new and exciting doctrine that appears to be based on Scripture but which, if examined closely, is in fact a departure from the Word of God. If what appears to be happening does not line up explicitly with Scripture, then this is false, not of the Spirit, and we should have nothing to do with it.

# LXIV

# **3 JOHN**

## WHO WROTE IT?

3 John does not directly name its author. The tradition from the earliest days of the church has been that the apostle John is the author. There have been occasional doubts raised by those who thought it possible that this was written by another disciple of the Lord named John, but all the evidence points to the author being the apostle John.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

3 John would most likely have been written at about the same time as John's other letters, I and 2 John, between AD 85-95.

## WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

John's purpose in writing this third letter is threefold. First, he writes to commend and encourage his beloved co-worker, Gaius, in his ministry of hospitality to the itinerant messengers who were going from place to place to preach the Gospel of Christ. Second, he indirectly warns and condemns the behavior of one Diotrephes, a dictatorial leader who had taken over one of the churches in the province of Asia, and whose behavior was directly opposed to all that the apostle and his Gospel stood for. Third, he commends the example of Demetrius who was reported as having a good testimony from all.

# **SOME KEY VERSES**

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

**3 JOHN 4** 

Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

3 JOHN 11

# A QUICK SUMMARY

John is writing with his usual strong emphasis on truth to this much-loved brother in Christ, Gaius, a layman of some wealth and distinction in a city near Ephesus. He highly commends Gaius' care and hospitality to his messengers whose mission was to take the Gospel from place to place, whether they were known to him or were strangers. John exhorts him to continue to do good and not to imitate evil, as in the example of Diotrephes. Diotrephes had taken over the leadership of a church in Asia and not only refused to recognize John's authority as an apostle but also refused to receive his letters and submit to his directions. He also circulated malicious slanders against John and excommunicated members who showed support and hospitality to John's messengers. Before John concludes his letter, he also commends the example of Demetrius, of whom he has heard excellent reports.

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

The concept of offering hospitality to strangers has plenty of precedent in the Old Testament. Acts of hospitality in Israel included the humble and gracious reception of aliens into the home for food, lodging, and protection (Genesis 18:2-8, 19:1-8; Job 31:16-23, 31-32). In addition, Old Testament teaching portrays the Israelites as alienated people who are dependent on God's hospitality (Psalm 39:12), and God as the One who graciously meets their needs, redeeming them from Egypt, feeding them, and clothing them in the wilderness (Exodus 16; Deuteronomy 8:2-5).

# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

John, as always, emphasizes the importance of walking in the truth of the Gospel. Hospitality, support, and encouragement for our fellow Christians are some of the main precepts of the teachings of Jesus, and Gaius was obviously an outstanding example of this ministry. We should also show hospitality to those who minister the Word, welcoming them into our churches and homes. Those who are servants of the Gospel deserve our support and encouragement.

We also need to be careful always to follow only the example of those whose words and actions are in line with the Gospel, and be discerning enough to be aware of those such as Diotrephes whose behavior is far from being like that which Jesus taught.

# LXV

# **JUDE**

## WHO WROTE IT?

Jude I identifies the author as Jude, a brother of James. This likely refers to Jesus' half-brother Jude, as Jesus also had a half-brother named James (Matthew 13:55). Jude likely does not identify himself as a brother of Jesus out of humility and reverence for Christ.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Jude is closely related to the book of 2 Peter. The date of authorship for Jude depends on whether Jude used content from 2 Peter, or Peter used content from Jude when writing 2 Peter. The book of Jude was written somewhere between AD 60-80.

### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Jude is an important book for us today because it is written for the end times, for the end of the church age. The church age began at the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came onto the scene. Jude is the only book given entirely to the great abandonment of faith. Jude writes that evil works are the evidence of this. He admonishes us to fight for the faith, for there are weeds among the wheat. False prophets are in the church and the saints are in danger. Jude is a small but important book worthy of study, written for the Christian of today.

## SOME KEY VERSES

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

#### JUDE 3

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.

#### JUDE 17-19

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

**JUDE 24-25** 

# **A QUICK SUMMARY**

According to verse 3, Jude was anxious to write about our salvation; however, he changed topics to address contending for the faith. This faith embodies the complete body of Christian doctrine taught by Christ, later passed on to the apostles. After Jude warns of false teachers (verses 4-16), he advises us on how we can succeed in spiritual warfare (verses 20-21). Here is wisdom we would do well to accept and adhere to as we go through these days of the end times.

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Jude is filled with references to the Old Testament, including the Exodus (Jude 5); Satan's rebellion (Jude 6); Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 7); Moses' death (Jude 9); Cain (Jude II); Balaam (Jude II); Korah (Jude II); Enoch (Jude I4,I5); and Adam (Jude I4). Jude's use of the well-known historical illustrations of Sodom and Gomorrah, Cain, Balaam, and Korah reminded the Jewish Christians of the necessity of true faith and obedience.

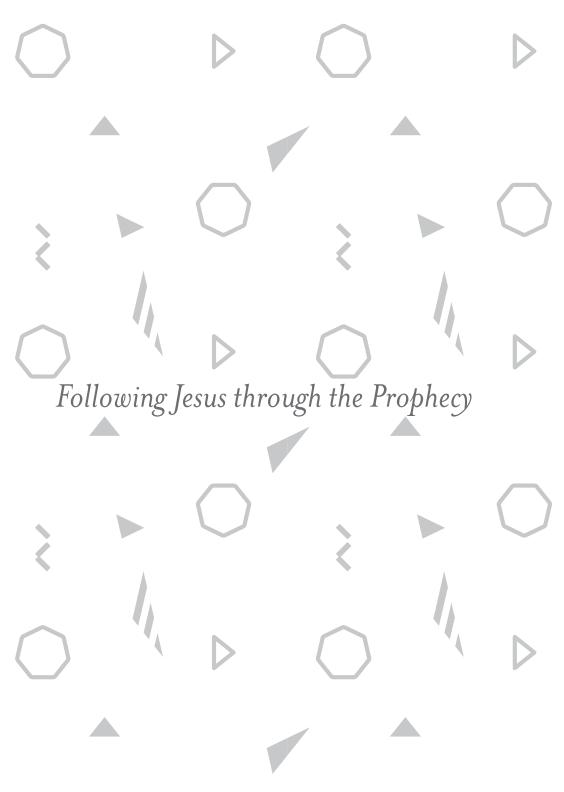
### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

We live in a unique time in history and this little book can help equip us for the untold challenges of living in the end times. Today's Christian must be on guard for false teachings that can so easily deceive us if we aren't well versed in the Word. We need to know the Gospel—to protect and defend it—and accept the Lordship of Christ.

Authentic faith always reflects Christ-like behavior. Our life in Christ should reflect our very own heart-knowledge that rests on the authority of God the Father and puts faith into practice.



Revelation



# HOW DOES THIS TYPE OF LITERATURE FIT INTO THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE?

Written by the aging apostle John when he was exiled on the island of Patmos (a Roman penal colony) in roughly in the mid 90's AD, Revelation is the final book of the Bible. Jesus gave the apostle this Revelation to help seven first-century churches in the province of Asia Minor who were being oppressed as minorities in their culture. Threatened by false teaching, (satanic) persecution, and the temptation to compromise with paganism through idolatry and immorality, it has been said that the churches listed in Revelation are also representative of all churches across time. This means that Jesus was promising a divine end-time intervention and ultimate triumph for everyone who puts their faith in Him. Revelation thus speaks heavily into a field of theology called "eschatology", which is concerned with the study of the end times.

# HOW DO WE READ THE PROPHECY NORMALLY?

Perhaps the first step to reading Revelation normally is actually reading it in the first place. Some, either for fear of sensationalism or due to frustration over what is not immediately clear in the text, have an aversion to Revelation. At the other end of the spectrum, some have an unhealthy preoccupation with eschatology, continually projecting current political and social events onto the text to make speculative predictions about the end times. This approach is also problematic because it tends to overlook Revelation's original audience, historical context, and the Bible holistically.

As mentioned above, modern audiences need to realize that while Revelation was written for us, it was not written directly to us. Studying historical background can help us understand the letter's original context and the way its symbolism would have been understood by John's contemporaries. Yet, while Revelation does pertain to a setting in the past, it also causes us to be alert and looking to the future in anticipation of the second coming of Christ and a new heaven and earth.

Revelation is perhaps the most complex book in the entire Bible and requires careful and thorough study because in it multiple literary styles converge. The overall genre of Revelation is prophecy (22:19) which gives visions of real persons and events with

imaginative and symbolic details that hearken back to Old Testament prophecies such as Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. However, the title "Revelation" also signifies that it belongs to the genre of apocalypse (revealing or unveiling heavenly or future realities), which utilizes poetry, imagery, metaphor, simile, and allusion to our capture attention and imagination.

# HOW DOES THIS PART OF THE BIBLE POINT TO JESUS?

Revelation is all about Jesus; it was ultimately authored by Him, and points explicitly to His glory, power over enemies, and impending return. The overarching theme of Revelation deals with an unseen spiritual war in which the church was and still is engaged; a cosmic conflict between God and His Christ against Satan and his allies. In this conflict, Jesus has already won the decisive victory through His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection. Revelation clearly positions Jesus as the focal point of not only God's redemptive work, but also as the centerpiece of history itself, as stated by Jesus Himself, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 22:13).

# HOW DOES THE PROPHECY FIT INTO OUR LIVES TODAY?

As followers of Jesus, it is clear there is blessing to be had in reading even the perceived craziness of the book of Revelation. Perhaps on its pages, we will be prompted to trust God to guide us through odd apocalyptic images. Or maybe the blessing is in a renewed confidence that God will not and does not allow evil to stand forever in His good world. Either way, John's visions reveal that Jesus has overcome evil through His death on the cross, His resurrection, and one day through His return as the true King of kings. In this strange but beautifully wise letter/vision/discourse/prophecy, John brings us to a throne of enduring hope. He brings us to Jesus and reminds us that in Him our suffering, our distress, our tears, our hurts, and our pains aren't relativized, ignored, or discounted. In Jesus, all of our sorrow is redeemed and our future hope invades our present distress to the glory of God.

# **LXVI**

# REVELATION

## WHO WROTE IT?

Revelation I:I,4,9 and 22:8 specifically identify the author of the book of Revelation as the apostle John.

# WHEN(ISH) WAS IT WRITTEN?

Revelation was likely written between AD 90-95.

#### WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

The Revelation of Jesus Christ was given to John by God "to show to his servants the things that must soon take place" (Revelation I:I). This book is filled with mysteries about things to come. It is the final warning that the world will surely end and judgment is certain. It gives us a tiny glimpse of Heaven, and all of the glories awaiting those who choose Jesus. Revelation takes us through the great tribulation with all its woes and the final fire that all unbelievers will face for eternity. The book reiterates the fall of Satan and the doom for which he and his angels are bound. We are shown the duties of all creatures and angels of Heaven, and the promises of the saints that will live forever with Jesus in the New Jerusalem. Like John, we find it hard to describe what we read in the book of Revelation.

# **SOME KEY VERSES**

Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

**REVELATION 1:19** 

Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

### REVELATION 13:16-17

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

### **REVELATION 19:11**

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

### **REVELATION 20:11**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

### **REVELATION 21:1**

# A QUICK SUMMARY

Revelation is lavish in colorful descriptions of the visions which proclaim for us the last days before Christ's return and the ushering in of the new heaven and new earth. Revelation begins with letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor, then goes on to reveal the series of devastations poured out upon the earth; the climactic battle of Armageddon; the binding of Satan; the reign of the Lord; the Great White Throne Judgment; and the nature of the eternal city of God. Prophecies concerning Jesus Christ are fulfilled, and a concluding call to His Lordship assures us that He will soon return.

## **OLD TESTAMENT TIES**

Revelation is the culmination of the prophecies about the end times, beginning with the Old Testament. The description of the antichrist mentioned in Daniel 9:27 is developed fully in chapter 13 of Revelation. Outside of Revelation, examples of

apocalyptic literature in the Bible are Daniel chapters 7-12, Isaiah chapters 24-27, Ezekiel chapters 37-41, and Zechariah chapters 9-14. All these prophecies come together in the book of Revelation.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The overarching theme of this book is that Jesus is victorious and has complete authority over all creation, over all heaven, over all earth, over all humanity, and over all spiritual forces. We know that the battle has already been won, and as followers of Christ, we're on the winning team. This should motivate us to live freely in our position in Christ rather than be burdened by the weight of sin. The future home with Christ is something that should encourage us to live on mission in the current age. The urgency of sharing the hope of salvation in Christ should be at the forefront of our minds as we live out our lives in the "in between" until Jesus returns in victory.

## MY NOTES



# **READING PLANS**

As we embark on studying through the Bible, it's helpful to start with actually spending time reading through it. A book like the one you're holding is great as a resource and reference to help understand things, but time spent in the Word itself is critical to understanding who Jesus is and what He has done.

We've put together four reading plans depending on what interests you and how ambitious you are. Each will last 66 weeks and we'd encourage you to commit to one of them over the next year and a half.

- Semi-Chronological | page 327
- Balanced Old & New Testaments | page 332
- Select Verses | page 336
- Everything Straight Through | page 340
- Inductive Bible Study Method | 346

As you select a plan, we want to encourage you not to beat yourself up if you "fall behind" on a given day or week. Ultimately this isn't about reading the whole Bible in 66 weeks, checking off 464 boxes, or even reading the passage that we went through during weekend services. We just want you to make some intentional time to get in the Word on a regular basis. If one of these reading plans helps you do that, well, that's awesome.

## SEMI-CHRONOLOGICAL

This plan takes you through the whole Bible as we see the grand story woven together in Jesus. It's a semi-chronological ordering of the Old and New Testaments for you to see when events happened in relation to one another. There are readings set for each weekday so you can use the weekends to catch up or reread some passages from the previous week.

WEEK 1 (09.11.2017)	WEEK 2 (09.18.2017)	WEEK 3 (09.25.2017)
☐Genesis I-3	☐Genesis 19-21	☐Genesis 37-40
☐Genesis 4-7	☐Genesis 22-24	☐Genesis 41-42
☐Genesis 8-11	☐Genesis 25-28	☐Genesis 43-45
☐Genesis 12-15	☐Genesis 29-31	☐Genesis 46-47
☐Genesis 16-18	☐Genesis 32-34	☐Genesis 48-50

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#### WEEK 4 (10.02.2017) WEEK 10 (11.13.2017) WEEK 16 (12.25.2017) □ Exodus 1-3 □ Numbers 25-27, Psalm 17 □ I Samuel 9-12, Psalm 47 □ Exodus 4-6 □ Numbers 28-30, Psalm 18 □1 Samuel 13-14, Psalm 48 □ Exodus 7-9 □ Numbers 31-34, Psalm 19 □ I Samuel 15-17, Psalm 49 ☐ Exodus 10-12 □ Numbers 35-36, Psalm 20 ☐ I Samuel 18-20, Psalm 50 ☐ Exodus 13-15 Deuteronomy I-3, Psalm 21 □ I Samuel 21-24, Psalm 51 WEEK 5 (10.09.2017) WEEK 11 (11.20.2017) WEEK 17 (01.01.2018) ☐ Exodus 16-18 Deuteronomy 4-6, Psalm 22 □ I Samuel 25-27, Psalm 52 □ Exodus 19-21 Deuteronomy 7-9, Psalm 23 □1 Samuel 28-31, Psalm 53 Deuteronomy 10-12, Psalm 24 ☐ Exodus 22-24 □2 Samuel 1-3, Psalm 54 Deuteronomy 13-14, Psalm 25 ☐ Exodus 25-27 □2 Samuel 4-8, Psalm 55 Deuteronomy 15-6, Psalm 26 ☐ Exodus 28-31 □2 Samuel 9-12, Psalm 56 WEEK 6 (10.16.2017) WEEK 12 (11.27.2017) WEEK 18 (01.08.2018) ☐ Exodus 32-34 Deuteronomy 17-20, Psalm 27 □2 Samuel 13-15, Psalm 57 □Exodus 35-40 [skim] Deuteronomy 21-23, Psalm 28 □2 Samuel 16-18, Psalm 58 Deuteronomy 24-27, Psalm 29 ☐ Leviticus I-4 □2 Samuel 19-21, Psalm 59 Deuteronomy 28-29, Psalm 30 ☐ Leviticus 5-7 □2 Samuel 22-24, Psalm 60 ☐ Deuteronomy 30-34, Psalm 31 ☐ Leviticus 8-10, Psalm I □I Kings I-3, Psalm 61 WEEK 7 (10.23.2017) WEEK 13 (12.04.2017) WEEK 19 (01.15.2018) ☐ Leviticus II-I3, Psalm 2 □Joshua I-4, Psalm 32 □ I Kings 4-7, Psalm 62 □Joshua 5-8, Psalm 33 Leviticus 14-15, Psalm 3 ☐1 Kings 8-10, Psalm 63 ☐ Leviticus 16-18, Psalm 4 □Joshua 9-12, Psalm 34 □ I Kings II-I3, Psalm 64 Leviticus 19-20, Psalm 5 □Joshua 13-21 [skim], Psalm 35 ☐1 Kings 14-16, Psalm 65 ☐ Leviticus 21-23, Psalm 6 □Joshua 22-24, Psalm 36 ☐1 Kings 17-19, Psalm 66 WEEK 8 (10.30.2017) WEEK 14 (12.11.2017) WEEK 20 (01.22.2018) Leviticus 24-25, Psalm 7 □Judges 1-3, Psalm 37 □ I Kings 20-22, Psalm 67 ☐ Leviticus 26-27, Psalm 8 □Judges 4-5, Psalm 38 □2 Kings I-3, Psalm 68 □ Numbers 1-4, Psalm 9 □Judges 6-8, Psalm 39 □2 Kings 4-7, Psalm 69 □ Numbers 5-7, Psalm 10 □Judges 9-12, Psalm 40 □2 Kings 8-II, Psalm 70 □ Numbers 8-10, Psalm II □Judges 13-15, Psalm 41 □2 Kings 12-14, Psalm 71 □ WEEK 21 (01.29.2018) WEEK 9 (11.06.2017) WEEK 15 (12.18.2017) ☐2 Kings 15-17, Psalm 72 □ Numbers II-I3, Psalm I2 □Judges 16-18, Psalm 42 □2 Kings 18-19, Psalm 73 □ Numbers 14-16, Psalm 13 □Judges 19-21, Psalm 43 □2 Kings 20-22, Psalm 74 □ Numbers 17-18, Psalm 14 Ruth, Psalm 44 □2 Kings 23-25, Psalm 75 Numbers 19-21, Psalm 15 □ I Samuel I-3, Psalm 45

□I Samuel 4-8, Psalm 46

☐ Isaiah 1-4, Psalm 76

□ Numbers 22-24, Psalm 16

WEEK 22 (02.05.2018)  ☐ Isaiah 5-8, Psalm 77  ☐ Isaiah 9-12, Psalm 78  ☐ Isaiah 13-17, Psalm 79  ☐ Isaiah 18-22, Psalm 80  ☐ Isaiah 23-27, Psalm 81	WEEK 28 (03.19.2018)  □ Job 1-3, Psalm 107  □ Job 4-7, Psalm 108  □ Job 8-11, Psalm 109  □ Job 12-15, Psalm 110  □ Job 16-19, Psalm 111	WEEK 34 (04.30.2018)  □ Jeremiah 7-9, Psalm 137  □ Jeremiah 10-13, Psalm 138  □ Jeremiah 14-17, Psalm 139  □ Jeremiah 18-22, Psalm 140  □ Jeremiah 23-25, Psalm 141
WEEK 23 (02.12.2018)  ☐ Isaiah 28-30, Psalm 82 ☐ Isaiah 31-35, Psalm 83 ☐ Isaiah 36-38, Psalm 84 ☐ Isaiah 39-41, Psalm 85 ☐ Isaiah 42-44, Psalm 86	WEEK 29 (03.26.2018)  □ Job 20-23, Psalm 112  □ Job 24-28, Psalm 113  □ Job 29-31, Psalm 114  □ Job 32-34, Psalm 115  □ Job 35-37, Psalm 116	WEEK 35 (05.07.2018)  □ Jeremiah 26-29, Psalm 142  □ Jeremiah 30-32, Psalm 143  □ Jeremiah 33-36, Psalm 144  □ Jeremiah 37-39, Psalm 145  □ Jeremiah 40-44, Psalm 146
WEEK 24 (02.19.2018)  ☐ Isaiah 45-48, Psalm 87 ☐ Isaiah 49-51, Psalm 88 ☐ Isaiah 52-54, Psalm 89 ☐ Isaiah 55-57, Psalm 90 ☐ Isaiah 58-60, Psalm 91	WEEK 30 (04.02.2018)  □ Job 38-39, Psalm 117  □ Job 40-42, Psalm 118  □ Psalm 119 □ Proverbs 1-3, Psalm 120 □ Proverbs 4-6, Psalm 121	WEEK 36 (05.14.2018)  □ Jeremiah 45-48, Psalm 147  □ Jeremiah 49-52, Psalm 148  □ Lamentations 1-2, Psalm 149  □ Lamentations 3, Psalm 150  □ Lamentations 4-5
WEEK 25 (02.26.2018)	WEEK 31 (04.09.2018)	WEEK 37 (05.21.2018)
☐ Isaiah 61-64, Psalm 92 ☐ Isaiah 65-66, Psalm 93 ☐ Hosea 1-5, Psalm 94 ☐ Hosea 6-10, Psalm 95 ☐ Hosea II-14, Psalm 96	☐ Proverbs 7-9, Psalm 122 ☐ Proverbs 10-12, Psalm 123 ☐ Proverbs 13-15, Psalm 124 ☐ Proverbs 16-18, Psalm 125 ☐ Proverbs 19-21, Psalm 126	□ Ezekiel 1-4 □ Ezekiel 5-8 □ Ezekiel 9-12 □ Ezekiel 13-15 □ Ezekiel 16-18
☐ Isaiah 61-64, Psalm 92 ☐ Isaiah 65-66, Psalm 93 ☐ Hosea I-5, Psalm 94 ☐ Hosea 6-10, Psalm 95	☐ Proverbs 10-12, Psalm 123 ☐ Proverbs 13-15, Psalm 124 ☐ Proverbs 16-18, Psalm 125	□ Ezekiel 5-8 □ Ezekiel 9-12 □ Ezekiel 13-15

WEEK 40 (06.11.2018)  □ Ezra 4-7  □ Ezra 8-10  □ Nehemiah 1-3  □ Nehemiah 4-6  □ Nehemiah 7-9	WEEK 46 (07.23.2018)  □ 2 Chronicles 21-24  □ 2 Chronicles 25-27  □ 2 Chronicles 28-31  □ 2 Chronicles 32-34  □ 2 Chronicles 35-36	WEEK 52 [09.03.2018]  □ Luke 4-5  □ Luke 6-7  □ Luke 8-11  □ Luke 12-13  □ Luke 14-17
WEEK 41 (06.18.2018)  ☐ Nehemiah 10-11  ☐ Nehemiah 12-13  ☐ Esther 1-5  ☐ Esther 6-10  ☐ Daniel 1-3	WEEK 47 (07.30.2018)  ☐ Matthew I-3  ☐ Matthew 4-6  ☐ Matthew 7-10  ☐ Matthew II-13  ☐ Matthew I4-16	WEEK 53 (09.10.2018)  □ Luke 18-20  □ Luke 21-24  □ Acts 1-3  □ Acts 4-6  □ Acts 7-9
WEEK 42 (06.25.2018)  □ Daniel 4-6 □ Daniel 7-9 □ Daniel 10-12 □ Haggai □ Zechariah 1-4	WEEK 48 [08.06.2018]  ☐ Matthew 17-20:16  ☐ Matthew 20:17-22  ☐ Matthew 23-24  ☐ Matthew 25-26  ☐ Matthew 27-28	WEEK 54 (09.17.2018)  □ Acts 10-11  □ Acts 12-14  □ Acts 15-16  □ Acts 17-18  □ Acts 19-20
WEEK 43 [07.02.2018]  □ Zechariah 5-8  □ Zechariah 9-14  □ Malachi 1-2  □ Malachi 3-4  □ I Chronicles I-IO [skim]	WEEK 49 [08.13.2018]  Mark I-3  Mark 4-6  Mark 7-8  Mark 9-II  Mark 12-I6	WEEK 55 [09.24.2018]  □ Acts 21-22  □ Acts 23-24  □ Acts 25-26  □ Acts 27-28  □ Romans I-2
WEEK 44 [07.09.2018]  □ I Chronicles II-14  □ I Chronicles I5-17  □ I Chronicles I8-21  □ I Chronicles 22-24  □ I Chronicles 25-29	WEEK 50 (08.20.2018)  □ John 1-2  □ John 3-4  □ John 5-6  □ John 7-10  □ John II-I4	WEEK 56 [10.01.2018]  □ Romans 3-4 □ Romans 5-6 □ Romans 7-8 □ Romans 9-10 □ Romans II-12
WEEK 45 (07.16.2018)  □ 2 Chronicles 1-4  □ 2 Chronicles 5-8  □ 2 Chronicles 9-12  □ 2 Chronicles 13-17  □ 2 Chronicles 18-20	WEEK 51 (08.27.2018)  □ John 15-16 □ John 17-18 □ John 19-21 □ Luke 1 □ Luke 2-3	WEEK 57 (10.08.2018)  Romans 13-14 Romans 15-16 I Corinthians 1-2 I Corinthians 3-4 I Corinthians 5-6

WEEK 58 (10.15.2018)  □ I Corinthians 7-8  □ I Corinthians 9-10  □ I Corinthians II-13  □ I Corinthians I4-16  □ 2 Corinthians I-2	WEEK 64 (11.26.2018)  ☐ Hebrews 7-8  ☐ Hebrews 9-10  ☐ Hebrews II-13  ☐ James I-3  ☐ James 4-5
WEEK 59 (10.22.2018)  2 Corinthians 3-4  2 Corinthians 5-7  2 Corinthians 8-10  2 Corinthians II-I3  Galatians I-2	WEEK 65 [12.03.2018]  ☐ I Peter I-2  ☐ I Peter 3-5  ☐ 2 Peter  ☐ I, 2, & 3 John [skim]  ☐ Jude
WEEK 60 (10.29.2018)  □ Galatians 3-4 □ Galatians 5-6 □ Ephesians 1-2 □ Ephesians 3-4 □ Ephesians 5-6	WEEK 66 (12.10.2018)  □ Revelation 1-6  □ Revelation 7-11  □ Revelation 12-16  □ Revelation 17-20  □ Revelation 21-22
WEEK 61 (11.05.2018)  □ Colossians 1-2 □ Colossians 3-4 □ I Thessalonians 1-2 □ I Thessalonians 3-4 □ I Thessalonians 5	
WEEK 62 (11.12.2018)  □ 2 Thessalonians □ I Timothy I-2 □ I Timothy 3-4 □ I Timothy 5-6 □ 2 Timothy I-4	
WEEK 63 (11.19.2018)  ☐ Titus ☐ Philemon ☐ Hebrews 1-2 ☐ Hebrews 3-4 ☐ Hebrews 5-6	

# BALANCED OLD & NEW TESTAMENTS

This plan will take you through the whole Bible while reading a chunk of the Old Testament and a chunk of the New Testament each weekday for 66 weeks. You can use the weekends to catch up or reread some passages from the previous week.

WEEK 1 (09.11.2017)	WEEK 6 (10.16.2017)	WEEK 11 (11.20.2017)
☐ Genesis I-3, Matthew I	☐ Genesis 23-24, Matthew 17	☐ Exodus 31-33, Mark 3:1-19
☐ Genesis 4-6, Matthew 2	☐ Genesis 25-26, Matthew 18:1-20	☐ Exodus 34-35, Mark 3:20-35
☐ Genesis 7-9, Matthew 3	☐ Genesis 27-28, Matthew 18:21-35	☐ Exodus 36-38, Mark 4:1-20
☐ Genesis 10-12, Matthew 4	☐ Genesis 29-30, Matthew 19	☐ Exodus 39-40, Mark 4:21-41
☐ Genesis 13-15, Matthew 5:1-26	☐ Genesis 31-32, Matthew 20:1-16	☐ Psalm 90, Leviticus I-2, Mark 5:I-2
WEEK 2 (09.18.2017)	WEEK 7 (10.23.2017)	WEEK 12 (11.27.2017)
☐ Genesis 16-17, Matthew 5:27-48	☐ Genesis 33-35, Matthew 20:17-34	☐ Leviticus 3-5, Mark 5:21-43
☐ Genesis 18-19, Matthew 6:1-18	☐ Genesis 36-38, Matthew 21:1-22	☐ Leviticus 6-7, Mark 6:1-29
☐ Genesis 20-22, Matthew 6:19-34	☐ Genesis 39-40, Matthew 21:23-46	☐ Leviticus 8-10, Mark 6:30-56
□ Job 1-2, Matthew 7	☐ Genesis 41-42, Matthew 22:1-22	☐ Leviticus II-I2, Mark 7:I-I3
□ Job 3-4, Matthew 8:1-17	☐ Genesis 43-45, Matthew 22:23-46	☐ Leviticus 13, Mark 7:14-37
WEEK 3 (09.25.2017)	WEEK 8 (10.30.2017)	WEEK 13 (12.04.2017)
□ Job 5-7, Matthew 8:18-34	☐ Genesis 46-48, Matthew 23:1-22	Leviticus 14, Mark 8:1-21
□ Job 8-10, Matthew 9:1-17	☐ Genesis 49-50, Matthew 23:23-29	☐ Leviticus 15-16, Mark 8:22-38
☐ Job 11-13, Matthew 9:18-38	☐ Exodus 1-3, Matthew 24:1-28	☐ Leviticus 17-18, Mark 9:1-29
☐ Job 14-16, Matthew 10:1-20	☐ Exodus 4-6, Matthew 24:29-51	☐ Leviticus 19-20, Mark 9:30-50
□ Job 17-19, Matthew 10:21-42	☐ Exodus 7-8, Matthew 25:1-30	☐ Leviticus 21-22, Mark 10:1-31
WEEK 4 (10.02.2017)	WEEK 9 (11.06.2017)	WEEK 14 (12.11.2017)
□ Job 20-21, Matthew II	☐ Exodus 9-11, Matthew 25:31-46	☐ Leviticus 23-24, Mark 10:32-52
☐ Job 22-24, Matthew 12:1-23	☐ Exodus 12-13, Matthew 26:1-35	☐ Leviticus 25, Mark II:I-18
☐ Job 25-27, Matthew 12:24-50	☐ Exodus 14-15, Matthew 26:36-75	☐ Leviticus 26-27, Mark 11:19-33
☐ Job 28-29, Matthew 13:1-30	☐ Exodus 16-18, Matthew 27:1-26	☐ Numbers I-2, Mark I2:I-27
□ Job 30-31, Matthew 13:31-58	☐ Exodus 19-20, Matthew 27:27-50	□ Numbers 3-4, Mark 12:28-44
WEEK 5 (10.09.2017)	WEEK 10 (11.13.2017)	WEEK 15 (12.18.2017)
□ Job 32-33, Matthew 14:1-21	☐ Exodus 21-22, Matthew 27:51-66	☐ Numbers 5-6, Mark 13:1-20
□ Job 34-35, Matthew 14:22-36	☐ Exodus 23-24, Matthew 28	☐ Numbers 7-8, Mark 13:21-37
□ Job 36-37, Matthew 15:1-20	☐ Exodus 25-26, Mark 1:1-22	☐ Numbers 9-11, Mark 14:1-26
☐ Job 38-40, Matthew 15:21-39	☐ Exodus 27-28, Mark 1:23-45	☐ Numbers 12-14, Mark 14:27-53

☐ Exodus 29-30, Mark 2

☐ Numbers 15-16, Mark 14:54-72

☐ Job 41-42, Matthew 16

WEEK 16 (12.25.2017)	WEEK 22 (02.05.2018)	WEEK 28 (03.19.2018)
Numbers 17-19, Mark 15:1-25	☐ Judges 7-8, Luke 13:23-35	2 Samuel 16-18, John 5:1-24
□ Numbers 20-22, Mark 15:26-47	☐ Judges 9-10, Luke 14:1-24	2 Samuel 19-20, John 5:25-47
Numbers 23-25, Mark 16	☐ Judges 11-12, Luke 14:25-35	☐ Psalm 64, Psalm 70, John 6:1-21
□ Numbers 26-27, Luke 1:1-20	☐ Judges 13-15, Luke 15:1-10	2 Samuel 21-22, Psalm 18, John 6:22-40
☐ Numbers 28-30, Luke 1:21-38	☐ Judges 16-18, Luke 15:11-32	□ 2 Samuel 23-24, John 6:41-71
WEEK 17 (01.01.2018)	WEEK 23 (02.12.2018)	WEEK 29 (03.26.2018)
□ Numbers 31-33, Luke 1:39-56	☐ Judges 19-21, Luke 16	☐ Psalm 4-6, John 7:1-27
☐ Numbers 34-36, Luke 1:57-80	☐ Ruth 1-4, Luke 17:1-19	☐ Psalm 7-8, John 7:28-53
☐ Deuteronomy I-2, Luke 2:I-24	☐ 1 Samuel 1-3, Luke 17:20-37	☐ Psalm 9-11, John 8:1-27
☐ Deuteronomy 3-4, Luke 2:25-52	☐ 1 Samuel 4-6, Luke 18:1-23	☐ Psalm 12-14, John 8:28-59
☐ Deuteronomy 5-7, Luke 3	□ 1 Samuel 7-9, Luke 18:24-43	☐ Psalm 15-16, John 9:1-23
WEEK 18 (01.08.2018)	WEEK 24 (02.19.2018)	WEEK 30 (04.02.2018)
☐ Deuteronomy 8-10, Luke 4:1-30	☐ 1 Samuel 10-12, Luke 19:1-27	☐ Psalm 17-19, John 9:24-41
☐ Deuteronomy II-I3, Luke 4:3I-44	☐ 1 Samuel 13-14, Luke 19:28-48	☐ Psalm 20-22, John 10:1-21
Deuteronomy 14-16, Luke 5:1-16	☐ 1 Samuel 15-16, Luke 20:1-26	☐ Psalm 24-26, John 10:22-42
☐ Deuteronomy 17-19, Luke 5:17-39	☐ 1 Samuel 17-18, Luke 20:27-47	☐ Psalm 27-29, John 11:1-29
☐ Deuteronomy 20-22, Luke 6:1-26	☐ 1 Samuel 19, Psalm 23-59, Luke 21:1-19	☐ Psalm 31-35, John 11:30-57
WEEK 19 (01.15.2018)	WEEK 25 (02.26.2018)	WEEK 31 (04.09.2018)
WEEK 19 (01.15.2018)  Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49	WEEK 25 (02.26.2018)  I Samuel 20-21. Psalm 34. Luke 21:20-38	WEEK 31 (04.09.2018)  Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26
☐ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49	WEEK 25 [02.26.2018]  1 Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38  1 Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23	☐ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26
☐ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49☐ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:I-30	☐ 1 Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38☐ 1 Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23	☐ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 ☐ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50
☐ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 ☐ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:I-30 ☐ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:31-50	☐ 1 Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38☐ 1 Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23☐ Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46	☐ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 ☐ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 ☐ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20
☐ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49☐ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:I-30	☐ 1 Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38☐ 1 Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23	☐ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 ☐ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50
□ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 □ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:1-30 □ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:31-50 □ Deuteronomy 30-31, Luke 8:1-25 □ Deuteronomy 32-34, Luke 8:26-56	I Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38     I Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23     Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46     I Samuel 23, Psalm 54, 63, Luke 22:47-71     I Samuel 24-27, Luke 23:1-25	□ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 □ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 □ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20 □ Psalm 61-62, 65, John 13:21-38 □ Psalm 68-72, 86, John 14
□ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 □ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:1-30 □ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:31-50 □ Deuteronomy 30-31, Luke 8:1-25 □ Deuteronomy 32-34, Luke 8:26-56  WEEK 20 [01.22.2018]	I Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38     I Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23     Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46     I Samuel 23, Psalm 54, 63, Luke 22:47-71     I Samuel 24-27, Luke 23:1-25  WEEK 26 [03.05.2018]	□ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 □ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 □ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20 □ Psalm 61-62, 65, John 13:21-38 □ Psalm 68-72, 86, John 14  WEEK 32 [04.16.2018]
□ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 □ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:I-30 □ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:3I-50 □ Deuteronomy 30-3I, Luke 8:I-25 □ Deuteronomy 32-34, Luke 8:26-56  WEEK 20 [01.22.2018] □ Joshua I-3, Luke 9:I-17	I Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38     I Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23     Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46     I Samuel 23, Psalm 54, 63, Luke 22:47-71     I Samuel 24-27, Luke 23:1-25  WEEK 26 [03.05.2018]     I Samuel 28-29, Luke 23:26-56	□ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 □ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 □ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20 □ Psalm 61-62, 65, John 13:21-38 □ Psalm 68-72, 86, John 14  WEEK 32 [04.16.2018] □ Psalm 101-103, 108, John 15
□ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 □ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:1-30 □ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:31-50 □ Deuteronomy 30-31, Luke 8:1-25 □ Deuteronomy 32-34, Luke 8:26-56  WEEK 20 [01.22.2018] □ Joshua I-3, Luke 9:1-17 □ Joshua 4-6, Luke 9:18-36	I Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38     I Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23     Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46     I Samuel 23, Psalm 54, 63, Luke 22:47-71     I Samuel 24-27, Luke 23:1-25  WEEK 26 [03.05.2018]     I Samuel 28-29, Luke 23:26-56     I Samuel 30-31, Luke 24:1-35	□ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 □ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 □ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20 □ Psalm 61-62, 65, John 13:21-38 □ Psalm 68-72, 86, John 14  WEEK 32 [04.16.2018] □ Psalm 101-103, 108, John 15 □ Psalm 109-110, 138, John 16
□ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 □ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:1-30 □ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:31-50 □ Deuteronomy 30-31, Luke 8:1-25 □ Deuteronomy 32-34, Luke 8:26-56  WEEK 20 [01.22.2018] □ Joshua I-3, Luke 9:1-17 □ Joshua 4-6, Luke 9:18-36 □ Joshua 7-9, Luke 9:37-62	1 Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38     1 Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23     Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46     1 Samuel 23, Psalm 54, 63, Luke 22:47-71     1 Samuel 24-27, Luke 23:1-25     WEEK 26 [03.05.2018]     1 Samuel 28-29, Luke 23:26-56     1 Samuel 30-31, Luke 24:1-35     2 Samuel 1-2, Luke 24:36-53	□ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 □ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 □ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20 □ Psalm 61-62, 65, John 13:21-38 □ Psalm 68-72, 86, John 14  WEEK 32 [04.16.2018] □ Psalm 101-103, 108, John 15 □ Psalm 109-110, 138, John 16 □ Psalm 139-141, John 17
□ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 □ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:1-30 □ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:31-50 □ Deuteronomy 30-31, Luke 8:1-25 □ Deuteronomy 32-34, Luke 8:26-56  WEEK 20 [01.22.2018] □ Joshua 1-3, Luke 9:1-17 □ Joshua 4-6, Luke 9:18-36 □ Joshua 7-9, Luke 9:37-62 □ Joshua 10-12, Luke 10:1-24	1 Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38     1 Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23     Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46     1 Samuel 23, Psalm 54, 63, Luke 22:47-71     1 Samuel 24-27, Luke 23:1-25     WEEK 26 [03.05.2018]     1 Samuel 28-29, Luke 23:26-56     1 Samuel 30-31, Luke 24:1-35     2 Samuel 1-2, Luke 24:36-53     2 Samuel 3-5, John 1:1-28	□ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 □ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 □ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20 □ Psalm 61-62, 65, John 13:21-38 □ Psalm 68-72, 86, John 14  WEEK 32 [04.16.2018] □ Psalm 101-103, 108, John 15 □ Psalm 109-110, 138, John 16 □ Psalm 139-141, John 17 □ Psalm 143-145, John 18:1-18
□ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 □ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:1-30 □ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:31-50 □ Deuteronomy 30-31, Luke 8:1-25 □ Deuteronomy 32-34, Luke 8:26-56  WEEK 20 [01.22.2018] □ Joshua I-3, Luke 9:1-17 □ Joshua 4-6, Luke 9:18-36 □ Joshua 7-9, Luke 9:37-62	1 Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38     1 Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23     Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46     1 Samuel 23, Psalm 54, 63, Luke 22:47-71     1 Samuel 24-27, Luke 23:1-25     WEEK 26 [03.05.2018]     1 Samuel 28-29, Luke 23:26-56     1 Samuel 30-31, Luke 24:1-35     2 Samuel 1-2, Luke 24:36-53	□ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 □ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 □ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20 □ Psalm 61-62, 65, John 13:21-38 □ Psalm 68-72, 86, John 14  WEEK 32 [04.16.2018] □ Psalm 101-103, 108, John 15 □ Psalm 109-110, 138, John 16 □ Psalm 139-141, John 17
□ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 □ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:1-30 □ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:31-50 □ Deuteronomy 30-31, Luke 8:1-25 □ Deuteronomy 32-34, Luke 8:26-56  WEEK 20 [01.22.2018] □ Joshua 1-3, Luke 9:1-17 □ Joshua 4-6, Luke 9:18-36 □ Joshua 7-9, Luke 9:37-62 □ Joshua 10-12, Luke 10:1-24	1 Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38     1 Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23     Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46     1 Samuel 23, Psalm 54, 63, Luke 22:47-71     1 Samuel 24-27, Luke 23:1-25     WEEK 26 [03.05.2018]     1 Samuel 28-29, Luke 23:26-56     1 Samuel 30-31, Luke 24:1-35     2 Samuel 1-2, Luke 24:36-53     2 Samuel 3-5, John 1:1-28	□ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 □ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 □ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20 □ Psalm 61-62, 65, John 13:21-38 □ Psalm 68-72, 86, John 14  WEEK 32 [04.16.2018] □ Psalm 101-103, 108, John 15 □ Psalm 109-110, 138, John 16 □ Psalm 139-141, John 17 □ Psalm 143-145, John 18:1-18
□ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 □ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:1-30 □ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:31-50 □ Deuteronomy 30-31, Luke 8:1-25 □ Deuteronomy 32-34, Luke 8:26-56  WEEK 20 [01.22.2018] □ Joshua 1-3, Luke 9:1-17 □ Joshua 4-6, Luke 9:18-36 □ Joshua 7-9, Luke 9:37-62 □ Joshua 10-12, Luke 10:1-24 □ Joshua 13-15, Luke 10:25-42	I Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38     I Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23     Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46     I Samuel 23, Psalm 54, 63, Luke 22:47-71     I Samuel 24-27, Luke 23:1-25   WEEK 26 [03.05.2018]     I Samuel 28-29, Luke 23:26-56     I Samuel 30-31, Luke 24:1-35     2 Samuel 1-2, Luke 24:36-53     2 Samuel 3-5, John 1:1-28     2 Samuel 6-7, Psalm 30, John 1:29-51	□ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 □ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 □ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20 □ Psalm 61-62, 65, John 13:21-38 □ Psalm 68-72, 86, John 14  WEEK 32 (04.16.2018) □ Psalm 101-103, 108, John 15 □ Psalm 109-110, 138, John 16 □ Psalm 139-141, John 17 □ Psalm 143-145, John 18:1-18 □ 1 Kings 1-2, John 18:19-40
□ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 □ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:1-30 □ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:31-50 □ Deuteronomy 30-31, Luke 8:1-25 □ Deuteronomy 32-34, Luke 8:26-56  WEEK 20 [01.22.2018] □ Joshua 1-3, Luke 9:1-17 □ Joshua 4-6, Luke 9:18-36 □ Joshua 7-9, Luke 9:37-62 □ Joshua 10-12, Luke 10:1-24 □ Joshua 13-15, Luke 10:25-42  WEEK 21 [01.29.2018]	I Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38     I Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23     Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46     I Samuel 23, Psalm 54, 63, Luke 22:47-71     I Samuel 24-27, Luke 23:1-25    WEEK 26 [03.05.2018]     I Samuel 28-29, Luke 23:26-56     I Samuel 28-29, Luke 24:1-35     2 Samuel 30-31, Luke 24:1-35     2 Samuel 3-5, John I:1-28     2 Samuel 6-7, Psalm 30, John I:29-51    WEEK 27 [03.12.2018]	□ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 □ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 □ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20 □ Psalm 61-62, 65, John 13:21-38 □ Psalm 68-72, 86, John 14  WEEK 32 (04.16.2018) □ Psalm 101-103, 108, John 15 □ Psalm 109-110, 138, John 16 □ Psalm 139-141, John 17 □ Psalm 143-145, John 18:1-18 □ 1 Kings 1-2, John 18:19-40  WEEK 33 (04.23.2018)
□ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 □ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:1-30 □ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:31-50 □ Deuteronomy 30-31, Luke 8:1-25 □ Deuteronomy 32-34, Luke 8:26-56  WEEK 20 [01.22.2018] □ Joshua I-3, Luke 9:1-17 □ Joshua 4-6, Luke 9:18-36 □ Joshua 7-9, Luke 9:37-62 □ Joshua 10-12, Luke 10:1-24 □ Joshua 13-15, Luke 10:25-42  WEEK 21 [01.29.2018] □ Joshua 16-18, Luke II:1-28	1 Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38     1 Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23     Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46     1 Samuel 23, Psalm 54, 63, Luke 22:47-71     1 Samuel 24-27, Luke 23:1-25    WEEK 26 [03.05.2018]     1 Samuel 28-29, Luke 23:26-56     1 Samuel 28-29, Luke 24:1-35     2 Samuel 30-31, Luke 24:1-35     2 Samuel 3-5, John 1:1-28     2 Samuel 6-7, Psalm 30, John 1:29-51    WEEK 27 [03.12.2018]     2 Samuel 8-9, Psalm 60, John 2	□ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 □ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 □ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20 □ Psalm 61-62, 65, John 13:21-38 □ Psalm 68-72, 86, John 14  WEEK 32 [04.16.2018] □ Psalm 101-103, 108, John 15 □ Psalm 109-110, 138, John 16 □ Psalm 139-141, John 17 □ Psalm 143-145, John 18:1-18 □ 1 Kings 1-2, John 18:19-40  WEEK 33 [04.23.2018] □ 1 Kings 3-4, Proverbs 1, John 19:1-22
□ Deuteronomy 23-25, Luke 6:27-49 □ Deuteronomy 26-27, Luke 7:1-30 □ Deuteronomy 28-29, Luke 7:31-50 □ Deuteronomy 30-31, Luke 8:1-25 □ Deuteronomy 32-34, Luke 8:26-56  WEEK 20 [01.22.2018] □ Joshua 1-3, Luke 9:1-17 □ Joshua 4-6, Luke 9:18-36 □ Joshua 7-9, Luke 9:37-62 □ Joshua 10-12, Luke 10:1-24 □ Joshua 13-15, Luke 10:25-42  WEEK 21 [01.29.2018] □ Joshua 16-18, Luke II:1-28 □ Joshua 19-21, Luke II:1-25-54	I Samuel 20-21, Psalm 34, Luke 21:20-38     I Samuel 22, Psalm 56, Luke 22:1-23     Psalm 52, 57, 142, Luke 22:24-46     I Samuel 23, Psalm 54, 63, Luke 22:47-71     I Samuel 24-27, Luke 23:1-25     WEEK 26 [03.05.2018]     I Samuel 28-29, Luke 23:26-56     I Samuel 30-31, Luke 24:1-35     2 Samuel 1-2, Luke 24:36-53     2 Samuel 3-5, John I:1-28     2 Samuel 6-7, Psalm 30, John I:29-51     WEEK 27 [03.12.2018]     2 Samuel 8-9, Psalm 60, John 2     2 Samuel 10-12, John 3:1-15	□ Psalm 36-38, John 12:1-26 □ Psalm 39-41, John 12:27-50 □ Psalm 53-55, Psalm 58, John 13:1-20 □ Psalm 61-62, 65, John 13:21-38 □ Psalm 68-72, 86, John 14  WEEK 32 (04.16.2018) □ Psalm 101-103, 108, John 15 □ Psalm 109-110, 138, John 16 □ Psalm 139-141, John 17 □ Psalm 143-145, John 18:1-18 □ 1 Kings 1-2, John 18:19-40  WEEK 33 (04.23.2018) □ 1 Kings 3-4, Proverbs 1, John 19:1-22 □ Proverbs 2-4, John 19:23-42

#### WEEK 34 (04.30.2018) WEEK 40 (06.11.2018) WEEK 46 (07.23.2018) ☐ Proverbs 13-15, Acts 2:1-21 ☐ Amos 7-9, Galatians 2 ☐ I Chronicles IO-I2, I Corinthians 8 ☐ Proverbs 16-18, Acts 2:22-47 ☐ I Chronicles 13-15, I Corinthians 9 2 Kings 15-16, Galatians 3 ☐ Proverbs 19-21, Acts 3 2 Kings 17-18, Galatians 4 ☐ I Chronicles 16, Psalm 42, 44, I Corinthians IO:I-I8 ☐ Proverbs 22-24, Acts 4:1-22 2 Kings 19-21, Galatians 5 ☐ Psalm 45-47, I Corinthians IO:19-33 ☐ Proverbs 25-26, Acts 4:23-37 2 Kings 22-23, Galatians 6 ☐ Psalm 48-50, I Corinthians II:I-I6 WEEK 35 (05.07.2018) WEEK 41 (06.18.2018) WEEK 47 (07.30.2018) ☐ Proverbs 27-29, Acts 5:1-21 ☐ 2 Kings 24-25, Acts 16:1-21 ☐ Psalm 73-85, I Corinthians II:17-34 ☐ Proverbs 30-31, Acts 5:22-42 ☐ Psalm I-2, IO, Acts I6:22-40 ☐ Psalm 87-88, I Corinthians I2 ☐ Song of Solomon 1-3, Acts 6 ☐ Psalm 33, 43, & 66, Philippians I ☐ I Chronicles 17-19, I Corinthians 13 ☐ Song of Solomon 4-5, Acts 7:1-21 ☐ Psalm 67-71, Philippians 2 ☐ I Chronicles 20-22, I Corinthians I4:I-20 ☐ Song of Solomon 6-8, Acts 7:22-43 ☐ Psalm 89-92, Philippians 3 ☐ I Chronicles 23-25, I Corinthians I4:2I-40 WEEK 36 (05.14.2018) WEEK 42 (06.25.2018) WEEK 48 (08.06.2018) ☐ I Kings 5-7, Acts 7:44-60 ☐ Psalm 93-95, Philippians 4 ☐ I Chronicles 26-27, I Corinthians I5:I-28 ☐ I Kings 8-9, Acts 8:1-25 ☐ Psalm 96-98, Acts 17:1-15 ☐ I Chronicles 28-29, I Corinthians 15:29-58 ☐ I Kings 10-11, Acts 8:26-40 ☐ Psalm 99-100, 102, Acts 17:16-34 ☐ 2 Chronicles I-3, I Corinthians I6 ☐ Ecclesiastes I-3, Acts 9:1-22 ☐ Psalm 104-105, I Thessalonians I 2 Chronicles 4-6, 2 Corinthians I ☐ Ecclesiastes 4-6, Acts 9:23-43 ☐ Psalm 106-112, I Thessalonians 2 2 Chronicles 7-9, 2 Corinthians 2 WEEK 37 (05.21.2018) WEEK 43 (06.02.2018) WEEK 49 (08.13.2018) ☐ Ecclesiastes 7-9, Acts 10:1-23 ☐ Psalm 13-115, 1 Thessalonians 3 ☐ 2 Chronicles 10-12, 2 Corinthians 3 ☐ Ecclesiastes 10-12, Acts 10:24-48 ☐ Psalm II6-II8, I Thessalonians 4 2 Chronicles 13-14, 2 Corinthians 4 ☐ I Kings 12-13, Acts 11 ☐ Psalm 119:1-88, 1 Thessalonians 5 2 Chronicles 15-16, 2 Corinthians 5 ☐ I Kings 14-15, Acts 12 ☐ Psalm II9:89-I76, 2 Thessalonians I 2 Chronicles 17-18, 2 Corinthians 6 ☐ 1 Kings 16-18, Acts 13:1-25 ☐ Psalm 120-122, 2 Thessalonians 2 2 Chronicles 19-20, 2 Corinthians 7 WEEK 38 (05.28.2018) WEEK 44 (07.09.2018) WEEK 50 (08.20.2018) ☐ 1 Kings 19-20, Acts 13:26-52 ☐ Psalm 123-125, 2 Thessalonians 3 ☐ 2 Chronicles 21, Obadiah 1, 2 Corinthians 8 ☐ I Kings 21-22, Acts 14 ☐ Psalm 127-129, Acts 18 2 Chronicles 22, Joel I, 2 Corinthians 9 ☐ Psalm 130-132, I Corinthians I 2 Kings I-3, James I ☐ 2 Chronicles 23, Joel 2, 3, 2 Corinthians 10 ☐ Psalm 133-135, I Corinthians 2 ☐ 2 Kings 4-6, James 2 2 Chronicles 24-26, 2 Corinthians II:I-I5 2 Kings 7-9, James 3 ☐ Psalm 136-146, I Corinthians 3 ☐ Isaiah 1-2, 2 Corinthians II:16-33 WEEK 39 (06.04.2018) WEEK 45 (07.16.2018) WEEK 51 (08.27.2018) ☐ 2 Kings 10-12, James 4 ☐ Psalm 147-148, 1 Corinthians 4 ☐ Isaiah 3-4, 2 Corinthians 12 ☐ 2 Kings 13-14, James 5 ☐ Psalm 149-150, I Corinthians 5 ☐ Isaiah 5-6, 2 Corinthians 13 ☐ Jonah 1-4, Acts 15:1-21 ☐ I Chronicles I-3, I Corinthians 6 ☐ 2 Chronicles 27-28, Acts 19:1-20 ☐ Amos I-3, Acts I5:22-41 ☐ I Chronicles 4-6, I Corinthians 7:I-I9 ☐ 2 Chronicles 29-30, Acts 19:21-41

☐ I Chronicles 7-9, I Corinthians 7:20-40

☐ 2 Chronicles 31-32, Acts 20:1-16

☐ Amos 4-6, Galatians I

WEEK 52 (09.03.2018)	WEEK 58 (10.15.2018)	WEEK 64 (11.26.17)
☐ Isaiah 7-8, Acts 20:17-38	☐ Micah 6-7, Acts 22	☐ Daniel 5-7, Titus 3
☐ Isaiah 9-10, Ephesians 1	☐ Nahum 1-3, Acts 23:1-15	☐ Daniel 8-10, Philemon 1
☐ Isaiah 11-13, Ephesians 2	☐ 2 Chronicles 33-34, Acts 23:16-35	☐ Daniel II-I2, I Timothy I-3
☐ Isaiah 14-16, Ephesians 3	☐ Zephaniah 1-3, Acts 24	☐ Psalm 137, Ezekiel 1-2, 1 Timothy 4-6
☐ Isaiah 17-19, Ephesians 4	2 Chronicles 35, Habakkuk 1-3, Acts 25	☐ Ezekiel 3-4, 2 Timothy
WEEK 53 (09.10.2018)	WEEK 59 (10.22.2018)	WEEK 65 (12.3.17)
☐ Isaiah 20-22, Ephesians 5:1-16	☐ Jeremiah I-2, Acts 26	☐ Ezekiel 5-7, 1 Peter 1-3
☐ Isaiah 23-25, Ephesians 5:17-23	☐ Jeremiah 3-5, Acts 27:1-26	☐ Ezekiel 8-10, 1 Peter 4-5
☐ Isaiah 26-27, Ephesians 6	☐ Jeremiah 6, 11-12, Acts 27:27-44	☐ Ezekiel II-I3, 2 Peter, Jude
☐ Isaiah 28-29, Romans I	☐ Jeremiah 7-8, 26, Acts 28	☐ Ezekiel 14-15, Revelation 1-3
☐ Isaiah 30-31, Romans 2	☐ Jeremiah 9-10, 14, Colossians 1	☐ Ezekiel 16-17, Revelation 4-7
WEEK 54 (09.17.2018)	WEEK 60 (10.29.2018)	WEEK 66 (12.10.17)
☐ Isaiah 32-33, Romans 3	☐ Jeremiah 15-17, Colossians 2	☐ Ezekiel 18-19, Revelation 8-10
☐ Isaiah 34-36, Romans 4	☐ Jeremiah 18-19, Colossians 3	☐ Ezekiel 20-21, Revelation II-I3
☐ Isaiah 37-38, Romans 5	☐ Jeremiah 20, 35-36, Colossians 4	☐ Ezekiel 22-23, Revelation 14-17
☐ Isaiah 39-40, Romans 6	☐ Jeremiah 25, 45-46, Hebrews I	☐ Ezekiel 24-26, Revelation 18-19
☐ Isaiah 41-42, Romans 7	☐ Jeremiah 47-48, Hebrews 2	☐ Ezekiel 27-29, Revelation 20-22
		, ,
WEEK 55 (09.24.2018)	WEEK 61 (11.05.2018)	
☐ Isaiah 43-44, Romans 8:1-21	☐ Jeremiah 49, 13, 22, Hebrews 3	
☐ Isaiah 45-46, Romans 8:22-39	☐ Jeremiah 23-24, Hebrews 4	
☐ Isaiah 47-49, Romans 9:1-15	☐ Jeremiah 27-29, Hebrews 5	
☐ Isaiah 50-52, Romans 9:16-33	☐ Jeremiah 50, Hebrews 6	
☐ Isaiah 53-55, Romans 10	☐ Jeremiah 51, 30, Hebrews 7	
WEEK 56 (10.01.2018)	WEEK 62 (11.12.2018)	
☐ Isaiah 56-58, Romans 11:1-18	☐ Jeremiah 31-32, Hebrews 8	
☐ Isaiah 59-61, Romans 11:19-36	☐ Jeremiah 33, 21, Hebrews 9	
☐ Isaiah 62-64, Romans 12	☐ Jeremiah 34, 37-38, Hebrews 10:1-18	
☐ Isaiah 65-66, Romans 13	☐ Jeremiah 39, 40, Hebrews 10:19-39	
☐ Hosea 1-4, Romans 14	☐ Jeremiah 41-42, Hebrews 11:1-19	
WEEK 57 (10.08.2018)	WEEK 63 (11.19.2018)	
☐ Hosea 5-8, Romans 15:1-13	☐ Jeremiah 43-44, Hebrews II:20-40	
☐ Hosea 9-11, Romans 15:14-33	☐ Lamentations 1-2, Hebrews 12	
☐ Hosea 12-14, Romans 16	☐ Lamentations 3-5, Hebrews 13	
☐ Micah 1-3, Acts 21:1-17	🛘 2 Chronicles 36, Daniel I-2, Titus I	
☐ Micah 4-5, Acts 21:18-40	☐ Daniel 3-4, Titus 2	

# **SELECT VERSES**

This plan acts as a "sampler," giving a taste of each book as we go through it. Each weekday will give you as little as a single verse, or as much as the whole book (for the short ones).

WEEK 1 (09.11.2017)	WEEK 6 (10.16.2017)	WEEK 11 (11.20.2017)
☐Genesis I	□Joshua 1:1-9	□1 Kings 2:2-4
☐Genesis 3:15	□Joshua 6:17-21, 24	□1 Kings 3:16-28
☐Genesis 6:5-6	□Joshua 11:23, 18:1	□1 Kings 8:10-12
☐Genesis 12:1-3	□Joshua 21:43-44	□1 Kings 11:26-12:33
☐Genesis 50:15-21	□Joshua 23:14	□1 Kings 19:7-18
WEEK 2 (09.18.2017)	WEEK 7 (10.23.2017)	WEEK 12 (11.27.2017)
□Exodus 1:11-12; 2:23-24	□Judges 1:1-2	□2 Kings 1:3
□Exodus 3:11-15; 6:1-8	□Judges 2:6-23	□2 Kings 2:8, 11-12
□Exodus II:I-IO	□Judges 17:6	□2 Kings 12:17-18
□Exodus 15	□Judges 18:1	□2 Kings 14:13-14
□ Exodus 31:1-5; 40:34-35	□Judges 21:25	□2 Kings 24:12-13; 25:8-17
WEEK 3 (09.25.2017)	WEEK 8 (10.30.2017)	WEEK 13 (12.04.2017)
☐ Leviticus I:I	□ Ruth 1:1-6	□1 Chronicles 9:1-2
☐ Leviticus 17:10-11; 1 John 4:10-11	□ Ruth 1:7-18	☐1 Chronicles 10:1-7
☐ Leviticus II:44	□ Ruth 2:22	□1 Chronicles 17:23-27
☐Leviticus 26:11-12	□Ruth 3:1	□1 Chronicles 22:7-16
☐Leviticus 26:40-45	☐ Ruth 4:1-12	□1 Chronicles 29:20-22
WEEK 4 (10.02.2017)	WEEK 9 (11.06.2017)	WEEK 14 (12.11.2017)
□ Numbers 10:11-36	□1 Samuel 2:1-3	☐2 Chronicles 1:7-13
□ Numbers II:I-I5	□1 Samuel 9:1-2	☐2 Chronicles 7:II, 17-22
□ Numbers 14:11; 20:12	□1 Samuel 15:22-23, 16:7	☐2 Chronicles 28:22-27
□Numbers 21:4-9	□1 Samuel 18:1-9	□2 Chronicles 29:3-II
□ Numbers 24:3-9; 15-24	□1 Samuel 24:16-21	☐2 Chronicles 36:20-23
WEEK 5 (10.09.2017)	WEEK 10 (11.13.2017)	WEEK 15 (12.18.2017)
Deuteronomy I:I-3	□2 Samuel I	□Ezra I:I-II, 6:I-5
Deuteronomy 4:1-9	□2 Samuel 5:7	□Ezra 4:1-24
☐ Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 14:22-29	□2 Samuel 7:9-16	□Ezra 7:1-26
Deuteronomy 28:1-14	□2 Samuel II:2-4	□Ezra 9
Deuteronomy 34:10-12; Malachi 4:4-6	□2 Samuel 22:51	□Ezra 10:1, 3-4

WEEK 16 [12.25.2017]  □ Nehemiah 1:1-2:6  □ Nehemiah 2:10, 4:1-3  □ Nehemiah 4:9, 16-23  □ Nehemiah 9:36-37  □ Nehemiah 13:10-31	WEEK 22 (02.05.2018)  ☐ Song of Solomon 1:12-2:7 ☐ Song of Solomon 3:1-5 ☐ Song of Solomon 4:1-7 ☐ Song of Solomon 5:10-16 ☐ Song of Solomon 7:1-9	WEEK 28 (03.19.2018)  ☐ Hosea 1:2  ☐ Hosea 4:5  ☐ Hosea 6:6  ☐ Hosea II:I  ☐ Hosea I4
WEEK 17 (01.01.2018)	WEEK 23 (02.12.2018)	WEEK 29 (03.26.2018)
Esther 1:1-8	□ Isaiah 2:1-4	□ Joel 1:2-7
☐ Esther 3:7-15	□Isaiah 4:2-5	□Joel 2:I-II
□Esther 6:1-14	☐ Isaiah 11:1-16	□Joel 2:22-26
□Esther 8:1-8	□ Isaiah 24:17-23	□Joel 2:28-32
□Esther 9:1-19	□ Isaiah 27:2-6	□Joel 3:18-21
WEEK 18 (01.08.2018)	WEEK 24 (02.19.2018)	WEEK 30 (04.02.2018)
□Job 1:4-5	□Jeremiah 2:1-3	□Amos 1:3-5
□Job 2:7	□Jeremiah 6:13-15	□Amos 2:6-8
□Job 9:14-35	□Jeremiah 14:13-16	□Amos 5:7-13
□Job 31:35-37	□Jeremiah 31:31-34	□Amos 6:1-7
□Job 28:28	□Jeremiah 33:15-16	□Amos 9:11-15
WEEK 19 (01.15.2018)	WEEK 25 (02.26.2018)	WEEK 31 (04.09.2018)
□ Psalm 1	☐ Lamentations 1:5	□Obadiah
☐ Psalm 42	☐ Lamentations 1:16, 2:1	□Obadiah
□ Psalm 73	☐ Lamentations 3:61-63	□Obadiah
□Psalm 90	☐ Lamentations 4:1-3	□Obadiah
□ Psalm 107	☐ Lamentations 5:19-22	□Obadiah
WEEK 20 (01.22.2018)	WEEK 26 (03.05.2018)	WEEK 32 (04.16.2018)
☐ Proverbs 3:1-3	□ Ezekiel 1:22-28	□Jonah 1:3, 5, 9
☐ Proverbs 6:20-23	□ Ezekiel 3:17-21	□Jonah 1:10
☐ Proverbs 7:2-3	☐ Ezekiel 6:1-14	□Jonah 2:1-9
☐ Proverbs 8:22	☐ Ezekiel 10:1-22, 11:15	□Jonah 3:4-9
□ Proverbs 19:23	□ Ezekiel 34:23-24	□Jonah 4:11
WEEK 04 (04 00 0040)		
WEEK 21 (01.29.2018)	WEEK 27 (03.12.2018)	WEEK 33 (04.23.2018)
WEEK 21 [U1.29.2018]  □ Ecclesiastes 1:2-11	WEEK 27 (03.12.2018)  □ Daniel 1:1-3	WEEK 33 (04.23.2018) □ Micah 1:2-7
	, ,	
□ Ecclesiastes I:2-II	Daniel I:I-3	☐ Micah 1:2-7
□ Ecclesiastes 1:2-11 □ Ecclesiastes 3:18	□ Daniel I:I-3 □ Daniel 2:44	☐ Micah 1:2-7 ☐ Micah 4:1-7

WEEK 34 (04.30.2018)  □ Nahum 1:2b-3a  □ Nahum 3:I-4  □ Nahum 2:3-I3  □ Nahum 3:I8-I9  □ Nahum	WEEK 40 (06.11.2018)  ☐ Matthew 1:22  ☐ Matthew 4:18-25  ☐ Matthew 5:17-20  ☐ Matthew 15:1-20  ☐ Matthew 21:43; 28:18-20	WEEK 46 [07.23.2018]  ☐ I Corinthians I:IO ☐ I Corinthians 2:I-5 ☐ I Corinthians 3:IO-I5 ☐ I Corinthians 7:20-24 ☐ I Corinthians I5:58-I6:3
WEEK 35 (05.07.2018)	WEEK 41 (06.18.2018)	WEEK 47 (07.30.2018)
□ Habakkuk 1:2-4	□ Mark 1:2-3	□2 Corinthians 1:24
□Habakkuk 1:5-11	□ Mark 1:9-15	☐2 Corinthians 4:1-2
□Habakkuk 2:2-4	□Mark 4:41; 6:2; 7:5	☐2 Corinthians 5:10
□Habakkuk 3:3-8	□Mark 14:53-65	□2 Corinthians 8:13-15
☐ Habakkuk 3:16-19	□ Mark 15:6-32	□2 Corinthians 12:9-10
WEEK 36 (05.14.2018)	WEEK 42 (06.25.2018)	WEEK 48 (08.06.2018)
Zephaniah 1:2-3	□ Luke 1:68-79	Galatians 2:19-20
Zephaniah 2:1-3	□Luke 2:29-32	☐Galatians 3:29-4:7
Zephaniah 3:1-7	□Luke 4:18-19	□Galatians 5:6
Zephaniah 3:9-10	□Luke 7:36-49, 18:9-14	□Galatians 5:13
☐Zephaniah 3:II-20	□ Luke 19:10; 24:24-27	Galatians 6:10
WEEK 37 (05.21.2018)	WEEK 43 (07.02.2018)	WEEK 49 (08.13.2018)
□Haggai I:2-II	□John 1:1-18	□Ephesians 1:9-10
☐ Haggai 1:12-15	□John 4:43-54	☐Ephesians 2:8-10
☐ Haggai 2:15-19	□John 12:32	□Ephesians 4:28
□Haggai 2:21	□John 14:16-17, 20	□Ephesians 6:6-8
☐ Haggai 2:21-23	□John 20:20-31	□Ephesians 6:9
WEEK 38 (05.28.2018)	WEEK 44 (07.09.2018)	WEEK 50 (08.20.2018)
☐Zechariah 1:2-6	□Acts 1:8	☐ Philippians 1:6
☐Zechariah 1:7-17	□Acts 2:38	☐ Philippians 2:2
☐Zechariah 2:1-13	□Acts 4:12	□Philippians 2:3
☐Zechariah 7:1-3	□Acts 6:1-7	☐ Philippians 2:4
☐Zechariah 9:9-10	□Acts 12:20-23	☐ Philippians 4:12-13, 18
WEEK 39 (06.04.2018)	WEEK 45 (07.16.2018)	WEEK 51 (08.27.2018)
□ Malachi 1:2-5	□Romans 1:16	□Colossians I:15-17
□ Malachi 2:1-9	□Romans 3:23-24	Colossians I:19-20
□ Malachi 2:10-16	□Romans 5:7	□Colossians 2:8
□Malachi 3:6-7	□Romans 7:18-20	□Colossians 3:2-5
□Malachi 4:4-6	□Romans 8:31-39	□Colossians 3:22, 4:1

☐ Romans 8:31-39

 $\square$  Colossians 3:22, 4:1

WEEK 52 (09.03.2018)  ☐ I Thessalonians 1:5  ☐ I Thessalonians 2:6-7  ☐ I Thessalonians 3:13  ☐ I Thessalonians 4:II  ☐ I Thessalonians 5:9, 17-19	WEEK 58 (10.15.2018)  ☐ Hebrews 1:1-3  ☐ Hebrews 2:14-15  ☐ Hebrews 5:9  ☐ Hebrews 9:22  ☐ Hebrews 12:1-2	WEEK 64 [11.26.2018]  □3 John □3 John [read aloud] □3 John □3 John □3 John [read aloud]
WEEK 53 (09.10.2018)  □ 2 Thessalonians 1:II  □ 2 Thessalonians 2:I-3  □ 2 Thessalonians 3:6  □ 2 Thessalonians 3:I0-II  □ 2 Thessalonians 3:I4-I5	WEEK 59 (10.22.2018)  □ James 1:2-4  □ James 2:15-16  □ James 1:19-25  □ James 2:26  □ James 4:13-17	WEEK 65 [12.03.2018] □Jude 22-23 □Jude □Jude [read aloud] □Jude □Jude □Jude [read aloud]
WEEK 54 (09.17.2018)  □ I Timothy I:3-5  □ I Timothy 2:8-9  □ I Timothy 3:2-3  □ I Timothy 3:10  □ I Timothy 5	WEEK 60 [10.29.2018]  □ I Peter 2:13-14  □ I Peter 2:18-19  □ I Peter 2:20  □ I Peter 3:9  □ I Peter 4:12	WEEK 66 [12.10.2018]  □ Revelation I:IO □ Revelation 2:5 □ Revelation 4:8-II □ Revelation I4:I5 □ Revelation 22:2-5
WEEK 55 (09.24.2018)  □ 2 Timothy 1:5  □ 2 Timothy 2:22-25  □ 2 Timothy 3:1  □ 2 Timothy 3:12  □ 2 Timothy 4:1-8	WEEK 61 (11.05.2018)  □ 2 Peter 1:5-9  □ 2 Peter 3:8  □ 2 Peter 3:13  □ 2 Peter 3:14  □ 2 Peter 3:17	
WEEK 56 (10.01.2018)  □ Titus 1:7-8  □ Titus 2:9-12  □ Titus 2:15  □ Titus 3:1-11  □ Titus 3:14	WEEK 62 [11.12.2018]  □ I John 1:7  □ I John 1:8-10  □ I John 2:3-6  □ I John 2:7-9  □ I John 3:2	
WEEK 57 (10.08.2018)  □ Philemon [see Col.]  □ Philemon [see Col.]  □ Philemon [see Col.]  □ Philemon [see Col.]	WEEK 63 (11.19.2018)  □ 2 John [read aloud] □ 2 John □ 2 John [read aloud] □ 2 John □ 2 John □ 2 John [read aloud]	

# **EVERYTHING STRAIGHT THROUGH**

This plan is the marathon from Genesis to Revelation. It's seven days a week so be sure to set aside some dedicated time each day to get some reading in. Don't beat yourself up if you "fall behind," the end goal here is just to be intentional about time in the Word and if you want to, you can always catch up over the weekend.

WEEK 1 (09.11.2017)	WEEK 5 (10.09.2017)	WEEK 9 (11.06.2017)
☐ Genesis I-2	□Exodus 15-16	□ Numbers 4
☐ Genesis 3-5	□Exodus 17-18	□ Numbers 5-6
☐ Genesis 6-8	□Exodus 19-21	□ Numbers 7
☐ Genesis 9-12	□Exodus 22-23	□Numbers 8-9
☐ Genesis 13-15	□ Exodus 24-25	□ Numbers 10-11
☐ Genesis 16-18	□Exodus 26-27	□ Numbers 12-13
☐ Genesis 19-20	□ Exodus 28-29	□ Number 14-15
WEEK 2 (09.18.2017)	WEEK 6 (10.16.2017)	WEEK 10 (11.13.2017)
☐ Genesis 21-22	□ Exodus 30-31	□ Numbers 16-17
☐ Genesis 23-24	□Exodus 32-33	□ Numbers 18-19
☐ Genesis 25-26	□ Exodus 34-35	□ Numbers 20-21
☐ Genesis 27-28	□Exodus 36-37	□ Numbers 22
☐ Genesis 29-30	□Exodus 38-39	□ Numbers 23-25
☐ Genesis 31	☐ Exodus 40-Leviticus 2	□ Numbers 26-27
☐ Genesis 32-33	☐ Leviticus 3-4	□ Numbers 28-29
WFFK 3 (09.25.2017)	WFFK 7 (10.23.2017)	WFFK 11 (11.20.2017)
WEEK 3 (09.25.2017)	WEEK 7 (10.23.2017)	WEEK 11 (11.20.2017)
☐ Genesis 34-36	☐ Leviticus 5-6	□ Numbers 30-31
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38	☐ Leviticus 5-6 ☐ Leviticus 7-8	□ Numbers 30-31 □ Numbers 32-33
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38 ☐ Genesis 39-40	☐ Leviticus 5-6	□ Numbers 30-31 □ Numbers 32-33 □ Numbers 34-35
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38 ☐ Genesis 39-40 ☐ Genesis 41-42	☐ Leviticus 5-6 ☐ Leviticus 7-8 ☐ Leviticus 9-10	□ Numbers 30-31 □ Numbers 32-33 □ Numbers 34-35 □ Numbers 36-Deuteronomy I
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38 ☐ Genesis 39-40	☐ Leviticus 5-6 ☐ Leviticus 7-8 ☐ Leviticus 9-10 ☐ Leviticus II-12	□ Numbers 30-31 □ Numbers 32-33 □ Numbers 34-35 □ Numbers 36-Deuteronomy 1 □ Deuteronomy 2
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38 ☐ Genesis 39-40 ☐ Genesis 41-42 ☐ Genesis 43-44	☐ Leviticus 5-6 ☐ Leviticus 7-8 ☐ Leviticus 9-10 ☐ Leviticus II-12 ☐ Leviticus I3	□ Numbers 30-31 □ Numbers 32-33 □ Numbers 34-35 □ Numbers 36-Deuteronomy I
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38 ☐ Genesis 39-40 ☐ Genesis 41-42 ☐ Genesis 43-44 ☐ Genesis 45-46	☐ Leviticus 5-6 ☐ Leviticus 7-8 ☐ Leviticus 9-10 ☐ Leviticus II-12 ☐ Leviticus I3 ☐ Leviticus I4-15	□ Numbers 30-31 □ Numbers 32-33 □ Numbers 34-35 □ Numbers 36-Deuteronomy 1 □ Deuteronomy 2 □ Deuteronomy 3-4
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38 ☐ Genesis 39-40 ☐ Genesis 41-42 ☐ Genesis 43-44 ☐ Genesis 45-46	☐ Leviticus 5-6 ☐ Leviticus 7-8 ☐ Leviticus 9-10 ☐ Leviticus II-12 ☐ Leviticus I3 ☐ Leviticus I4-15	□ Numbers 30-31 □ Numbers 32-33 □ Numbers 34-35 □ Numbers 36-Deuteronomy 1 □ Deuteronomy 2 □ Deuteronomy 3-4
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38 ☐ Genesis 39-40 ☐ Genesis 41-42 ☐ Genesis 43-44 ☐ Genesis 45-46 ☐ Genesis 47-48	□ Leviticus 5-6 □ Leviticus 7-8 □ Leviticus 9-10 □ Leviticus 11-12 □ Leviticus 13 □ Leviticus 14-15 □ Leviticus 16-17	□ Numbers 30-31 □ Numbers 32-33 □ Numbers 34-35 □ Numbers 36-Deuteronomy 1 □ Deuteronomy 2 □ Deuteronomy 3-4 □ Deuteronomy 5-6
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38 ☐ Genesis 39-40 ☐ Genesis 41-42 ☐ Genesis 43-44 ☐ Genesis 45-46 ☐ Genesis 47-48  WEEK 4 [10.02.2017]	□ Leviticus 5-6 □ Leviticus 7-8 □ Leviticus 9-10 □ Leviticus II-12 □ Leviticus I3 □ Leviticus I4-15 □ Leviticus I6-17  WEEK 8 [10.30.2017]	□ Numbers 30-31 □ Numbers 32-33 □ Numbers 34-35 □ Numbers 36-Deuteronomy 1 □ Deuteronomy 2 □ Deuteronomy 3-4 □ Deuteronomy 5-6  WEEK 12 [11.27.2017]
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38 ☐ Genesis 39-40 ☐ Genesis 41-42 ☐ Genesis 43-44 ☐ Genesis 45-46 ☐ Genesis 47-48  WEEK 4 [10.02.2017] ☐ Genesis 49-50	□ Leviticus 5-6 □ Leviticus 7-8 □ Leviticus 9-10 □ Leviticus II-12 □ Leviticus I3 □ Leviticus I4-15 □ Leviticus I6-17  WEEK 8 [10.30.2017] □ Leviticus I8-19	□ Numbers 30-3I □ Numbers 32-33 □ Numbers 34-35 □ Numbers 36-Deuteronomy I □ Deuteronomy 3-4 □ Deuteronomy 5-6  WEEK 12 [11.27.2017] □ Deuteronomy 7-8 □ Deuteronomy 9-I0 □ Deuteronomy II-I2
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38 ☐ Genesis 39-40 ☐ Genesis 41-42 ☐ Genesis 43-44 ☐ Genesis 45-46 ☐ Genesis 47-48  WEEK 4 [10.02.2017] ☐ Genesis 49-50 ☐ Exodus 1-3 ☐ Exodus 4-5 ☐ Exodus 6-8	□ Leviticus 5-6 □ Leviticus 7-8 □ Leviticus 9-10 □ Leviticus 11-12 □ Leviticus 13 □ Leviticus 14-15 □ Leviticus 16-17  WEEK 8 (10.30.2017) □ Leviticus 18-19 □ Leviticus 20-21	Numbers 30-3I  Numbers 32-33  Numbers 34-35  Numbers 36-Deuteronomy I  Deuteronomy 2  Deuteronomy 3-4  Deuteronomy 5-6  WEEK 12 [11.27.2017]  Deuteronomy 7-8  Deuteronomy 9-10
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38 ☐ Genesis 39-40 ☐ Genesis 41-42 ☐ Genesis 43-44 ☐ Genesis 45-46 ☐ Genesis 47-48  WEEK 4 [10.02.2017] ☐ Genesis 49-50 ☐ Exodus 1-3 ☐ Exodus 4-5	□ Leviticus 5-6 □ Leviticus 7-8 □ Leviticus 9-10 □ Leviticus 11-12 □ Leviticus 14-15 □ Leviticus 16-17  WEEK 8 [10.30.2017] □ Leviticus 18-19 □ Leviticus 20-21 □ Leviticus 22-23 □ Leviticus 24-25 □ Leviticus 26	□ Numbers 30-3I □ Numbers 32-33 □ Numbers 34-35 □ Numbers 36-Deuteronomy I □ Deuteronomy 3-4 □ Deuteronomy 5-6  WEEK 12 [11.27.2017] □ Deuteronomy 7-8 □ Deuteronomy 9-I0 □ Deuteronomy II-I2
☐ Genesis 34-36 ☐ Genesis 37-38 ☐ Genesis 39-40 ☐ Genesis 41-42 ☐ Genesis 43-44 ☐ Genesis 45-46 ☐ Genesis 47-48  WEEK 4 [10.02.2017] ☐ Genesis 49-50 ☐ Exodus 1-3 ☐ Exodus 4-5 ☐ Exodus 6-8	□ Leviticus 5-6 □ Leviticus 7-8 □ Leviticus 9-10 □ Leviticus 11-12 □ Leviticus 14-15 □ Leviticus 16-17  WEEK 8 [10.30.2017] □ Leviticus 18-19 □ Leviticus 20-21 □ Leviticus 22-23 □ Leviticus 24-25	□ Numbers 30-3I □ Numbers 32-33 □ Numbers 34-35 □ Numbers 36-Deuteronomy I □ Deuteronomy 3-4 □ Deuteronomy 5-6  WEEK 12 [11.27.2017] □ Deuteronomy 7-8 □ Deuteronomy 9-10 □ Deuteronomy II-12 □ Deuteronomy I3-15

WEEK 42 (42 O4 2047)	WEEK 47 (4 04 2040)	WEEK 24 (04 20 2040)
WEEK 13 (12.04.2017)	WEEK 17 (1.01.2018)	WEEK 21 (01.29.2018)
Deuteronomy 23-25	Ruth I-2	I Kings I
Deuteronomy 26-27	Ruth 3-1 Samuel 1	I Kings 2
Deuteronomy 28	I Samuel 2-3	☐ I Kings 3-5
Deuteronomy 29-30	□ I Samuel 4-6	□ I Kings 6
☐ Deuteronomy 31-32	□ 1 Samuel 7-8	□ I Kings 7
☐ Deuteronomy 33-34	□ I Samuel 9-II	□ I Kings 8-9
□Joshua 1-3	□ I Samuel 12-13	□ I Kings 10
WEEK 44 (42 44 2047)	WEEK 40 (04 00 2040)	WEEK 22 (02 OF 2040)
WEEK 14 (12.11.2017)	WEEK 18 (01.08.2018)	WEEK 22 (02.05.2018)
□Joshua 4-6	I Samuel 14	I Kings II-I2
□Joshua 7	I Samuel 15-16	☐ 1 Kings 13-14
□Joshua 8-9	I Samuel 17	□ 1 Kings 15
□Joshua 10-11	☐ I Samuel 18-19	□ 1 Kings 16-17
□Joshua 12-13	□ I Samuel 20-2I	□ 1 Kings 18-19
□Joshua 14-16	□ I Samuel 22-24	□ I Kings 20
□Joshua 17-18	□ I Samuel 25	□ 1 Kings 21-22
WEEK 15 (12.18.2017)	WEEK 40 (04 45 2040)	WEEK 23 (02.12.2018)
	WEEK 19 (01.15.2018)	
□Joshua 19-20	□ I Samuel 26-28	2 Kings I-2
□Joshua 2I-22	□ I Samuel 29-30	2 Kings 3-4
□Joshua 23-24	☐ I Samuel 31-2 Samuel 2	2 Kings 5
□Judges 1-2	2 Samuel 3-4	□ 2 Kings 6-7
□Judges 3-4	2 Samuel 5-6	☐ 2 Kings 8-9
□Judges 5-6	2 Samuel 7-10	2 Kings 10
□Judges 7	□2 Samuel II-I2	□2 Kings II-I3
WEEK 16 (12.25.2017)	WEEK 20 (01.22.2018)	WEEK 24 (02.19.2018)
□Judges 8-9	□2 Samuel 13	□2 Kings 14
□Judges 10	□ 2 Samuel 14-15	□ 2 Kings 15-16
□Judges 11-13	□ 2 Samuel 16-17	☐ 2 Kings 17-18
□Judges 14-15	□ 2 Samuel 18	□2 Kings 19
☐Judges 16-18	☐ 2 Samuel 19-20	☐ 2 Kings 19
□Judges 19	☐ 2 Samuel 19-20 ☐ 2 Samuel 21-22	☐ 2 Kings 20-21
		-
□Judges 20-21	□ 2 Samuel 23-24	□ 2 Kings 24-25

WEEK 25 (02.26.2018)	WEEK 29 (03.26.2018)	WEEK 33 (04.23.2018)
☐ I Chronicles I-2	□Ezra 2-4	☐ Psalm 31-35
☐1 Chronicles 3-5	□Ezra 5-6	☐ Psalm 36-39
☐ I Chronicles 6	□Ezra 7-8	☐ Psalm 40-44
□ I Chronicles 7-9	□ Ezra 9-10	☐ Psalm 45-50
☐ I Chronicles IO-II	□ Nehemiah 1-3	☐ Psalm 51-56
□ I Chronicles 12-14	□ Nehemiah 4-5	☐ Psalm 57-62
☐ I Chronicles I5-I6	□ Nehemiah 6-7	□ Psalm 63-68
WEEK 26 (03.05.2018)	WEEK 30 (04.02.2018)	WEEK 34 (04.30.2018)
□ I Chronicles 17-19	□ Nehemiah 8-9	☐ Psalm 69-72
☐1 Chronicles 20-22	□ Nehemiah 10-11	☐ Psalm 73-77
□ I Chronicles 23-25	□ Nehemiah 12-13	☐ Psalm 78-79
☐1 Chronicles 26-27	☐ Esther I-2	☐ Psalm 80-86
☐1 Chronicles 28-29	☐ Esther 3-5	☐ Psalm 87-90
□2 Chronicles I-3	☐ Esther 6-9	□ Psalm 91-97
□2 Chronicles 4-5	□Job 1-4	□ Psalm 98-103
WEEK 27 (03.12.2018)	WEEK 31 (04.09.2018)	WEEK 35 (05.07.2018)
□2 Chronicles 6-7	□Job 5-8	☐ Psalm 104-106
☐2 Chronicles 8-10	□Job 9-13	☐ Psalm 107-110
☐2 Chronicles II-I3	□Job 14-17	□Psalm III-II8
□2 Chronicles 14-16	□Job 18-21	□Psalm 119
□2 Chronicles 17-19	□Job 22-26	☐ Psalm 120-128
☐2 Chronicles 20-21	□Job 27-30	□ Psalm 129-138
☐2 Chronicles 22-23	□Job 31-33	□ Psalm 139-144
WEEK 28 (03.19.2018)	WEEK 32 (04.16.2018)	WEEK 36 (05.14.2018)
☐2 Chronicles 24-25	□Job 34-37	☐ Psalm 145-Proverbs 1
□2 Chronicles 26-28	□Job 38-40	☐ Proverbs 2-5
□2 Chronicles 29-30	□Job 41-Psalm 5	□ Proverbs 6-9
□2 Chronicles 31	□Psalm 6-12	☐ Proverbs 10-12
☐2 Chronicles 32-33	□ Psalm 13-18	☐ Proverbs 13-15
☐ 2 Chronicles 34-35	☐ Psalm 19-23	☐ Proverbs 16-19

☐ Psalm 24-30

☐ Proverbs 20-22

🗖 2 Chronicles 36-Ezra I

WEEK 37 (05.21.2018)  Proverbs 23-26	<b>WEEK 41 (06.18.2018)</b> □ Isaiah 66-Jeremiah 1	<b>WEEK 45 (07.16.2018)</b> □ Ezekiel 4-6
☐ Proverbs 27-29	□Jeremiah 2-3	□ Ezekiel 7-9
☐ Proverbs 30-Ecclesiastes 2	□Jeremiah 4-5	☐ Ezekiel 10-12
☐ Ecclesiastes 3-5	□Jeremiah 6-7	□ Ezekiel 13-14
☐ Ecclesiastes 6-9	□Jeremiah 8-10	□ Ezekiel 15-16
☐ Ecclesiastes 10-of Solomon 2	□Jeremiah II-I3	□ Ezekiel 17-18
☐ Song of Solomon 3-7	□Jeremiah 14-15	□ Ezekiel 19-20
WEEK 38 (05.28.2018)	WEEK 42 (06.25.2018)	WEEK 46 (07.23.2018)
☐ Song of Solomon 8-Isaiah 2	□Jeremiah 16-17	□ Ezekiel 21
☐ Isaiah 3-6	□Jeremiah 18-21	□ Ezekiel 22-23
☐ Isaiah 7-9	□Jeremiah 22	□ Ezekiel 24-25
☐ Isaiah 10-11	□Jeremiah 23-25	□ Ezekiel 26-27
☐ Isaiah 12-15	□Jeremiah 26-27	□ Ezekiel 28-30
□Isaiah 16-19	□Jeremiah 28-29	□ Ezekiel 31-32
☐ Isaiah 20-23	□Jeremiah 30-31	□ Ezekiel 33-34
WEEK 39 (06.04.2018)	WEEK 43 (07.02.2018)	WEEK 47 (07.30.2018)
☐ Isaiah 24-27	□Jeremiah 32	□ Ezekiel 35-36
□ Isaiah 28-29	□Jeremiah 33-34	□ Ezekiel 37-38
☐ Isaiah 30-32	□Jeremiah 35-36	☐ Ezekiel 39-40
☐ Isaiah 33-36	□Jeremiah 37-38	□ Ezekiel 41
☐ Isaiah 37	□Jeremiah 39-41	☐ Ezekiel 42-43
☐ Isaiah 38-40	□Jeremiah 42-44	☐ Ezekiel 44-45
□ Isaiah 41-43	□Jeremiah 45-47	□ Ezekiel 46-47
WEEK 40 (06.11.2018)	WEEK 44 (07.09.2018)	WEEK 48 (08.06.2018)
☐ Isaiah 44-45	□Jeremiah 48-49	□ Ezekiel 48-Daniel 1
☐ Isaiah 46-48	□Jeremiah 50	□ Daniel 2-3
☐ Isaiah 49-51	□Jeremiah 51	□ Daniel 4
☐ Isaiah 52-55	□Jeremiah 52	□ Daniel 5-6
☐ Isaiah 56-59	☐Lamentations I-2	□Daniel 7-8
☐ Isaiah 60-62	☐ Lamentations 3-5	□Daniel 9-10
☐ Isaiah 63-65	□ Ezekiel 1-3	☐ Daniel II

WEEK 49 (08.13.2018)	WEEK 53 (09.10.2018)	WEEK 57 (10.08.2018)
□ Daniel 12-Hosea 4	☐ Matthew 24	□John 2-3
□Hosea 5-8	☐ Matthew 25-26	□John 4-5
□Hosea 9-13	☐ Matthew 27	□John 6
□ Hosea 14-Joel 2	☐ Matthew 28-Mark I	□John 7-8
□Joel 3-Amos 3	□Mark 2-3	□John 9
□Amos 4-6	☐ Mark 4-5	□John 10-11
□Amos 7-Obadiah 1	□ Mark 6-7	□John 12-13
WEEK 50 (08.20.2018)	WEEK 54 (09.17.2018)	WEEK 58 (10.15.2018)
□Jonah 1-Micah 1	□ Mark 8-9	□John 14-15
☐ Micah 2-5	☐ Mark 10	□John 16-17
☐ Micah 6-Nahum 2	☐ Mark II-I2	□John 18-19
□ Nahum 3-Habakkuk 2	□Mark 13	□John 20-21
☐ Habakkuk 3-Zephaniah 3	☐ Mark 14-15	□Acts I-2
☐ Haggai I-Zechariah 2	□Mark 16-Luke 1	□Acts 3-4
□Zechariah 3-7	□ Luke 2	□Acts 5-6
WEEK 51 (08.27.2018)	WEEK 55 (09.24.2018)	WEEK 59 (10.22.2018)
□Zechariah 8-10	□ Luke 3-4	□Acts 7-8
□Zechariah 11-14	□ Luke 5-6	□Acts 9-10
□ Malachi 1-3	□ Luke 7	□Acts II-I2
☐ Malachi 4-Matthew 2	□Luke 8	□Acts 13-14
☐ Matthew 3-5	□Luke 9	□Acts 15
☐ Matthew 6-7	□ Luke 10-11	□Acts 16-17
☐ Matthew 8-9	□ Luke 12	□Acts 18-19
WEEK 52 (09.03.2018)	WEEK 56 (10.01.2018)	WEEK 60 (10.29.2018)
☐ Matthew 10-11	□ Luke 13-14	□Acts 20-21
☐ Matthew 12-13	□ Luke 15-16	□Acts 22-23
☐ Matthew 14-15	□ Luke 17-18	□Acts 24-25
☐ Matthew 16-17	□ Luke 19-20	□Acts 26-27
☐ Matthew 18-19	□ Luke 21-22	□Acts 28-Romans I
☐ Matthew 20-21	□Luke 23	□Romans 2-4

□ Luke 24-John I

☐ Romans 5-7

☐ Matthew 22-23

WEEK 61 [11.05.2018]  Romans 8-9  Romans 10-12  Romans 13-15  Romans 16-1 Corinthians 2  I Corinthians 3-6  I Corinthians 7-8  I Corinthians 9-II	WEEK 65 [12.03.2018]  Hebrews 7-9  Hebrews 10-11  Hebrews 12-James 1  James 2-4  James 5-1 Peter 2  I Peter 3-2 Peter 1  2 Peter 2-1 John 1
WEEK 62 (11.12.2018)  I Corinthians I2-I4  I Corinthians I5-I6  2 Corinthians I-3  2 Corinthians 4-7  2 Corinthians 8-I0  2 Corinthians II-Galatians I  Galatians 2-3	WEEK 66 (12.10.2018)  □ I John 2-3 John  □ Jude I-Revelation 3  □ Revelation 4-8  □ Revelation 9-12  □ Revelation I3-16  □ Revelation I7-19  □ Revelation 20-22
WEEK 63 (11.19.2018)  ☐ Galatians 4-Ephesians I  ☐ Ephesians 2-4  ☐ Ephesians 5-Philippians I  ☐ Philippians 2-4  ☐ Colossians I-3  ☐ Colossians 4  ☐ I Thessalonians I-4	
WEEK 64 [11.26.2018]  ☐ I Thessalonians 5-2 Thessalonians 2 ☐ 2 Thessalonians 3 ☐ I Timothy I-5 ☐ I Timothy 6-2 Timothy 2 ☐ 2 Timothy 3-Titus 2 ☐ Titus 3-Hebrews 2 ☐ Hebrews 3-6	

# **Inductive Bible Study Method**

Here is a quick overview of what's called an Inductive Bible Study. It's a succinct and thorough framework within which to approach the Word and how to apply it to your life. It involves observation, interpretation, and application.

### **OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?**

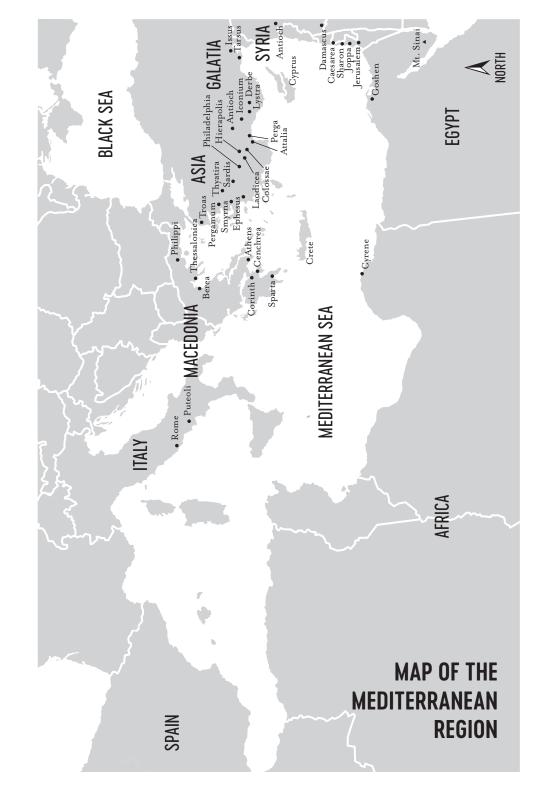
- Read the text repetitively.
- Ask the five w's: Who? What? When? Where? Why?
- Context from the text: How does this passage fit into the overall idea of the section of scripture?
- Take notes about what you see and make sure to write down any questions.
- Note any words that are repeated, transitional words and phrases, God's
  description, the people involved, and their description.
- Define repeated words and unknown words.
- Look up corresponding texts in other parts of the bible.
- Ask questions.

## INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE MEAN?

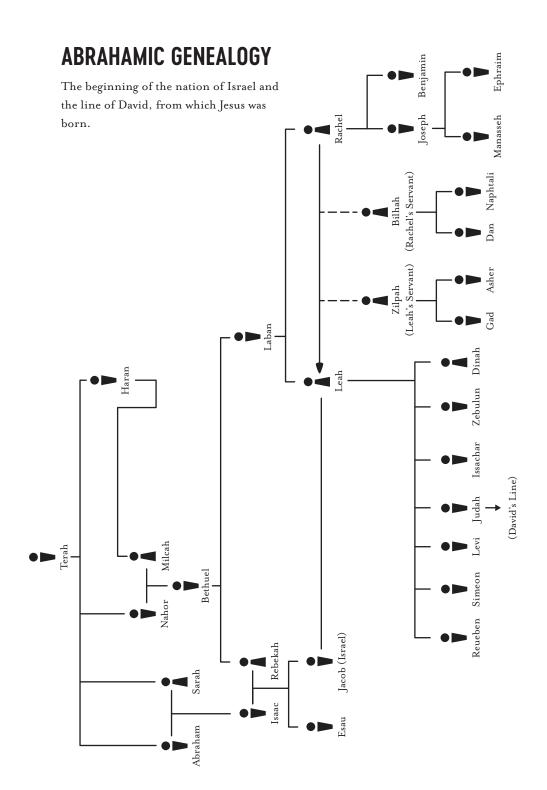
- Dig into cross-references. Paraphrase. Marinate.
- What was the author trying to say to the original audience?
- What does that mean for me today?
- Still unclear? That's ok! Read commentaries, online articles from reputable sources, and discuss with other believers. Ask a pastor too!

### APPLICATION: HOW SHOULD THIS PASSAGE CHANGE ME?

- What does this passage teach me about God?
- How does this aspect of God's character/work change my view of self?
- What should I do in response?







## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Here are some additional books and sites that may be of help as you continue to seek out a Gospel-focus in your reading of the Bible.

- How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens by Michael Williams
- The Scriptures Testify about Me: Jesus and the Gospel in the Old Testament by D.A. Carson
- Biblical lovemaking: A Study of Song of Solomon by Arnold Fruchtenbaum
- The Gospel Transformation Bible
- GotQuestions.org
- Bible.org

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# **MESSAGE VIDEOS**

This book has corresponding messages that were taught across Riverview Church's venues between 2017-2018. Visit *rivchurch.com* or download Riverview Church's app by searching "rivchurch" in your App Store to view the message videos.

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